



STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2023

 her
FUTURE

COALITION

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Her Future Coalition Strategic Plan 2021-2023

Executive Summary

Since 2005 Her Future has been creating powerful and positive change in the lives of survivors of gender violence and girls at the highest risk. We break the cycle of poverty and exploitation, by providing education – and a full range of services that support education – to survivors and the most vulnerable girls in India and Nepal.

Her Future Coalition is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works to provide shelter, education, and employment to survivors of gender violence. Our primary mission has always been to assist survivors of human trafficking in becoming and remaining free.

Today, human trafficking is the third-largest crime of the illicit economy, behind drugs and arms trafficking. In India alone, experts estimate that millions of women and children are victims of sex trafficking and forced labor.

Her Future Coalition believes passionately in collaboration as the only way to solve the world's biggest problems, and operates many programs in partnership with respected local agencies, with whom we have built relationships of trust over many years.

Our main program areas are:

Shelter: Her Future Coalition partners with local agencies to build, expand and maintain shelters for rescued girls.

Education: We have supported the education of 1000+ survivors and high risk children. Our sponsorships pay all expenses (at shelters or residential schools) from kindergarten through college.

Employment: We offer high quality employment and vocational training to survivors and high risk women, enabling them to get out of shelters, to live independently, to remain free and safe from exploitation, and to support their children.

Her Future Coalition has also been exploring the addition of trauma-informed mental health support to program participants, and this will be a focus going forward.

Over the next three years, Her Future Coalition has established the following **vision of success:**

- Girls are supported through and beyond the pandemic and remain free from trafficking
- Girls are completing their education and more girls are receiving education
- We have defined multiple pathways towards economic security
- Our organization has matured and created a stable base of funding.

The Plan: Her Future Coalition is guided by **four strategic goals** through 2023.

- 1.** Sustain Holistic Program Delivery--even as the world changes around us, we know it is critical to sustain a holistic and long-term investment in each of our program participants.
- 2.** Respond to Emerging Needs --the pandemic reshaped many aspects of our work and communities. Building up our capabilities to be responsive and innovative is critical to meeting the needs of our girls and delivering on our mission.
- 3.** Define Education and Training Focus--the pathway to a future of well-being and independence hinges on the educational and economic opportunities of our girls. Identifying and investing in our educational and training pathways anchor our strategic direction.
- 4.** Strengthen and Support Her Future Coalition Operations and Governance Support-- and grow our capabilities and approaches in governance, management, partnerships, and fundraising, to be as sustainable and effective as possible.

Under the leadership of founder and executive director Sarah Symons, with a strong staff in the US and India, and a governing board of ten, Her Future Coalition is poised to deepen and expand its impact on survivors of human trafficking and empower women to economic and personal freedom.

1. About Her Future Coalition

Introduction

Since 2005 Her Future has been creating powerful and positive change in the lives of survivors of gender violence and girls at the highest risk. We break the cycle of poverty and exploitation, by providing education – and a full range of services that support education – to survivors and the most vulnerable girls in India and Nepal.

Her Future Coalition is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works to provide shelter, education, and employment to survivors of gender violence. Our primary mission has always been to assist survivors of human trafficking in becoming and remaining free. The organizational model was created after asking leading women's shelters in Asia, "What do you need most?" In response, the answer always revolved around giving survivors safe, successful futures which would guard against re-victimization. While Her Future Coalition has made several tactical pivots over the years, our primary focus remains on education and employment as primary tools for women's independence.

History

The organization, formerly known as Made by Survivors, was founded by Sarah Symons and her husband John Berger in 2005. Sarah felt compelled to join the fight against human trafficking after seeing the documentary 'The Day My God Died,' which she described as both "deeply disturbing and incredibly inspiring." The film examined child sex trafficking between India and Nepal, and specifically looked at how survivors were bringing rescue agencies back into the brothels to save other girls. Following a period of research, Sarah contacted one of the organizations featured in the film and was invited to visit their shelter in Kathmandu. It was there that she got the idea for selling survivor-made goods as a way to fight slavery and help survivors rejoin society—as many survivors had been living at the shelter for years and were searching for opportunities to become independent. Soon after, John decided to leave his career as an investment banker and use his business strategy experience to help set up the organization.

While their initial target beneficiaries were survivors of human trafficking, Sarah and John quickly realized that survivors of human trafficking had overlapping needs with survivors of rape, child marriage, and domestic violence. Realizing this, they broadened their mission and services to include other forms of gender-based violence.

