



**Managing the Educate Girls brand:  
from changing a name to creating a movement**

*Background: highly diverse yet equally important stakeholders*

“The most important role of our brand is to invite all stakeholders to feel like a part of the organization,” said Nooreen Dossa, Communications Manager at Educate Girls. Educate Girls’ mission is to improve education for girls by mobilizing community and government resources. It sees itself as a facilitator of community ownership of girls’ education. As a non-profit with a mission embedded in unleashing resources that belong to others, its theory of change depends on changing their mindsets and behaviors. Its strategy begins with earning their trust, persuading them to share its mission and vision, and building lasting partnerships. Educate Girls’ brand is a unifying force that aligns and mobilizes internal and external stakeholders to advance the shared mission.

Ensuring that the Educate Girls brand appeals to staff, volunteers, children, parents, teachers, government officials and communities members in a coherent way is particularly challenging because they are highly diverse. They differ in geography, language, culture, religion, age, level of education and sophistication, and appetite for evidence-based proof of its theory of change. Its donors are mostly sophisticated English-speaking foreign foundations and multinational organizations with high expectations for monitoring and evaluations. The majority of staff and volunteers work in the field with village level people in remote districts with high gender disparities. Many of the community members are illiterate and speak only in the local language. They are more

interested in word-of-mouth stories of how girls and communities changed for the better rather than numbers and reports. Government is at the state and district level, somewhat removed from the local communities. Yet another emerging stakeholder is the relatively high income, young, urban and educated online supporter community dispersed around India that engages with the organization through social media platforms. While it would be much less risky to keep one consistent brand image, given this diversity, Educate Girls may benefit from projecting different brand images depending on the needs of the stakeholder.

#### *Early rebranding efforts to strengthen brand integrity*

When Educate Girls launched in 2007, it was named the Foundation to Educate Girls Globally (FEGG), as it had initially spun off from the California-based non-profit Educate Girls Globally (EGG). The organization initially struggled with its brand, as its internal identity did not match its external image. The original name did not successfully mobilize its external stakeholders because it was misleading on two fronts. “Foundation” led people to mistake the organization as a foundation rather than a non-profit, which was especially problematic in fundraising. “Globally” confused people at the village level to think that the organization aimed to send girls abroad for education. It was also too long to remember or say easily, particularly for those who did not speak English.

In 2009, for the first time the organization reflected seriously on its brand and asked: “how do we want to come across to everyone?” To bridge the gap between its identity and image and strengthen their ties to its mission, it launched a rebranding initiative that lasted nearly two years, changing its name and creating a logo and a

website (see Exhibit 1 for the rebranding completion announcement letter). As it was critical that each element representing its brand appeals to its stakeholders, Educate Girls tested different ideas among them and incorporated their feedback. While the CEO Safeena Husain and the management team led this effort, the field level staff's buy-in and active participation were critical to the success of the rebranding.

After soliciting input from donors, staff, village level volunteers, parents and community members, the organization changed its name to the shortened version, "Educate Girls." The new name communicates its mission much more powerfully and is easy to remember and say, even for village level people without English skills. To better communicate its mission, especially for those who cannot read English, Educate Girls also needed a logo that embodied it. When selecting a color scheme, the team found that green was associated with Islam in Rajasthan and inauspicious especially among illiterate households. It chose a symbol of a schoolgirl, represented by a face with pigtails tied in red ribbons, which are part of the Indian government's school uniform. This simple logo is powerful because its human features raise an emotional response. It is also easy for anyone to relate to because it can be recreated by anyone and understood even among illiterate populations. Fonts were also deliberately chosen to avoid both a dry, corporate look, and a look that was too childish. Fonts and the all-lowercase letters communicate friendliness that is reminiscent of a child but are by no means playful.

