



## The Language of Resilience

Annual Report 2019-2020

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# Welcome to Sambhali U.S.

Translating your support into  
the **language of resilience**



Rajasthan is renowned for its vast deserts and its breathtaking cultural and historic landmarks. But it also bears the distinction as one of the worst places in the world to be born female. Cultural, social, legal, and financial barriers stifle opportunities for women, forcing many to live in poverty and physical danger.

Yet the women of Rajasthan are **resilient**, and they are fighting back. With your help, we are supporting programs that empower Rajasthani women and girls to transform their lives.

# Our mission

The mission of Sambhali U.S. is to support the courageous women and girls of Rajasthan, India who seek to raise their voices with **dignity and self-confidence**, build a road to **economic independence**, and ultimately determine **their own destinies**.

We invite you to explore, through this first annual report of Sambhali U.S., how this mission is coming to life.

# From the President of Sambhali U.S.

In the fall of 2019, seven people came together to launch Sambhali U.S. In this, our first annual report, we cover the period from our birth through the end of 2020, those initial months when a child begins to tell the world who she is, to tell her story.

For Sambhali U.S., we learned to speak the **language of resilience**. We learned this language from the women and girls in the Sambhali Trust programs we support. Facing a gauntlet of discrimination based on gender, caste, poverty—and now a pandemic—they raise their voices over those barriers to claim control over their lives.

In this report, you will hear the language of resilience shouted by the first girls in their families to go to college and whispered by a woman who finds the courage to call a helpline after she is beaten by her husband. It is a language you'll hear taught with pride by a teacher at an empowerment center.

And you will hear the language of resilience spoken closer to home as Sambhali U.S. grew and thrived. Hitting a pandemic less than six months after we started might have stopped another infant organization, but not you—the volunteers and donors who banded together to step up for Rajasthani women and girls.

Led by our Board or Directors, now eleven members strong, today we are a family of volunteers and donors from across the United States who believe every woman should be able to raise her voice and determine her own destiny—and who have taken action to make that belief a reality.

Working together through five committees, we have built the infrastructure for our future as reflected in our GuideStar Gold rating.

Your generosity reached women's empowerment centers and primary education centers; it sustained survivors of gender-based violence, educated teens, and responded to the pandemic. With gratitude, we guard your generosity carefully. Ninety-two percent of our expenditures go directly to programs in India. And in response to the pandemic, we quickly reallocated funds to where they were most needed and could be used most effectively.

Together we have begun the narrative of Sambhali U.S. It is a story written in the language of resilience, a language that is understood from the state of Alaska to the state of Rajasthan, and one that binds us all to this work.

Please continue to join with us—to speak the language—in any way you can.

With abundant gratitude,



Shereen Arent



# With your help, Sambhali U.S.:

- Supports empowerment of women and girls in Rajasthan
- Funds grassroots programs to improve the lives of Rajasthani women
- Connects U.S. volunteers with programs in Rajasthan
- Translates our belief in the community benefits of gender equality to stories of resilience



“I went to school until seventh grade. . . . One day [my elder brother] announced that [my sister and I] should no longer go to school and that we should get married instead. . . . However, we were able to go to Fatima Empowerment Center of Sambhali Trust, where we learn English and embroidery. This keeps us away from an early marriage. Education has always been my dream.”  
-Zara

# The Projects We Support

## An Introduction

The enormous struggles that women and girls face in Rajasthan begin even before birth.

The ratio of 888 females to 1,000 males, nearly the greatest disparity in India, reflects ingrained gender-based discrimination and violence that manifests in sex-selective abortions and female infanticide.

As girls grow up, they continue to face steep educational, cultural, physical, and economic barriers to progress in Rajasthan. Few finish secondary school and in rural areas a full two-thirds of women are illiterate. In addition to marrying young, most have no say in whom they marry or where they live.

Once married, they often are isolated living with their in-laws, without access to support from friends and family. In a country where one in three women is subject to domestic violence, Rajasthani women frequently suffer physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse.

The majority of Rajasthani women do not work outside the home, deepening their financial dependence on their husbands.

Steep Barriers for  
Rajasthani Women  
and Girls

**16%**  
FINISH SECONDARY  
SCHOOL

**57%**  
ARE ILLITERATE

**19**  
AVERAGE AGE OF  
MARRIAGE

Sambhali U.S. funds grassroots programs that give women and girls the tools to break the cycle of hopelessness and helplessness. As you will see in the following pages, with your support women and girls are accessing education and training opportunities that provide them with the knowledge and skills they need for financial autonomy.

You'll read of how these programs also enhance women's self-esteem, sense of community, and independence, so they can raise their voices and determine their own destinies. And you will learn that even in the face of COVID-19 as we worked closely with Sambhali Trust to reallocate funds so they could be most effective in the changing circumstances, we were able to stay true to these principles.