The focus of our initial employment program was selling textile products made by survivors in shelters, but in 2010 we shifted focus as we realized that the wages and opportunity provided by those programs were not enough to transform survivors' lives and get them permanently

out of the cycle of poverty and exploitation. Our team identified alternative training in higher skilled and higher wage (thus traditionally male) professions, such as a metalsmithing and jewelry design training program. Goldsmithing is a respected profession in India, traditionally done only by men. Because jewelry is a higher margin product, and goldsmithing is a harder to master skill, it leads to a higher, life-changing salary for the survivor/artisans.

In 2012, we launched our Shelter Programs, first by adding a floor to the Nijoloy shelter in Kolkata, and then in 2015, building an entire shelter for 150 survivors in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. In 2017, we launched three Resource Centers in red light areas of Kolkata, and soon after we changed our name from *Made By Survivors* to *Her Future Coalition*. This was due to feedback from the women in our programs who wished not to publicly identify themselves as survivors.

Our organization has always been about the future, not the past, of the women and girls we serve, and over the years the organization has served thousands of women across India, Nepal, Cambodia, and Thailand. ¹

Addressing Human Trafficking and Gender Violence

Today, human trafficking is the third-largest crime of the illicit economy, behind drugs and arms trafficking. Human trafficking has become one of the major concerns of the 21st century, with a rapid pace of growth under globalization's advent of increasingly free movement and trade. With 30-40 million people living in slavery, and 71% of all trafficking victims being women and girls, it is crucial to understand the scope of the issue in order to understand the value of Her Future Coalition's impact.

According to the United Nations' Palermo Protocol, "Trafficking in persons can be defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation should include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs."

In India alone, experts estimate that millions of women and children are victims of sex trafficking and forced labor. This number is intentionally vague, as reported cases only begin to address the scope of the issue and data varies widely between studies. We chose to focus on India, not only because of the internal prevalence of the issue, but also because women and girls, many other countries including Nepal, Thailand and Bangladesh, and even Europe and Africa, are subjected to sex trafficking in India.² The various purposes of human-trafficking include the trafficking in human

¹ Her Future Coalition (2018). Dining for Women Grant Application

² Najjar (2014). Human Trafficking in India

beings for "sexual exploitation, forced labor, services, slavery, entertainment, illegal activities, drug trafficking, servitude, removal of organs etc."³ In India, commercial sexual exploitation includes: forced prostitution, socially and religiously sanctioned forms of prostitution, sex tourism, pornography, pedophilia, massage parlors, and other related industries.

Programming

These dynamics have defined the scope of Her Future Coalition's mission, and continue to drive our work forward. In order to most effectively support female survivors of human trafficking, we offer shelter, education, and employment programs to survivors of gender violence and girls at the highest risk. The long term, intensive support that we provide enables them to recover from trauma, rejoin society, and build a bright future.

Her Future Coalition believes passionately in collaboration as the only way to solve the world's biggest problems, and operates many programs in partnership with respected local agencies, with whom we have built relationships of trust over many years.

Programming and Impact:

Shelter: Her Future Coalition partners with local agencies to build, expand and maintain shelters for rescued girls. Many survivors are never able to return home, either because their families were involved in trafficking them, because their families refuse to accept them back, or because their families cannot be found.

Education: We have supported the education of 1000+ survivors and high risk children. Our sponsorships pay for school fees, books, uniforms, tutoring, enrichments such as dance and art, and in many cases, room and board (at shelters or residential schools) from kindergarten through college.

Employment: We offer high quality employment and vocational training to survivors and high risk women, enabling them to get out of shelters, to live independently, to remain free and safe from exploitation, and to support their children. Our employment programs focus on skills that are hard to learn, and are thus more valuable and valued in their communities. These skills have generally been reserved for men, so in addition to the direct benefits of employment, this role-reversal helps to bring social change.

Her Future Coalition has also been exploring the addition of trauma-informed mental health support to program participants, and this will be a focus going forward.

Between 2015-2020, Her Future Coalition has reached the following milestones:

- Built a shelter housing 100+ girls a year in Jalpaiguri, North India - 2015

³ Najar (2014). Human Trafficking in India

- Added a third floor to the Jalpaiguri shelter, making room for vocational training and nonformal education (2017)
- Launched 3 Resource Centers in Kolkata red light areas, serving 325 women and children (2018-19)
- Supported an entire school for 275 survivors and high risk children in Kathmandu, Nepal (2017-18)
- Provided college education to 25+ survivors a year (ongoing)
- Provided primary and secondary school education to 250+ girls a year (ongoing)
- Launched and completed a training program for high risk Hill Tribe minority women in Chiang Rai, Thailand, eventually handing over the equipment and ownership of the project to the 10 trainees (2017-2018)
- Opened 2 new jewelry centers in India, providing vocational training, job and life skills, and economic opportunity to 25 survivors - (2016 and 2019)
- At the request of the survivors we serve, changed our name to better reflect our work and values (2018)
- Supported and co-managed vocational training in cooking/catering, blockprinting and sewing to 100+ survivors. Provided continuing financial support to the training programs (ongoing)
- Helped launch a middle school for 250 girls in an urban slum community of Kolkata (2019)
- Supported shelter care and building maintenance and expansion at Nijoloy Shelter in Kolkata, providing space for 100 survivors to live and learn (2019-2020)
- Supported the shelter of 50 survivors at Rescue Foundation Shelters in Mumbai and Boisar (2019-present)
- Supported a project serving 125 street children in Kolkata (2020)
- Helped to launch a school in a village of Nepal with an extremely high trafficking rate, in partnership with a survivor who we have sponsored for the last 8 years, and who has co-written a book about her life with our founder Sarah Symons
- Provided COVID emergency food packets, feeding 1000+ people for several months during COVID lockdowns.

These accomplishments mark the growth and impact of Her Future Coalition, and hint at what's possible in the future. Though this planning process began in 2019 and was meant to take effect in 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact in 2020, HFC focused on ensuring basic needs and supports were in place to help survivors weather the worst impacts of the pandemic. Board and staff have worked to ensure relevancy and this strategic plan defines goals for 2021-2023 and puts forth an inspiring and attainable vision for the organization and its future impact.

2. Vision of Success

Over the next three years, Her Future Coalition has established the following vision of success that will help board and staff know we are accomplishing our goals:

- Girls are supported through and beyond the pandemic and remain free from trafficking
- Girls are completing their education and more girls are receiving education
- We have defined multiple pathways towards economic security
- Our organization has matured and created a stable base of funding.

3. Strategic Orientation

Her Future Coalition seeks to sustain existing programming, while increasing support that helps survivors heal from trauma and increase economic and vocational opportunities.

4. Strategic Goals

Her Future Coalition is guided by four strategic goals through 2023.

1. Sustain Holistic Program Delivery

Even as the world changes around us, we know it is critical to sustain a holistic and long-term investment in each of our program participants.

2. Respond to Emerging Needs

The pandemic reshaped many aspects of our work and communities. Building up our capabilities to be responsive and innovative is critical to meeting the needs of our girls and delivering on our mission.

3. Define Education and Training Focus

The pathway to a future of well-being and independence hinges on the educational and economic opportunities of our girls. Identifying and investing in our educational and training pathways anchor our strategic direction.

4. Strengthen and Support Her Future Coalition Operations and Governance

Support and grow our capabilities and approaches in governance, management, partnerships, and fundraising, to be as sustainable and effective as possible.

5. Strategic Questions to Explore

During the planning process, as Her Future Coalition board and staff explored how we can have the greatest impact and be sustainable for the long term, we identified several questions that could not be resolved in a one-year planning period.

These questions arise because the organization is often presented with new opportunities for partnerships and programs, because a need is identified, our services were requested, or funding becomes available. This plan provides us with a means for evaluating these opportunities and seizing on those most in line with our vision and goals. However, to make the strongest choices, some areas need more time for research and testing. By the end of this three-year period, we hope to answer these three questions, and use the information we gather to shape and guide subsequent years.

1. Should Her Future Coalition focus exclusively or primarily, on Education?
2. What kinds of employment and vocational training are most effective and sustainable?
3. In what ways should Her Future strengthen its governance and management structure and fundraising capacity to be most sustainable and effective?

Appendix

1. Planning Process Overview

Strategic Planning Timeline and Overview

Organizational Assessment & Situational Analysis (July – August 2019)

Document review:

- Document review (board minutes, financials/budget, past strategic documents, program descriptions, grant applications, marketing materials and evaluations)
Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback
- Survey of board
- Survey of staff
- Survey of funders and community partners
- Subset of interviews with executive leadership, board and staff, and partners
- Secondary review of feedback surveys from clients

Deliverable: Situational Analysis Report or PPT

- Brief report and PowerPoint presentation highlighting:
 - Internal critical issues, strengths and areas to build on
 - External threats and opportunities
 - Bright ideas and best practices

Strategic Planning (September 2019–October 2020)

Planning Committee

- Committee of 4 members made up of board and staff leadership
- Informed strategic planning process
- Reviewed and provided feedback on final draft of plan

Board and Staff Retreat

- A virtual retreat to review key findings from situational analysis
- Revisited mission, vision and values
- Identified strategic orientation for next 3 years
- Identified 4 strategic goals
- Began to flesh out objectives and actions