In creating the website, Educate Girls communicated as succinctly and clearly as possible rather than going into every detail, so as to help stakeholders understand the essence of its story and how they can participate. It recognized that the more the stakeholders speak the same language when discussing the organization, the more

impactful the brand. Although fairly basic, the website took nine months to create because much thought went into writing each paragraph. Safeena reflected on why it is so important for Educate Girls to use simple, easy-to-understand language: “What we do is not simple. We don’t have a single strategy model. We have a comprehensive partnership model. So it’s even more important to communicate what we’re all about in the simplest and most direct manner.” Adopting such simple and direct form of communication in education, training, marketing, reporting and all other material has helped maintain consistency between its internal identity and external image.

#### *Staying true to core values to establish brand ethics*

A key component of Educate Girls’ theory of change is treating the government, local cultures and religions as part of the solution rather than the problem. Therefore, one of Educate Girls’ core values is respecting them and not creating conflict. Educate Girls strives to maintain brand ethics by avoiding means to achieve results that sacrifice this value, even if they would be more effective in the short term. For example, in its recent “Send child brides to school” campaign, Educate Girls initially featured stories about individual child brides. However, these stories were not well received by the village people who saw them as a criticism of their tradition. Educate Girls changed its messaging to avoid being disrespectful to the local culture by emphasizing the benefits of educating girls and the dangers of early marriage instead of spinning the child marriage practice as an evil tradition and using language that explicitly criticizes it.

Another example that demonstrates brand ethics is how it handles conflicts with the government. When Educate Girls requests something that the government should



provide but refuses to, it does not take an antagonistic stance. Instead, it reminds the officials of the Right to Education Act (RTE) that mandates them to provide it, and asks the refusal to be given in writing, which they cannot do. By acting peacefully yet intelligently within the existing cultural, legal and political systems, Educate Girls shows respect and ensures it is creating partners rather than enemies.

Because Educate Girls relies heavily on village level volunteers called the Team Balika<sup>1</sup> for implementation and for communicating the brand, it is critical that they are absolutely clear on the organization's core values, and do not sacrifice them, intentionally or unintentionally. Frequent and regular training sessions and training materials remind the Team Balika of the organizations' values. They can also call a help desk whenever they have questions or encounter problems. Safeena remarked that as a result, "volunteers are only 18 to 24 years of age, but do not resort to any acts that undermine our values."

Another way Educate Girls avoids conflict is choosing partners and supporters wisely. By avoiding associations with organizations that have particular religious affiliations or are known to work against the government, it is able to appeal to any community, regardless of religion or culture, and gain significant support from the government, financially and otherwise.

The website hosts many colorful, high quality photographs, one minute video clips, and personal stories of girls against the backdrop of the communities they come from to help donors and supporters who are not in the field better understand their situations and feel more connected to them. Even if negative images of extreme poverty or abuse may evoke more donor emotions and lead to more funding, it chooses dignifying images that portray the value of education and hardships of their everyday lives honestly.

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<sup>1</sup> Means girl child in Hindi

Even the somber images of child brides are respectful and show hope for change (see Exhibit 2). Entirely without words, the videos transcend language barriers and communicate through emotions to everyone, whether a donor in the US or a parent in a remote village. The individual stories are of successes that highlight how girls' lives changed for the better through education rather dwell on than their dark pasts.

*Sharing generously to raise brand affinity*

Underlying its use of brand to mobilize government and community members to accomplish its mission (brand integrity) and maintain its core values (brand ethics) is an effort to raise brand affinity among its stakeholders. Whenever Educate Girls collaborates with government entities, it reminds both donors and community members of their partnership and gives credit to the government's efforts. Appreciating recognition, the government is more willing to partner, especially in light of RTE mandates that place the burden of educating children aged 6 to 14 on the government rather than on parents. Educate Girls also benefits from having a stamp of the government's approval as it increases legitimacy of its programs. Maintaining its core value of respecting the local culture and value system helps Educate Girls win the trust of the community members.