# Sheerni Boarding Home: Finding an Oasis



Sambhali Trust's Sheerni Boarding Home serves 25 girls ages 12-20. They come primarily from the village of Setrawa in the Thar Desert and surrounding smaller villages, an area of abject poverty where it is common for inhabitants to live in huts with no running water or electricity.

## Many rural children do not attend

school and face a future of child marriage, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Sheerni Boarding Home provides them with an oasis in that desert that can lead to a brighter alternative path.

The boarding home emphasizes academic excellence along with developing self-esteem and leadership skills as avenues to greater independence.

Girls who live at Sheerni attend a private secondary school or college in Jodhpur. They live at the boarding home with a housemother and tutors assist them with their studies. They also have instruction in self-defense, computer literacy, and sewing, and workshops on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, women's history, legal rights, geography, and the environment. While Sambhali U.S. does not sponsor individual girls, the generosity of Sambhali U.S. donors translated to opportunities for six girls in the Sheerni family in 2020.

Sheerni temporarily closed in March 2020 during the country-wide pandemic lockdown, reopening in the summer for girls who needed to take board exams and then for all girls in October. Because the Jodhpur schools were providing only remote instruction, Sambhali Trust worked with international funders, including Sambhali U.S., to purchase computers and provide the computer instruction needed so the girls could continue with their studies.



## *A Prayer of Hope*



Nearly a decade ago, in the desert village of Solankiya Tala, a young girl's family approached Govind Rathore, the founder of Sambhali Trust, to ask that he take their seven-year-old daughter. The family felt that the girl, born with a condition that caused one leg to be shorter than the other, would be of no use for carrying out the tasks all girls are meant to take on. They'd never even given her a real name. The family called her Chauthi (fourth) simply because she was the fourth child, and harsher still, Khodi which means "one-legged."

Govind brought her to the Sheerni Boarding House and gave her a new name, Prarthna, which means "prayer."\* When she arrived at Sheerni, Prarthna spoke only the local Rajasthani dialect, no Hindi, no English. She said that she did not know how to learn. But in fact, she proved **resilient**. The Trust arranged for medical treatment for her condition, which still impacts her life. In March 2020, the Trust facilitated special accommodations, to have another girl write for her, so Prarthna could sit for school exams. But the exams were delayed until late June because of the pandemic and, under those circumstances, bringing in the additional girl was not possible. Undaunted, Prarthna passed with a First Division (A) score! Inspired by other young women living at Sheerni, Prarthna now dreams of becoming a lawyer. With Sambhali Trust providing the support for her education, that dream can become a reality.

\*All names of minors have been changed, but the spirit of the name was retained.

*Contributed by Nancy Brandt, Photographers Without Borders*

## *Rooted in Tradition and Growing in Education*

Born nineteen years ago in a rural village in India's Thar Desert, Manya and Saanvi faced a path that would have them married by now, with children, and barely literate. But they embarked on a different journey.

When they were eleven years old, Manya and Saanvi left their village, their families, and everything familiar to them to head to the city of Jodhpur and the Sheerni Boarding Home. In doing so, they bravely forged new paths for themselves, breaking from the patterns established by the generations before them. At Sheerni, they attended a good school, received tutoring, and participated in workshops that exposed them to global issues and concerns. With the other Sheerni girls, they built a true sisterhood. Their dreams grew every year as they achieved not just book learning, but the confidence to raise their voices - and the belief that their voices matter.

As 2020 began, Manya and Saanvi prepared for the board exams that would determine not only whether they would graduate from high school, but also whether they would be the first girls in their families to go to college. Then the pandemic hit and the exams were postponed. In the strict Indian lockdown, they had to leave the boarding home, losing access to books and teachers during the three-month gap until they finally were able to sit for the exams. Then came the wait for results, along with the knowledge that fewer than a third of all students pass these exams. Their perseverance and hard work paid off. Not only did they pass, but they both received highest marks. Today, Manya and Saanvi are flourishing in college.



# Forging a Future Through Empowerment and Education



Lack of education is a primary impediment to self-determination for Rajasthani women. A range of factors, including family values, economic priorities, and logistical constraints, keep many young children—especially girls—from attending school. As a result, less than half of Rajasthani women are literate. In 2020, Sambhali U.S. funded programs run by Sambhali Trust to help address this gender disparity.

# Women's Empowerment Centers

Women's Empowerment Centers provide vocational training in sewing and embroidery along with classes in Hindi, English, math, and self-defense for women and teenage girls who have had very little formal education.

Participants also attend workshops on a wide range of topics including health, the environment, gender-based violence, international women's rights, and how to set up a small business.

