OUR MISSION

The mission of Asia Initiatives (AI) is to leverage the power of social capital to promote healthcare, education and sustainable development, striving to bring positive change in the quality of life of people in underserved communities.
At the Women’s March on Washington, Gloria Steinem stood up in front of 500,000 people and proudly announced that women will no longer sit quietly or be controlled. Instead, “we will work for a world in which all countries are connected.”

One year later, as women’s rights are increasingly threatened on all sides, this sentiment rings as true as ever. We cannot sit idly by as our sisters across the world struggle to make their voices heard. I have seen firsthand the women in our projects - women who are mothers, farmers, entrepreneurs, activists - put in countless hours of labor and sweat to achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves, their families and their communities. At Asia Initiatives, we are honored to partner with these amazing women. It is our dream for our Social Capital Credits (SoCCs) methodology to shift society’s perspective toward properly recognizing the value of women’s work and to empower individuals to drive their own development in all communities that suffer from poverty.

In 2017, we came a long way toward achieving this dream. We received a grant from Dining For Women to kickstart a micro-poultry program for 450 women farmers in ten villages of Uttar Pradesh, India. Two new projects were also established: one in Rajaji National Park, India to promote alternative livelihoods for villagers and in Maharashtra, India and one to build kitchen gardens for the Katkari tribal population. Our cattle loan project with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) is set to reach complete sustainability and we have almost completely eradicated the problem of high absentee rates for over 1,000 junior high school girls in Kumasi, Ghana.

We were proud to end the year by hosting the inaugural Ban Ki-moon Women’s Empowerment Awards at our annual gala. The Eighth Secretary-General of the UN himself personally presented the awards in his name to our honorees: Gloria Steinem, Eva Haller and Yue-Sai Kan. All three of these impressive figures have advanced the cause of women and we were truly honored to celebrate their leadership and legacies.

As we end 2017, the world is starkly divided along political lines and at times darkness will certainly appear to prevail in the months and years to come. But this only increases the urgency of our task and strengthens each individual’s call to action as a global citizen. Together, we can weave a net that links us together, instead of tearing ourselves apart.

Dr. Geeta Mehta,

President
A SNAPSHOT OF OUR IMPACT IN 2017

Made possible through our community currency for social good

1,200 women helped establish kitchen gardens
600 farmers implemented organic farming techniques
200 women earned SoCCCs for low interest cattle loans
540 individuals in tribal villages have petitioned for access to government services
1,000 girls have been enabled to stay in school
300 women have taken health screenings
350 women artisans mobilized to demand efficient governance
200 women participated in waste management
230 girls participated in mentoring and safe spaces
150 children earned SoCCCs for attendance and good class behavior
“During my tenure as Secretary-General, I always worked to make women’s empowerment a top priority and I can see that Asia Initiatives is carrying on that legacy.”
- Eighth UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

“The Social Capital Credits program is a proven, powerful tool for advancing social justice by acknowledging the contributions of individuals and rewarding them and their communities for their efforts.”
- Susan Blaustein, Founder and Executive Director of WomenStrong International
Social Capital Credits (SoCCs) is an innovative community currency that helps people take charge of developing their own neighborhoods and improving their lives. SoCCs are earned for doing acts of social good, like cleaning up the neighborhood, planting trees or mentoring youth and are redeemed for vital resources like school fees, healthcare and home improvements.
GHANA
Kumasi, Bantama Market Project with WomenStrong International
Accra, Mangyea Project with African Youth Guild

KENYA
Kisumu, Women’s Empowerment Project with WomenStrong International

INDIA
Ahmedabad, Self Employed Women’s Association Project with PepsiCo Foundation
Ahmedabad, Adolescent Girls and Women’s Empowerment Project with Center for Development
Bori Sinh, Cattle Loans and Check Dams Project with Save Indian Farmers
Delhi, Women’s Financial Inclusion Project with Ruaab Self Employed Women’s Association
Kolkata, Nurse’s Assistant Training Project with Avenue Welfare Society
Madurai, Vaigai Restoration Pageant Project with Dhan Foundation
Madurai, Vagai River Restoration Project with Dhan Foundation
Pune, Girls’ Kishori Mandal and Karate Clubs Project with Ashta No Kai
Villupuram and Pudukottai, Well-desilting and Cattle Loans Project with M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Vinayagampet, Biovillage Program with M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
SoCCs for Kitchen Gardens (Parmarth/Bundelkhand)