Educate Girls also recognizes the importance of being a team player rather than being a competitive leader in its interactions with other organizations in this field, to achieve its mission. "We are not territorial. We draw from our commonalities," explained Safeena. Even if Educate Girls may compete with some organizations for funding, more often it benefits from partnerships. Several partners provide support in terms of funding, curricular content, organizational development and capacity building, and monitoring and

evaluations. Whenever it uses content or materials from its partners, such as Pratham's Read India cards that are a part of the Creative Teaching and Learning (CLT) kit, Educate Girls carries their logos alongside its own. On its website, it has a dedicated page on partners and supporters under "Who we are" that display their logos along with paragraph-length descriptions of how Educate Girls is benefiting from each of them. Under the history section, it explains how some of the most influential partners contributed to the organization's growth. It also hosts the Girl Effect video along with its own videos, giving full credit to Girl Effect. As the organization scales and more partners learn and replicate its model and use its materials, Educate Girls plans to learn from experienced partners like Pratham on how to share rather than over-protect its brand through processes such as common licensing in lieu of copyrights.

Sharing space and credit generously not only boosts Educate Girls' brand affinity among the organizations it is sharing with, but also helps build Educate Girls' legitimacy among its other audiences. Its partner brands are often brands that are highly respected in their fields. For example, Pratham is widely known in India as a producer of great content to teach reading, and UNICEF is known for supporting leading education organizations. To have their logos alongside Educate Girls' signals high quality and credibility. Recently, Educate Girls became a part of a network of implementing partners of Educate A Child (EAC), an initiative launched by the queen of Qatar to significantly reduce the number of out-of-school children worldwide. Lending its logo, pictures and stories to be featured on the EAC website next to much larger and more well known organizations', such as BRAC and UNHCR's, is helping build its legitimacy.

*Figuring out brand democratization to transform Team Balika into a movement*

Educate Girls has always welcomed feedback and has been open to change. One of Nooreen's main responsibilities is to listen to what the various stakeholders are saying about its brand. Safeena commented that "Nooreen has good filters for consistent themes in constructive feedback and we try to incorporate them." However, it has so far limited stakeholders' promoting their own interpretations of the brand.

As areas it operates in are remote districts where people are unlikely to have heard of the organization, when it enters a new area, Educate Girls controls its brand tightly among its brand ambassadors such as Team Balika volunteers and community members to ensure brand integrity and brand ethics. As the organization becomes more established in the area, the volunteers and community members better understand the brand, so it has less need to control it. Educate Girls works under a tight timeline to establish its brand, as after three years, it hands over its programs to the volunteers and community members. In this sustainability phase where Educate Girls' direction intervention is minimal, it trusts its brand ambassadors to continue promoting the brand.

With the rise of social media marketing and engagement tools such as Facebook and Twitter, this may have to change. Educate Girls sees a potential need for greater democratization of its brand as social media becomes more important. "Social media presents a great opportunity to mobilize a larger audience, but we have not yet been able to leverage it optimally," explained Nooreen. Educate Girls has so far policed these platforms a fair amount to avoid messages that do not reflect its values, such as antagonistic posts that harshly criticize the government or a particular religious group's actions. It also receives too many requests for endorsements of organizations and events

that do not resonate with its brand. With a small management team where Nooreen is the only person fully dedicated to managing all communications, policing is becoming more burdensome as social media platforms are becoming more popular. It will soon be impossible to closely monitor all social media interactions. To minimize the need for policing while protecting its image and core values, Educate Girls should create a social media guideline for its online audience outlining what kind of language to use and to avoid, and how brand assets such as the logo should be used.

A key benefit of social media platforms that Educate Girls has been taking advantage of is real-time tracking of both quantity and content of responses through features such as “likes” and comments. During its recent “Send a child bride to school” campaign, it had featured individual stories of child brides on its Facebook page. Even though they drew a lot of attention, they solicited responses that Educate Girls did not expect or want. They incited too much emotion, and took the focus away from the overall issue. Educate Girls was able to quickly diagnose the problem and take down the stories.

The main challenge to using social media more optimally is formulating the role of the online supporter community in Educate Girls’ theory of change. Safeena pointed out the importance of knowing “what [it is] that we want people to do. We need to guide them to what we’re trying to achieve.” So far, the use of social media platforms has been limited to Educate Girls sharing updates about new campaigns and key events with the larger audience, rather than for this audience to initiate dialogue or communicate among themselves. It has not yet been able to draw a critical mass of followers to generate such organic dialogue. More importantly, even if it draws a critical mass of online supporters

that engage organically, besides turning their attention into small individual donations that are likely to be one-time, it is unclear how to best leverage their support.