In addition to practical training and education, the Empowerment Centers serve as a haven where women can bond with others facing similar life challenges and build support networks.

At the end of the program, each graduate receives a sewing machine, a practical and essential tool to help her continue on the road to economic self-sufficiency.



# Primary Education Centers



Targeting the education deficit in teenagers and adult women alone will not break the crushing cycle of poverty in Rajasthan.

This is why Sambhali U.S. also supported five of Sambhali Trust's Primary Education Centers, which focus on early intervention with young children. After identifying primary-school-age children who are not attending school, Sambhali Trust staff talk with their parents about the importance of education and invite them to participate.



The Primary Education Centers offer these children a path into the education system by providing remedial programs that teach basic skills so they can enter school, followed by ongoing tutorial assistance to help them thrive once there. The Centers also incorporate educational workshops and medical check-ups, as well as washing facilities for those children who have no water supply at home.

# With Your Generous Assistance

Sambhali U.S. provided financial support in 2020 for:

2 Empowerment Centers

Fatima and Setrawa

5 Primary Education Centers

*Abhaya, Fatima, Jodpur, Laadli, and Setrawa*





# *Gaining Mastery*

## *From a Sparkle to Empowerment*

Monica was forced to leave school at the age of 12 when her father could afford to send only one child—her brother—to school.

She heard about the Empowerment Centers from a family member and decided to go to learn how to sew. Monica recalls that when she first began she was very shy, didn't make eye contact, and barely spoke to anyone. Gradually, with the support of the staff and her fellow students, she discovered that she had a "sparkle."

Monica progressed through secondary school, went to college, and earned a degree in hotel management. She has worked both in hotel management and as a staff member at Sambhali Trust, serving as a tutor in one of the boarding homes and presenting the Aadarsh ("Ideal") program for teens in Jodhpur schools.

And is she still shy? "No," she says with a sparkling smile, "now I am empowered!"



## *The Joy of Helping*



Asha is the headteacher in the Fatima Primary Education Center and the Fatima Empowerment Center.

A former teacher in Jodhpur schools, she gets tremendous satisfaction from her work at Sambhali Trust and says that before she came, "I totally lost my identification of who I am, I am only a wife at home and mother of children." Sambhali Trust is where she finds inspiration and gratification doing what she loves by sharing her knowledge and skills.

Asha described a woman who had been attending the Empowerment Center for only one month. Totally illiterate, with an alcoholic and violent husband, the woman came to the Empowerment Center because she wanted to prove herself, earn money, and learn. She was soon mastering the subjects and her life was already changing. And Asha, who came to Sambhali Trust because she wants to give back to her community, feels proud to have a positive impact on women's lives.

# Nirbhaya Helpline: Aiming to Be Fearless



In 2019, the state of Rajasthan ranked second in the country in the number of reported crimes against women, including rape, sexual harassment, kidnapping, dowry harassment, and domestic violence. To address this desperate situation, Sambhali U.S. supported Sambhali Trust’s Nirbhaya (“Fearless”) project to help prevent gender-based violence and provide support for survivors. Since 2014, the Nirbhaya toll-free helpline has provided direct assistance to survivors, helping them contact the police and access legal, social, and mental health counseling services.

## Gender-based violence soared

during the pandemic fueled by the lockdown and economic and social pressures. Led by an increase in domestic violence, reported crimes against women in Rajasthan more than doubled in May.

In response, Sambhali U.S. funded a three-month pilot expansion of Nirbhaya, which enabled the Trust to increase its counseling services by hiring a psychologist and a lawyer. During the pilot period of October to December, Nirbhaya provided direct assistance to over 170 women, including psychological counseling, legal support, and connections to other services. They conducted an education and outreach effort that included 14 legal and mental health workshops and ten door-to-door campaigns passing out leaflets informing the community about gender-based violence and how to get help.

The work and results of the Nirbhaya project so resonated that both BBC and CNN featured it, including [this inside look](#) at the work of Sambhali Trust psychologist Abiliasha Chouhan.



“

Many women don't even understand if domestic violence is violence or not. They think that it's very normal so we have to change their mindset. Because of these counseling sessions [the women we work with] are now feeling very empowered and they are very confident and secure enough and hopeful enough that they would fight for their legal rights.

Shivani Singh  
Sambhali Trust lawyer for Nirbhaya

”

# Two Stories of Rescue

## The woman on the phone was desperate.

Crying hysterically, she told the Nirbhaya Helpline worker that her husband and father-in-law, who would not let her leave the house, were mistreating and beating her. The abuse was getting worse and all she wanted to do was to return to her home of origin. The Nirbhaya worker contacted the police, and together they escorted the distraught woman and her newborn child to her father's house, where they were able to find safety and security.