AI partnered with Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan in the drought devastated region of Bundelkhand, India, to establish kitchen gardens and improve living conditions for 1,200 women and their families. This year, 74 new kitchen gardens were established, 80 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were formed and women in SHGs have so far saved a total of over Rs. 78,540 (approximately $1,266). In SHG meetings, women discuss social and village issues and earn SoCCs for participating in village cleanliness drives. This year, community members came together at least once a month to clean up waste material near sources of drinking water and dump material that had been left blocking portions of roads. In kitchen gardens, women planted green vegetables and used organic manure, improving nutrition and supplementing income for those who sold vegetables in the market by an average of Rs. 500 - 600 ($8-10) a month. Health camps were also held periodically and provided screenings for over 150 women across many local villages.
In partnership with Save Indian Farmers (SIF), Al launched a SoCCs project in Maharashtra, India, to incentivize farmers and their families to utilize organic farming methods. In 2017, 600 farmers were introduced to organic techniques and over 1,570 acres of land were switched away from chemical-intensive farming practices. This resulted in an increase of 200 tons of additional crop yield. Health camps were held in which over 300 women from 25 villages, many of whom never received health checks before, had the opportunity to get screened. Al also opened a computer center this year to help bridge the rural-urban digital divide. Women, as well as adolescent girls and boys, will continue to earn SoCCs by tutoring children in computer skills and homework three times a week.
In collaboration with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), SoCCs have been helping to ensure food security for 200 women and their families in Tamil Nadu. This year, the cattle loan programs in Villipuram and Illipur are set to reach complete sustainability, as the interest payment on microloans are used to pay for SoCCs redemption items. In Illipur, the number of loan beneficiaries has increased as well. With the close of the microcredit bank program, the accumulated interest from those loans will go toward a new program that promotes gardens with green leafy vegetables. These gardens will advance improved nutrition and fetch a higher selling rate in local and regional markets. MSSRF and AI offer loans to rehabilitate wells and purchase cattle in return for SoCCs earned. Our program has also organized women into cooperative Milk Producer Companies which are eligible for technical assistance from the government across many local villages.
In 2017, AI started a new project with Shramjivi Janata Sahayak to promote childcare and education for 540 members of low-income rural communities in ten hamlets of Maharashtra, India. This year, the SoCCs program in tribal villages has increased government agencies’ responsiveness to local needs. The village of Tol sanctioned a drinking water pipeline and a concrete approach-road after repeated petitions by our members. These members earned SoCCs for their petitions and ultimately changed the lives of villagers who previously had to commute along a dirt road linking Tol to a local town. In the village of Nandgaon, 18 families received small kitchen-garden and housing plots from government schemes and 38 families received housing. Program participants in Dasgaon attended their first gram panchayat (local village governance) meeting for which they earned SoCCs and presented a written formal demand, requesting mats for children to be used in the village hall. 114 more families successfully petitioned the government for basic rights and our local partner ran an awareness campaign to reduce the incidence of child marriage.
Kumasi, Ghana
SoCCs for Market Women and Schools