However, this challenge may be an opportunity. Further brand democratization may be an important step to the next phase of expansion that Educate Girls envisions, which is transforming from a Rajasthan-based regional nonprofit brand into an India-wide movement. Safeena explained that “although we are currently only in Rajasthan, our vision is national. There is no nationwide movement for girls’ education in India. We want to grow into this missing space.” National nonprofits such as Naandi Khali, Pratham and Child Rights and You (CRY) either have a focus that is too narrow such as scholarships for girls or too broad such as quality education or children’s rights. Educate Girls sees a gap that it is well positioned to fill. Over the next two to three years, Safeena hoped to “make the Team Balika initiative go beyond the volunteers in the field and turn it into a national movement that motivates everyone, from donors to college students.”

To make the its mission everyone’s mission, Educate Girls positions itself as a brand that is larger than Rajasthan. For example, it reports Rajasthan’s statistics in comparison with national statistics to remind its audience that the problem and Educate Girls’ vision go beyond Rajasthan. However, to become a recognizable and trusted brand at the national level, these subtle efforts may not be enough. Educate Girls’ cannot wait until it implements its model in every district with high gender disparity in India to become a national brand and movement. It should leverage its brand as a banner under which the broader audience can mobilize by creating more ways for them to engage with the brand and become brand ambassadors.

Educate Girls can learn from the Girl Effect, an organization that has successfully democratized its brand to form the basis of a broader movement. The Girl Effect is not an implementing organization but one that catalyzes change. At first, its theory of change was to raise awareness and build a worldwide movement around the cause of empowering girls so that governments and multilateral organizations give more attention and funding to the implementing agents that help empower girls. The joint Girl Effect-DFID project Girl Hub goes beyond that and aims to empower girls in poverty directly by providing them online tools to create and manage local Girl Effect media brands, such as girl run radio stations and magazines.

Educate Girls should also go beyond fundraising more at the individual level through the converted online Team Balika members. It should offer various tools to help them put girls' education on local governments' and political parties' agenda and demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of community engagement to promote girls' education. For example, Educate Girls' website can have statistics on gender disparities by state and by district and how they compare to the national average, a list of rights of the child and what the schools must provide as per the RTE, and a printable version of its school dashboard that it provides School Management Committees (SMCs) in its implementation zones (see Exhibit 3). The dashboard will allow SMCs anywhere in India to easily track whether the school meets the RTE standards. It can offer a functionality similar to the Girl Effect's website, which allows visitors to save articles, photographs, videos and any other materials into a folder and email themselves a zipped file of them to print, upload on their own blogs and websites, or use however they want.

It can also help the online Team Balika identify Educate Girls-endorsed local non-

profits that are doing good work where they can volunteer, and local foundations and high net worth individuals that they may be able to influence to give to Educate Girls or to any of its endorsed local non-profits. This will help further raise brand affinity as well.

While it may be unreasonable to expect Educate Girls' target beneficiary girls to have access to the Internet and be able to search for and use Educate Girls' online tools, it may be able to help people near them who are able to do so. In densely populated urban India, the privileged live right next to the underprivileged. Educate Girls can provide tools to create and manage local Team Balika chapters, such as a best practices manual for fostering an effective SMC and for creating an individualized education plan for out-of-school girls based on simple characteristics.

Educate Girls has three distinct advantages over the Girl Effect to more effectively leverage remote online support. First, its audience is not thousands of miles away in the global North but residing in the same country, and often in the same neighborhoods as the girls they are helping. People are likely to care more and have more concrete ways to make a difference in the education of girls in their own states and neighborhoods. Second, it should also face fewer cultural barriers and appeal more genuinely to the Indian girls as it understands India well and its staff is deeply rooted in India. Third, as an implementation agent, Educate Girls has a direct link to action and can provide recommendations that brand ambassadors can try to implement on their own with legitimacy. It can also avoid criticism that marketing dollars are being wasted.