## The caller said that she had left her abusive husband four years

before. But now, due to the lockdown, he had lost his job and tracked her down, repeatedly harassing her for money and physically abusing her if she refused. As a final provocation, he took her children from her parents' house without her permission. Nirbhaya staff offered her psychological counseling and legal assistance. The woman was then able to stand up to her husband, who returned the children and has stopped harassing her.

Gender-based crimes in  
India in 2019

**110.4/100,000**

**in Rajasthan**

**61.3/100,000**

**nationwide**

Source: National Crime Record Bureau  
"Crime in India 2019"

# Aadarsh: Reaching for the Ideal

Aadarsh (“ideal” in Hindi), a secondary school-based program run by Sambhali Trust, educates students in Jodhpur on the physical and psychological effects of puberty.

From December 2019 through March 2020 Sambhali U.S. provided funding for the program, which covers topics such as the reproductive system, menstruation, internet safety, sexual harassment, and mental health issues.

Aadarsh reaches young people whose lack of information renders them vulnerable. The aim is to help youth develop healthy relationships and avoid dangerous situations. Through this program, not only do girls and boys learn basic information about sexuality and puberty, but they also learn to treat members of the opposite gender with respect.

During the period of Sambhali U.S. funding, Aadarsh provided 19 workshops that reached over 500 children.



“

After the workshop they talk to me and they want to learn more and more and they say please can you come back next year? And sometimes they get our number so if they have a problem they can come to us.

Vimlesh Solanki  
Teacher, on students' response to  
Aadarsh

”

# A True Test of Resilience

## Responding to COVID-19



The strict nationwide lockdown that occurred in March 2020 upended not only the lives of the women and girls of Rajasthan but also the programs funded by Sambhali U.S. to serve them. In mid-March, the Empowerment Centers, Primary Education Centers, Sheerni boarding home, and school programs such as Aadarsh were temporarily suspended. The Nirbhaya helpline was able to remain open as services were provided remotely. Meanwhile, Sambhali Trust transformed itself into a highly efficient and effective relief organization reaching desperately poor people living in rural villages in the Thar Desert who had lost all means of income because of the lockdown. In these remote villages, families live in basic huts with no electricity and must collect water from a well.

## Sambhali Trust moved the center

of its operations to a rural area near the village of Setrawa and provided food and aid to the starving residents in the area.

As temperatures soared to highs of 120 degrees, Govind Rathore, Founder and Director of Sambhali Trust, with his staff and volunteers engaged in outreach to assess the needs in these areas. Govind described the people they found as they began walking down the dusty desert roads:

"Each family has five or six family members and sometimes even more. Those who are ill, homeless, people who are widows, no children, and mentally ill are most vulnerable. We are trying to reach them through the teams which go to the field to distribute soap, tell people of the COVID-19, distribute food and other necessities, and at the same time find out more about the individual families."

### Results

- Supplied 566 families with food and other necessities
- Reached over 1,140 families with health education and soap
- Connected more than 250 families who had cell phones to a WhatsApp group so they could access updates and verified health information







**When the lockdown was lifted,** and women were able to return to the Empowerment Centers, they used their sewing skills to produce face masks that were donated to first responders, quarantine centers, laborers, people who are unhoused, and those reached through the Nirbhaya Project. Working with local authorities, Sambhali Trust created and promoted a campaign to increase mask usage in Jodhpur.

Sambhali Trust also used the time before the empowerment centers and boarding homes could reopen for staff training and development, including preparing staff to take over tasks previously handled by international volunteers as it would be a long time before they could return in significant numbers.

## *A Story of Salvation*



The COVID-19 pandemic deepened and intensified the financial crisis that many rural Rajasthani women already were experiencing. Chikley, a widow who lives alone, suffered a broken hip two years ago that left her with limited mobility. Her house was falling apart; when it rained, water poured through the ceiling. Located by Sambhali Trust during its relief efforts, Chikley received much needed sustenance not only through regular food rations but also assistance repairing her home. She now can look forward to a brighter future.

# Responding in Support

On Sun, 5 Apr 2020, 5:21 pm Shereen Arent,  
Dear Govind, Corinne, and Ernestine,

I hope you all are well.

I'm pleased to report that the Sambhali U.S. Board has enthusiastically voted to provide funding for Sambhali's Fight Against COVID-19 with a grant of \$5248.

To streamline the process given the emergency nature of the need we have worked to make the process for Sambhali Trust to write a grant proposal. Rather, attach

The Sambhali U.S. board moved quickly to approve emergency grants for the relief efforts and to reallocate funds from programs that were temporarily closed to where they were most urgently needed. Funding from Sambhali U.S. enabled the Trust to provide food and other necessities to 200 families for one month and to produce 5,000 face masks. We understood that this was a time to pivot our financial support with the needs of the region as identified by the Trust.