Final Plan and Presentation (December 2020)

- Written narrative strategic plan (overview of process, highlights from org assessment and stakeholder engagement, introduction to plan, plan content through strategic goals and objectives)
- Strategic Framework and Program Overview

Supporting Content

Supporting content available to this narrative strategic plan includes:

- Strategic Framework for 2021-2023, and Program Overview
- Situational Analysis Powerpoint
- Interview Summaries
- Stakeholder Survey summaries
- Matrix of similar organizations and best practices
- Supporting document addressing thematic overlap
- Human Trafficking and Politics in India Report

2. Shared Strategic Planning Language

To help support readers of this plan, here is the shared lexicon that was used by Her Future Coalition Staff and Board members to organize the components of Her Future Coalition's strategic plan.

Definitions

Values: Moral compass that drives Her Future Coalition's organizational culture and decision-making. "What you stand for."

Vision: Guiding image of success formed in terms of a contribution to those we represent or serve.

Mission: A succinct statement of Her Future Coalition's reason for being that communicates who we are, what we hope to achieve for whom, and through what means

Strategic Orientation: These statements guide organizational development and serve to unify and align organizational effort.

Priorities/Goals: Broad statements that describe the intended result or direction for specific organizational activities

Objective: A measurable step toward achieving a goal.

Action Steps/Activities: Specific activities that must take place to achieve objectives

3. Organizational Structure

Her Future Coalition, as part of the strategic planning process, outlined the roles of the current staffing and board model.

Staffing & Board Model

- **Board Chair** – Oversees Board. Oversees strategic vision in collaboration with the Executive Director. Schedules and runs Board meetings and engages Board members to participate in calls, events, fundraising, etc.
- **Board Members** – Passionate and connected about cause and committed to the core mission. Stay current and engaged on HFC so that they can provide resources, connections, and educated votes that advance our mission. Raise funds through events, personal appeals, campaigns, introductions to foundations/corporations, etc.
- **Executive Director** – (Sarah Symons) Oversees all aspects of the organization and programs. Responsible for maintaining and enacting the vision, in collaboration with the Board, staff and key volunteers. Responsible for all administration, staffing, and budgets. Responsible for developing programs in accordance with our agreed mission and vision, implementing current and future programs, building and maintaining relationships with partners, documenting programs and sharing with the board and funders.
- **Development Director** (Amanda Cunningham)– Works closely with the Executive Director and assists in all above areas as needed, with a particular focus on fundraising, communications and social media.
- **Country Director** (Nafiza Khatun) - Responsible for managing jewelry projects in Kolkata; provides continued support, consulting, and oversight for all India Programs.
- **Program Staff** – Responsible for implementation of programs:
 - Education Program Director – (Maura Hurley)
 - Program Director (Soma Seal)
 - Social Media Manager (Caroline Hughes)
 - Jewelry Program Manager (Dianna Badalament)
 - Training and Production Manager in Kolkata (Sonali Khatoon)
 - Vocational Training Program Director (Kulsum Hamid)

4. Strategic Goals

Her Future Coalition is guided by four strategic goals through 2023.

1. Sustain Holistic Program Delivery

Even as the world changes around us, we know it is critical to sustain a holistic and long-term investment in each of our program participants.

2. Respond to Emerging Needs

The pandemic reshaped many aspects of our work and communities. Building up our capabilities to be responsive and innovative is critical to meeting the needs of our girls and delivering on our mission.

3. Define Education and Training Focus

The pathway to a future of well-being and independence hinges on the educational and economic opportunities of our girls. Identifying and investing in our educational and training pathways anchor our strategic direction.

4. Strengthen and Support Her Future Coalition Operations and Governance

Support and grow our capabilities and approaches in governance, management, partnerships, and fundraising, to be as sustainable and effective as possible.

During the planning process, as Her Future Coalition board and staff explored how we can have the greatest impact and be sustainable for the long term, we identified several areas that require more research and analysis. The path to achieving Goals #1 and #2 is relatively clear.

Goals #3 and #4 will require more research, exploration and discussion, both an analysis of our own experience and learning over the last 15 years, and a review of best practices and pilots of new programming approaches, to guide our long-term strategy.

We are asking ourselves the following questions:

1. Should Her Future Coalition focus exclusively or primarily, on Education?
2. What kinds of employment and vocational training are most effective and sustainable?