*Balancing brand IDEA*




Brand democratization presents a unique opportunity for Educate Girls as it prepares to take the next step in its expansion and grow into a national Team Balika movement. Yet, it must be careful that this ambitious vision does not detract from the brand integrity, brand ethics and brand affinity that it worked so diligently to achieve so far. Such a significant addition to the theory of change may detract from what it does best, which is village level implementation, and cause mission drift. If brand democratization goes too far so that editing and curating organic interpretations become too difficult, Educate Girls may see uses of its tools that belie its core values, such as using the RTE rights list to threaten and coerce the government rather than work with it. If it tries to be the ultimate authority on girls' education in India, it may alienate well established and more experienced national education non-profits and current partners such as Pratham. To transform successfully into a nationwide movement, Educate Girls must balance all four components of the brand IDEA.

Exhibit 1. Rebrand completion announcement on Global Giving

**Rebrand Complete: FEGG is Educate Girls now.**  
By Safeena Husain - CEO

PROJECT REPORT  
Sep 28, 2011



*Educate Girls | Home*

Dear Friends,

We have done it! Eventually the moment has arrived to tell you about some great news: Foundation to Educate Girls Globally is now simply Educate Girls. We are proud to introduce our brand new [website](#) to you!

Besides the latest success stories and updates you can download resources related to education, gender, child marriage etc. on our [resources page](#).

If you like our work and would like to keep in touch outside the GlobalGiving community, sign up for our newsletter, read what we're up to on our newsblog and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Please do get involved and spread the word!  
Thank you again for your trust and support that we highly appreciate.

Warm regards,  
Safeena Husain,  
CEO and Founder of Educate Girls

Source: Global Giving website

Exhibit 2. "Send child brides to school" campaign images


























Source: Educate Girls website

Exhibit 3. Pictorial School Management Committee (SMC) school dashboard

**हमारा विद्यालय = एक बजर**

विद्यालय का नाम रा. उ. प्रा. सं. 11 कोशीबाग ग्राम पंचायत कोलीवाडा  
 विद्यालय नामांकन 0771 जिला पाली  
 खण्ड सुनियरपुर

  
educate girls

उत्तम विद्यालय	क्र. सं.	मुख्य घटक	RTE के अनुसार	वर्तमान स्थिति	प्रगति				कमजोर विद्यालय	
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		शिक्षक								
		बेस बैचमार्क								
	दूरे शिक्षण पद्धति									
	पाठ टीचर									
	रजोई									
	<b>2 नामांकन</b>									
	6-14 वर्ष के सभी बच्चों का नामांकन	-स्कूल में नामांकन		4	4	4	4	4		
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	<b>3 शिदाकों की उपलब्धता</b>									
	विद्यालय में शिक्षक		3	3	3	3	3	3		
	<b>4 शिदाण सामग्री</b>									
	सुनियर छात्र									
	CLT बिट से छात्र									
	पुस्तकों की उपलब्धता									
	<b>5 शिदाण</b>									
	क्या बच्चे पढ़ लिख सकते हैं ?	-क्या पढ़ती और दुरुती व -अनार और सीजरी अति वीही अति वीही		10	10	10	10	10		
		-क्या सीजरी		10	10	10	10	10		
		-क्या सीजरी		10	10	10	10	10		
	क्या अति जान और/वासी व अन्य अतिजानर करते हैं ?	-क्या पढ़ती और दुरुती 1,2,3		10	10	10	10	10		
		-क्या सीजरी और वीही 1+2-3		10	10	10	10	10		
		-क्या सीजरी 2x1=2 2x2=4 2x3=6		10	10	10	10	10		

उपलब्ध नहीं है।     
  काम चल रहा है।     
  उपलब्ध है।

Source: Educate Girls field visit conducted April 26, 2012

## Sources

- Interview with Safeena Husain, CEO of Educate Girls, and Nooreen Dossa, Communication Manager of Educate Girls, on November 23, 2012
- Educate Girls website: <http://educategirls.in/>
- Global Giving website: <http://www.globalgiving.org/donate/5054/educate-girls/reports/?page=10>
- Field visit to Pali district on April 26, 2012