# The Sambhali U.S. Team

With no paid staff, Sambhali U.S. relies entirely on our volunteer Board of Directors and others who generously lend their skills and talents to make the organization a success. During 2020, our ranks of board and committee members, interns, and other volunteers grew to over 30 passionate souls, adding decades of expertise in fundraising, communications, volunteer engagement, and non-profit management.

## The Sambhali U.S. Leadership

Since our first meeting in October 2019, the Sambhali U.S. Board of Directors has grown from seven members to the current roster of eleven.

Seven of our Board members have either visited Sambhali Trust's centers in India or have completed a minimum ten-week volunteer engagement with the Trust. One member has family in Jodhpur.

Collectively, these professional and on-the-ground experiences provide the Sambhali U.S. leadership with a greater understanding of how best to support programs in Rajasthan and to direct funds to achieve the greatest impact.

As a team, the Board of Directors also shares a commitment to responsible and transparent management. This is reflected in the gold ranking we have earned with the charity rating organization GuideStar.

## Leading With Experience

Collectively the members of the Board bring rich and diverse experience including:

**70+**

YEARS IN NON-PROFIT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

**60+**

YEARS IN MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

**40+**

YEARS IN VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

**70+**

YEARS OF LEGAL EXPERIENCE

# Members of the Board

## Officers

### **Shereen Arent**

President; Chair of Executive and Governance & Board Development Committees

Shereen is a lawyer with decades of executive and leadership experience with large and small nonprofit organizations along with over 30 years of legal experience focused on discrimination law and health policy. She spent four months volunteering on-site at Sambhali Trust over the course of two years.

### **Eleanor Brtva**

Vice-President; Chair of the Development Committee

Elly has a Master in Public Health and has devoted 20+ years to the philanthropic world serving as a senior staff member of several national and international voluntary health agencies, museums, and universities, raising over \$100 million for various causes.

### **Amanda Frisco**

Secretary

With a Master of Social Service, Amanda has been involved in the nonprofit world since 2007 with a focus on low-income families. She has been supporting Sambhali Trust's efforts since 2014 when she spent three months there as a volunteer.

### **Esther Pujol Rodriguez**

Treasurer; Chair of the Finance Committee

A Certified Public Accountant, Esther has provided accounting services, including internal audit, compliance, process improvement, cost optimization, and other risk consulting projects to Fortune 500 companies, small private entities, and nonprofit organizations. She also served as the chief financial officer for several organizations in the government contracting arena and nonprofit sector. In February 2020, Esther visited Sambhali Trust.

# Members of the Board

## Directors

### **Sarah Ahmad Abedin**

Chair of the Volunteer Engagement Committee

An MBA and an Information Technology and Cybersecurity expert, Sarah has worked as an IT auditor, consultant, and information security specialist in both the public and private sectors and has applied those skills in the non-profit arena. Sarah visited Sambhali Trust in March of 2020.

### **Donna Arons**

Donna is an attorney with extensive experience over the past two decades in civil rights, education, and employment law, and currently supervises complex appellate litigation. Her other volunteer work focuses on supporting immigrant families.

### **Dina Baker**

Dina has more than 35 years of experience in marketing, branding, and communication, with expertise in strategy development, new product development and launches, creativity, and bridge-building. She has always sought to bring these capabilities to mission-driven organizations, whether in her professional roles or in her pro bono work. She is a certified Strategic Communication Management Professional.

### **Carlea Bauman**

Carlea spent three decades working in politics and health advocacy. She has driven advocacy and communications efforts for diabetes and anti-tobacco organizations, run two start-up nonprofits in the cancer field, and worked on education and community engagement for a food allergy organization.

### **Laura Iwanyk**

Laura has a Master in Public Administration along with a Certificate in Nonprofit Administration and a background in archeological field and museum work. She currently works in academia, developing programs to enhance student interest and involvement in India. In 2014, she completed an administrative internship with Sambhali Trust, where she pursued her interests in women's empowerment and international relations.

### **Tanmay Juneja**

Tanmay has a Master in Business Administration and works in business strategy. He has supported non-profit organizations through fundraising, tutoring, and other events for fifteen years. His wife's family is from Jodhpur and Tanmay visited Sambhali Trust in the fall of 2019.

### **Ginka Poole**

Chair of the Communications Committee

Ginka brings 20+-years of photography and marketing experience to Sambhali U.S. In the past five years, she has been a freelance photographer, travel writer, and blogger. She recently began focusing on sustainable travel and supporting women-run businesses, especially those in marginalized communities. Ginka visited Sambhali Trust in March 2019.