Our SoCCs program with Women’s Health to Wealth and WomenStrong International in Kumasi, Ghana, has been one of our most successful programs yet. Market women have deposited and saved a total of 48,000 USD in the bank and loan disbursals have increased to 41,000 USD. SoCCs have formed a sense of community among market women who previously did not interact substantially. Participating members have also organized a community watch, which includes a monthly council meeting to address issues that affect the market women and come up with solutions to those problems. In the Junior High School SoCCs program, 1,022 girls from 25 schools are currently enrolled in Girls’ Clubs and the program has reached over 10,000 students through attendance at educational meetings. Additionally, school age pregnancies and dropouts have been almost entirely eradicated. The retention rate for the most recent academic year is 98.4% and the program received very positive feedback from teachers and government education officers across many local villages.
AI teamed up with the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) and Delhi Ruaab, a women’s garment producer company, to improve workers’ productivity and increase revenue for 350 women. This year, SoCCs have also mobilized community leaders to demand efficient and effective local governance. Women earn SoCCs for running signature campaigns and submitting petitions to the local government and redeem them for mobile recharge cards, bicycles (increased mobility), LED lights, and computer classes. In response to petitions by Ruaab SEWA’s mohalla (community) leaders, a community toilet and several trash bins have been installed in the Ashok Nagar area by the Delhi Municipal Corporation.
AI partnered with SEWA in Ahmedabad to overcome significant issues of viral and water-borne disease, lack of hygiene awareness and low school attendance rates. With the generous support of the PepsiCo Foundation, SoCCs have been implemented for waste management, attending medical camps and sending children to school, with 200 SoCCs participants. This year, SEWA and AI expanded the program to form ten Self-Help groups in eight areas of Ahmedabad and expanded programming to include measures to create a cohesive community among diverse ethnic and religious groups that often clash over neighborhood issues. The program empowers local women to act as mediators among their neighbors, maintain neighborhood cleanliness, and resolve quarrels for SoCCs. AI also supports interfaith celebrations to foster religious understanding and organizes games and activities for neighborhood children.

SEWA Ahmedabad
CFD Ahmedabad

Working with the Center for Development (CFD) in Ahmedabad, AI provides a safe space for adolescent girls at the Kadam Resource Center (KRC). At the center, girls can learn about socially taboo topics such as self-defense, puberty and menstruation. Girls who attend the center then pass on their learned knowledge to others in the community for SoCCs. This year, 230 girls benefitted from the program, many of whom had previously been entirely unable to read or write. Of the 30 girls who were trained directly through the center, 20 have shown marked progress in their final examination grades, three of whom joined the center after dropping out of school. All of these students are now planning to obtain degrees in higher secondary education.
Dakshini Prayash

SoCCs have been implemented for 150 children in Dakshini Prayash, a primary school in Kolkata. The local neighborhood is plagued with issues of alcoholism, domestic violence and pollution. SoCCs were introduced to improve engagement with students and their families, with SoCCs earned for good class behavior, cleanliness and attendance. Students have also participated in cleaning up community spaces.
This year we were honored to host the Eighth United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at our most successful gala yet. Secretary-General Ban presented the Award For Women’s Empowerment in his name to Gloria Steinem, Eva Haller and Yue-Sai Kan. Secretary-General Ban and these three amazing honorees have contributed so much to women’s empowerment and Asia Initiatives will continue to pursue that legacy in all of our SoCCs projects.

“Women’s rights are essential to each of the three pillars of the UN: peace and security, development and human rights. We must keep fighting until [women’s] rights are respected all over the world. We must keep fighting for a shared, equitable, sustainable future.”

- Ban Ki-moon
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FINANCIAL STATEMENT

TOTAL INCOME

2016 $156,411
2015 $247,058

2017 INCOME

$317,929.70
15% Foundations/Corporate Sponsorships
12.5% Consulting Revenue
72.5% Individual Donations

2017 EXPENDITURE

$157,507.15
11% Fundraising,
12% Salaries,
8% Admin,
69% Programming
Network & Partners

Field Partners
Shohratgarh Environmental Society (SES), Uttar Pradesh, India
Friends of the Doon Society (FODS), Madhya Pradesh, India
Centre For Development (CFD), Ahmedabad, India
Kadam Resource Center for Girls (KRCG), Ahmedabad, India
Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), India
Women’s Health to Wealth (WHW), Kumasi, Ghana
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai, India
Deendayal Trust, Maharashtra, India
Shramjivi Janata Sahayak Mandal, Maharashtra, India
Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan, Bundelkhand, India
Save Indian Farmers (SIF), Maharashtra, India
SEWA Ruaab, Delhi, India

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