These questions arise because the organization is often presented with new opportunities for partnerships and programs, because a need is identified, our services were requested, or funding becomes available. This plan provides us with a means for evaluating these opportunities and

seizing on those most in line with our vision and goals. However, to make the strongest choices, some areas need more time for research and testing. By the end of this three-year period, we hope to answer these three questions, and use the information we gather to shape and guide subsequent years.

Should Her Future Coalition focus more exclusively, or primarily, on Education?

Our approach has always had three prongs: Education, Shelter and Employment. However, we have observed that programs providing education seem to have the highest cost/benefit. When successful (meaning girls are able to complete high school) education programs seem to do more to help the girls reach independence and long-term safety than other approaches.

Over the next three years, with the assistance of Mission Spark, we will conduct research and evaluation, look more deeply into our own outcomes, and pilot new programming to determine what kinds of educational programs are most appropriate and impactful, and what supportive services are most necessary to ensure that our girls can fully participate in and benefit from those programs.

What kinds of employment and vocational training are most effective and sustainable?

From its founding, Her Future was based on a model in which the girls and women we worked with would learn to make fine crafts in a workshop setting. The workshop would provide support and companionship, pay a living wage, and train the women for future careers. The programs were intended to be fully supported by the revenue generated by sales of the crafts in the US, through house parties, online sales, and partnerships with retail outlets.

While successful in many ways (for example, the women in the program have been very happy there, and there is always a waiting list of women waiting to join it) it has fallen short of its promise in two important ways: the women for the most part cannot move on to careers outside of the workshop (for reason having to do with low literacy, high stigma and trauma), and the income generated in the US has never fully sustained the program, despite a variety of efforts and approaches to increasing sales.

Furthermore, we have observed that many nonprofits who attempt similar models (selling handicrafts or clothing) find they cannot compete with for-profit businesses. Loans and investors are hard to come by, and as trends change, once-profitable programs can quickly fall by the wayside.

We have concluded that for now, despite these limitations, we will continue to support the workshop and our artisans, and we will continue to sell jewelry, and possibly other crafts, on our website. But rather than seek to expand it or put significant resources into growing sales, we will explore new avenues for employment training.

Over the next three years we will:

- A. Research existing models for employment and vocational training to determine which are most effective given the cultural constraints of the areas in which we work.
- B. Pilot new approaches that may include partnering with other employers and/or NGOs in India and Nepal, hiring a full-time job coach/placement manager, and offering different vocational training options to survivors..
- C. Continue to sustain the jewelry workshop, selling the jewelry on our website, trying to build a market within India, seeking custom orders and wholesale customers, and remaining open to other opportunities to increase sales. We will not, however, devote significant resources to expanding sales, training new jewelers or growing the program at this time.

In addition, we will be exploring what ways should Her Future strengthen its governance and management structure to be most sustainable and effective?

After a crisis in board leadership in 2017, Her Future has rebuilt its board so that, in early 2021, it is the largest and strongest it has ever been. Board members understand their governance role, are committed to fundraising and to being ambassadors for the organization. They provide expertise and support to the Executive Director.

The staff is strong as well, both in the US and in India. The recent addition of Amanda Cunningham as Development Director has improved Her Future's ability to conduct successful events, major donor outreach and annual appeals, as well as keep accurate records.

Over the next three years, we will continue to strengthen our internal capacity by:

- A. Training and mentoring staff, with an eye to succession planning. Ensuring our staff and board are fully versed in our values and philosophy of programs will help a smooth transition, should such a transition ever be necessary. To that end we will take time to capture and record our values and philosophy in a document that will be available to current and new staff and board.
- B. Establishing board committees, to help provide the support the staff needs in areas such as finance/audit and fundraising. A governance committee will focus on recruiting and orienting new members and ensuring that the board functions well. We will consider whether other committees could be useful (such as communications and PR, marketing, program or others) or whether we will be more effective (given our small staff capacity to manage and work with board committees) with individual board members continuing to provide individual support and assistance in those areas.
- C. Expanding the staff (carefully and sustainably) to provide administrative and program support to our Executive Director so she can focus her energy and time on areas where she can be most effective: as the inspirational leader and visionary that has created and sustained Her Future for sixteen years.

- D. Increasing our fundraising activities so that we can continue and grow all the initiatives described in the plan.

Other questions loom as well, such as whether we should expand our geographic focus. But we will address the above questions first, and when we have answered them, created a plan around the answers, and have begun to successfully implement those answers, we will move on to discuss geography and other questions that may arise. During this planning period, we will not add new programming outside our core locations in India and Nepal.

We are also aware that as external circumstances change and new opportunities and challenges come our way, that these questions may fade in importance. We strive to be aware and flexible enough to pivot, but to do so thoughtfully, not impulsively.