# Volunteering for Sambhali U.S.

In addition to our Board of Directors, Sambhali U.S. operates through six committees that meet regularly, strategize, and work to advance our mission: Communications, Development, Executive, Finance, Governance and Board Development, and Volunteer Engagement.

Some highlights from 2019 and 2020 are:

## Communications

Created and executed a comprehensive strategic communications plan to enhance our social media presence, increase public awareness of our work, and engage key constituencies in the work of Sambhali U.S.

## Development

Designed a multi-pronged fundraising strategy that includes electronic and peer-to-peer fundraising, the groundwork for corporate and foundation grants, and expanding our donor base through cultivation events. The result: In 2019 and 2020, Sambhali U.S. far exceeded its initial fundraising goals.

## Volunteer Engagement

Developed an extensive orientation program for U.S. based volunteers and a separate program for volunteers going to India, created our internship program, and began establishing relationships with universities and other organizations to serve as sources for future volunteers.

Sambhali U.S. is fortunate to bring together a group of people who offer their talents, devotion, and considerable enthusiasm to further the mission of the organization. The passionate spirit of our volunteers is epitomized by Sarah Abedin, chair of the Volunteer Engagement Committee. In her own words:

"I am humbled, honored, and privileged to lead the Volunteer Engagement Committee of Sambhali U.S. Volunteers are the lifeblood of any organization and we have the best volunteers who are highly dedicated. I joined Sambhali U.S. in late December 2019 and had the privilege of visiting Sambhali Trust in February 2020. As a new organization, we are trying to establish some structure and in one year we have achieved quite a lot from having an online volunteer application form to a volunteer orientation program. Our goal is to invite volunteers who are inspired by the life-altering and situation-elevating experience of the courageous women and girls of Rajasthan, India."



Sarah (back right) with two Sambhali Trust boarding home girls.

# Meet Some of the Volunteers From Our Development Committee



**Shumaila Fatima:** "Being a part of Sambhali U.S. gives me the opportunity to do what I am most passionate about, that is contribute in any way to uplift and empower women."



**Tracy Lee:** "I've built a career as a professional fundraiser for nonprofits focusing on education, the environment, youth, and the arts. I became involved with Sambhali U.S. when a close friend introduced them to me, and I fell in love with their mission—teaching women skills, providing them independence, and educating them in a safe environment. I'm proud to serve on the Development Committee for Sambhali U.S. to support the girls and women of Rajasthan."



**Yvonne Lee:** "May the Sambhali women and girls continue to grow in their skills and dream big."

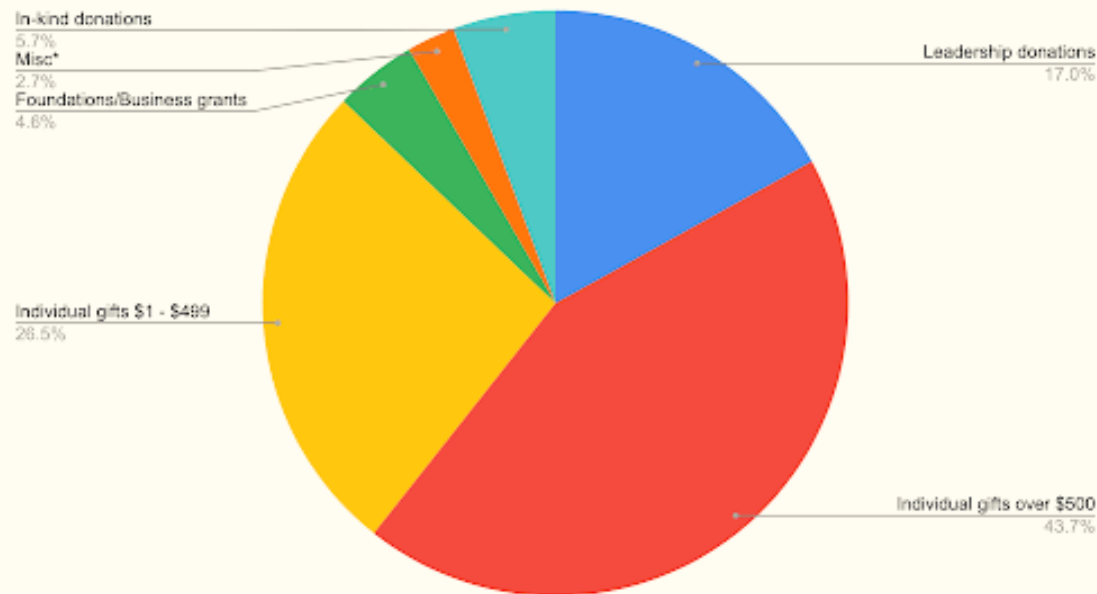


# Your Investment in Sambhali U.S. Funds

## Resilience in Rajasthan

At the Sambhali U.S. inaugural board meeting in October 2019, we identified our greatest challenges as prioritizing projects for funding and raising the money to support them. Lacking a track record, we assessed the funding streams identified to date and tentatively set a conservative fundraising goal of about \$20,000 for the remaining months of 2019, and about \$24,000 for 2020. At the same time, we approved several grants, the first of which began in December of that year.

Income 2019 and 2020



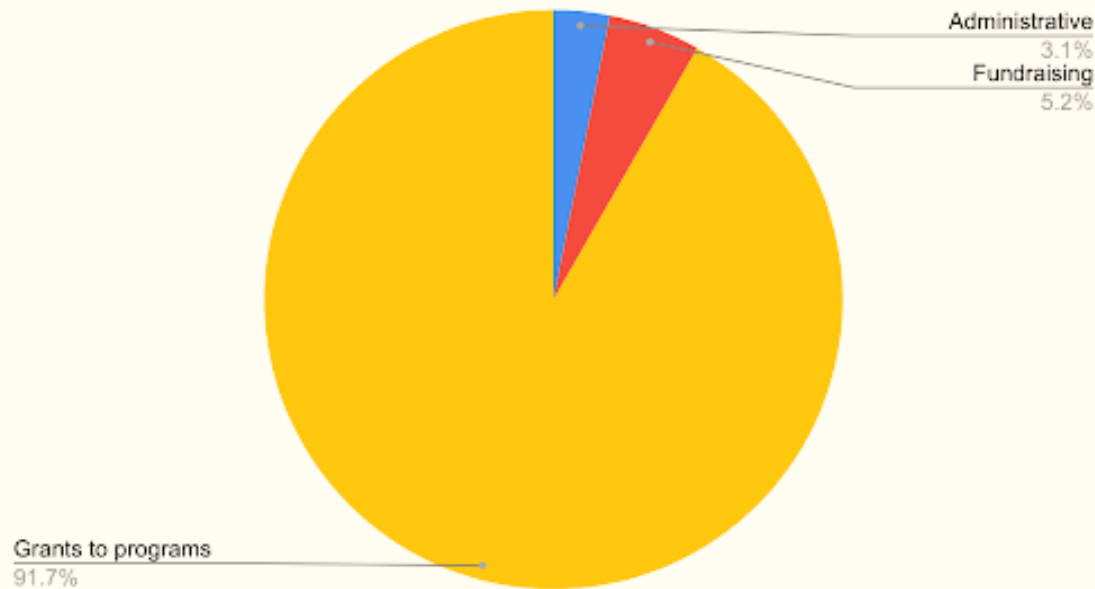
\* Misc includes funds from corporations/matching, membership organizations, and investment income.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, we greatly surpassed our initial targets. By the end of 2019, we had raised \$48,825. Despite the challenges posed by fundraising during a pandemic, our donors' generosity continued unabated and we shattered our original budget for 2020, raising \$82,905 during the year. In total, since the inception of our organization, we have raised \$131,730.

## Our combined administrative and fundraising expenses

in 2019 and 2020 totaled \$8,241, and 98% of these expenses were paid either by in-kind donations from volunteer leadership or through a corporate grant specific to administrative costs. Overall, 92% of our total expenditures thus far as an organization represent grants made to programs in Rajasthan.

Expenditures 2019 and 2020



Throughout Sambhali U.S.'s short existence, we have remained focused on ensuring that all of our donors' dollars have the greatest direct impact on women and girls in Rajasthan. We accomplish this because we are an all-volunteer organization that keeps overhead extremely low and is nimble enough to respond to changing conditions—even a pandemic—to ensure our donations remain targeted to where they can most effectively support our mission.

# Our Supporters' Commitment Fuels Resilience in Rajasthan

The generosity of our supporters has enabled Sambhali U.S. to promote critical programs in Rajasthan that have fundamentally improved the lives of women and girls in the region.

What moves people to contribute to Sambhali U.S.? Some are galvanized by the spirit of the women and girls we serve who are fighting against all odds to improve their lives, the lives of their children, and the lives of others in their community. Others have a mission to improve the living conditions of women globally. Some have a personal connection to Rajasthan or Sambhali Trust. And others are stirred by memories of strong women in their own past who have paved the way for a better life.

What inspires you to support Sambhali U.S.? On the following pages are moving stories of some of our donors. Perhaps theirs will resonate with your own.

## Generosity By the Numbers

Sambhali U.S.'s first  
15 months:

**350+**  
DONORS

**550+**  
TOTAL DONATIONS

**\$130,000+**  
RAISED

# *Giving to Sambhali U.S. Just Comes Naturally*

For Daniel Lorber and Deborah Lagana-Lorber, giving to others is just what you do. Dan said, “I grew up with charity being assumed, at every level.”

Their first connection to Sambhali U.S. was through a close friend on the Board of Directors. Dan describes how that friendship sparked their generosity: “When somebody I know, love, and trust for many years says ‘hey, I’m involved in this organization’ and it sounds interesting [then] I knew it was something I wanted to be involved with . . . it was logical. When Debbie and I looked it over, it was obvious this was an important need. “

Sambhali U.S.’s mission to empower women and girls hit home for Debbie: “I’m a former Girl Scout myself and was a Girl Scout leader. Women’s rights are very important to me. I was reading about Sambhali Trust and I’m very interested in all they are doing. It’s an amazing organization.”

Sambhali also touched Dan’s and Debbie’s professional lives. Dan, an endocrinologist, works with a large Indian-American community in New York and traveled to India in 2009 with the American Diabetes Association to deliver a series of professional lectures. His talks took him to Indian cities across the subcontinent, including Jaipur, a Rajasthani city not far from Sambhali Trust’s home in Jodhpur.



Debbie, a diabetes educator, wrote her master’s thesis on diabetes and female sexuality and speaks of how issues impacting women don’t get attention in the diabetes world, mirroring how the women and girls Sambhali serves are so often unseen.

Dan and Debbie seem almost embarrassed when thanked for their abundant generosity. They don’t get what the fuss is about. “It’s support for a friend who is making sure that good things happen,” Dan says. It’s just what you do.

# *A Needle That Helped Build a Family*

*In the words of Theresa Amato*

My paternal grandmother Teresa (Ricciardelli) Amato was a seamstress raised in Bracigliano, Italy, where, with an elementary school education, she taught young girls how to sew. In 1938, Teresa bravely left Mussolini's Italy without her husband, but with my father in her arms. She arrived in Illinois not knowing English, but her sewing skills landed her a factory job making men's suits. She continued to work for many years after her husband arrived to be able to send my father to medical school. Joseph J. Amato became chief of pediatric cardiothoracic surgery and a professor, inventing procedures and devices as he stitched the hearts of thousands of children.

As a child, I was my Nonna's go-to flower girl for elaborate Italian weddings where she often made the dresses of the bride and bridal party. Weekends under her watchful eyes were spent learning not only how to sew on buttons, but all the ways of the "bella figura." My dolls had hand-stitched Italian finery, though they lived in a cardboard shoebox. In high school, she warned me to "watch out for the badda boys," and conveyed a love so profoundly unconditional that I always felt safe. Nonna continued to make or alter many of the outfits I would wear for important occasions, even the suits I needed as a young lawyer going to court. She was still sewing when she passed away at age 87.

One of her last gifts was a quilt of fabric scraps from the outfits she had made for me over the years. She also made two baby girl dresses for the two great-granddaughters she would not live to see. How did she know I would have them?



**Clockwise from left: Teresa Amato in Italy, and making suits in Chicago; the author as a flower girl**

I contributed to Sambhali U.S. in memory of my grandmother, as a gift to her two great-granddaughters, and to thank and encourage the Board of Directors for their leadership to advance the dreams and empowerment of the women and girls in India. Fundamentally, I know how one seamstress, with courage, determination, hard work, and love, can provide a better life for generations of her family and so many others around the world.

# *Changing Lives Half a World Away, from a Lifestyle Brand in LA*

Two months volunteering at Sambhali Trust changed one woman's life in tremendous ways. Kristine Rodriguez, founder of the Latina lifestyle brand GRL Collective, returned from Rajasthan, India stronger and renewed. In gratitude, she committed herself to the women and girls who "taught me so much" with a special focus, and love, for the girls at the Sheerni Boarding home.



Kristine's LA-based lifestyle brand, GRL collective, sells jewelry, accessories, and clothing. The products promote social justice at home and make a big impact thousands of miles away. Twenty percent of the proceeds are donated to Sambhali U.S.

Giving back is important to Kristine because she believes "we were put on this earth to love and care for others. The girls at Sambhali have taught me so much. They are worthy of it all... and they deserve all that we can make available to them."

After her first visit to Sambhali Trust, GRL Collective organized other American volunteers to visit and Kristine has led two more trips, thus inspiring a new generation of supporters.

Kristine credits the women in her life, including her mom, sisters, and grandmother, for making her the person she is today. Because of their support, she understands firsthand how important it is to be there for other women and girls.



Thank you to **Photographers Without Borders** for many of the beautiful photographs throughout this annual report.

For more information about **Sambhali U.S.** visit our [website](#), sign up for our [newsletter](#), and follow us:

