

A Breeze of Hope Foundation (ABH)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Valley of Cochabamba, Bolivia, A Breeze of Hope Foundation (ABH) is giving unprecedented and life-changing voice and support to victims¹ of childhood sexual violence. Grounded in the experiences of those who have lived through sexual violence and using an innovative model aligned with global best practices, ABH pursues three broad goals:

- (1) Restoring the rights and lives of child survivors of sexual violence: ABH offers professional psychological support, comprehensive legal accompaniment, and wide-ranging social services to survivors and their families.
- (2) Preventing sexual violence: ABH shifts social norms and laws that enable sexual violence by educating communities, working for public policy reform, and advocating for the protection of human rights.
- (3) Promoting healthy childhood development: ABH breaks the generational cycle of violence by advancing a positive, non-violent, feminist, and rights-based vision to nurture children into healthy adulthood.

This comprehensive model of care, legal assistance and prevention has generated significant results for Bolivian young people and their families, who are able to use ABH services free of charge. Most notably, since its founding in 2004 through 2016, ABH has:

- Achieved and maintained a conviction rate of 96 percent in the oral trials in which they have participated, as compared to the 2 percent conviction rate before ABH existed;
- Provided free, comprehensive services to more than 1,500 victims of child and adolescent sexual violence;
- Trained more than 100,000 participants in conferences, workshops, and post-graduate courses;
- Persuaded the Bolivian National Government to declare August 9th the National Day Against Child Sexual Assault and in Solidarity with Child Victims and mobilized country-wide support for the day through annual parades raising awareness about the issue; and
- Created the Youth Network Against Sexual Violence in 2016, in which the young people themselves lead advocacy and media outreach, as well as peer-to-peer contact at schools, community events, and fairs.

This case study is based primarily on interviews with ABH staff and the families they serve, as well as with the judges and lawyers who work daily with ABH. Quantitative data about ABH services and results is based on ABH reports.

¹ ABH's founder believes it is important to use the term "victim" alongside "survivor." She believes that using the term victim grounds the discourse surrounding sexual violence within a framework of domestic and human rights. She says the term victim conveys the vital notion that children and adolescents do not bear responsibility for the sexual violence committed against them and that they suffer these human rights violations against their wills. At the same time, ABH's founder believes it to be of extreme importance to use the term survivor because it honors the courage, strength, and effort needed to break the silence and seek healing. In this case study both terms are used.

BACKGROUND

A Breeze of Hope Foundation was founded in 2004 by Brisa De Angulo, herself a victim of sexual violence as a teenager. When she eventually revealed to her parents that an adult cousin had raped her repeatedly over the course of several months, they supported her wholeheartedly. Yet her pursuit of justice and healing was stymied by prosecutors, judges and lawyers, who put her on trial instead of her aggressor. Moved to action by the injustice she faced, she dreamed of establishing a safe haven where victims could find what she did not: caring adults who believe, comfort and accompany young survivors along every step of a complicated, overburdened legal process, and offer them the psychological and social support they need to overcome the trauma of their experience and regain control of their lives.

Today, ABH is the haven envisioned by Dr. De Angulo, now a psychologist and lawyer. ABH is a physical space where survivors and families can find support and healing; a hub of legal and policy advocacy to prevent sexual violence; and an incubator of innovative programs that promote positive childhood development.

Sexual violence against minors is prevalent in Bolivia, but a conspiracy of silence shames victims and protects perpetrators. Dr. De Angulo conducted government-commissioned research in public schools in Cochabamba, finding that more than 1 in 3 girls and nearly 1 in 4 boys suffered some form of sexual abuse before age 18; 70 percent said they had never told anyone about the abuse.²

The problem ABH faces is deeply entrenched in social norms, requiring a multi-pronged response. Traditional beliefs about how boys and girls are supposed to behave, along with assumptions and taboos about gender and sexuality, weigh heavily on the issue of sexual violence against children in Bolivia. Norms around masculinity in Bolivia tell men they should be dominant and even violent in exercising control in intimate relationships. Of 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries surveyed in 2012, Bolivian women were most likely to have suffered physical or sexual abuse from their partners.³ Women's economic inequality and dependence also contributes to the silence around sexual abuse. When the abuser is the sole breadwinner in the family, some mothers feel they must choose between the victims of sexual violence and economic survival.

Girls who come to ABH show just how much these gender norms affect them and their experience of abuse. They have been told to put the needs of others first, to be "nice" and not cause trouble. As in most societies, many Bolivians see rape and other forms of sexual assault and harassment as the woman's fault for "provoking" such behavior. Adolescent girls who come to ABH often talk about the intense shame of being told by family members or friends that they brought rape on themselves, or that it was actually consensual sex.

While the vast majority of children who seek help from ABH are girls, boys also suffer sexual violence. The stigma boys face can be greater than that experienced by girls, as a result of homophobia and of traditional norms about masculinity. With gender norms dictating that boys act tough and strong, boys are usually less willing to disclose abuse.



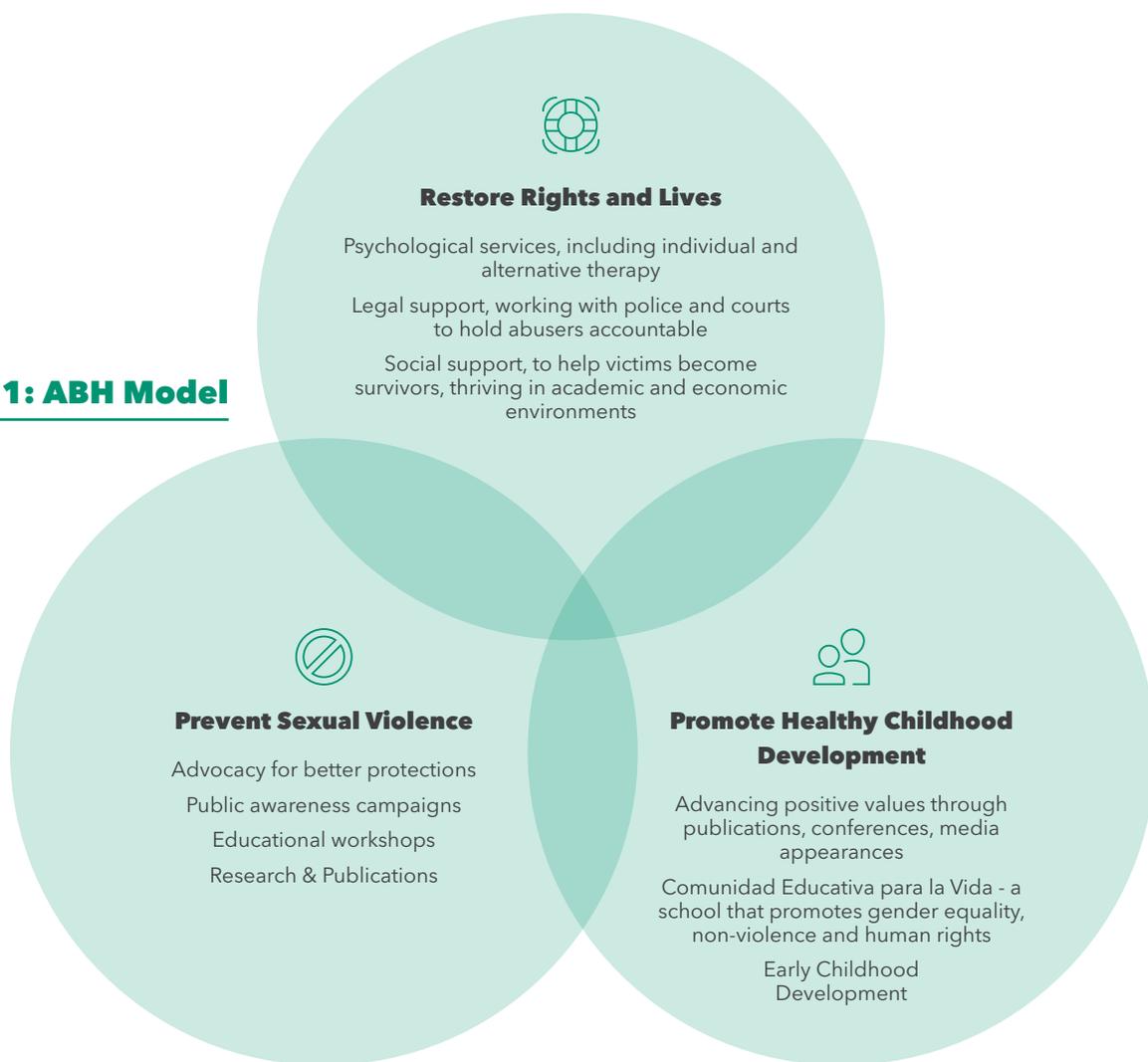
"If you have come here to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

—QUOTE FROM LILA WATSON THAT ABH STAFF USE AS THEIR MOTTO.

2 De Angulo, Brisa, "Child Sexual Abuse and the Conspiracy of Silence", study conducted among 3,722 participants age 12-17, in schools in Cochabamba, Bolivia, 2009.

3 Pan American Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: A comparative analysis of population-based data from 12 countries." 2012

Fig. 1: ABH Model



Fighting these entrenched gender norms is woven through the work ABH does, and its human rights-based and feminist approach has generated impressive success. Since it opened its doors in 2004, ABH has achieved major gains in an environment where the subject of sexual violence against children is taboo, the justice system often protects the aggressor, and myths persist that blame the victim. As a direct result of ABH's programs, abusers are facing justice and those who live through sexual violence - both boys and girls - are challenging social norms that dictate their silence and shame, and transforming themselves from victims into outspoken and powerful survivors.

Grounded in the experiences of those who have lived through sexual violence and using an innovative model aligned with global best practices, ABH pursues three broad goals:

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GOAL 1: RESTORING THE RIGHTS AND LIVES OF SURVIVORS

ABH's approach to restoring the lives of child survivors revolves around one powerful organizing principle: The core of trauma is overwhelming loss of control.⁴ ABH seeks to restore the traumatized child's sense of control by treating each individual based on her or his needs, in response to her or his expressed wishes, and on the timeline that she or he desires. ABH's clients range in age from 0 to 18, and each one is given the power to shape her or his care.

Referrals to ABH come from peers, teachers, hospitals, government child protection services, private psychologists, lawyers, neighbors and family members. When a young person and her or his family come to ABH, a trans-disciplinary team composed of a lawyer, a psychologist and a social worker welcomes them and offers them support and understanding.

ABH's work to restore rights and lives includes: therapeutic and social support, legal advocacy, and economic and political participation.

Providing Integrated Therapeutic and Social Support

The child and family members often arrive at a moment of intense crisis, as families can be torn apart when the child reveals the abuse, and the child may be suicidal or feel that she/he caused the abuse. With their different perspectives and with attention to the gender norms that often shape the reactions of abused boys and girls, the ABH team helps "stabilize" the child and family members, helping all of them move from a point of crisis to one of greater understanding that the abuse is not the child's fault. ABH's support continues for as long as children and their families need it and is completely free to its clients. A child can spend as much time in the center as she or he desires.

In the initial visit, the team shows the child and accompanying adults the installations and outlines in simple terms the support that ABH can offer. The emphasis is on crisis management, psychological and social stabilization, and reassurance that the child is believed and not alone. ABH professionals move beyond discipline-specific approaches to understand the whole child and every aspect of the child's life.

Because a child victim of sexual violence is under the control of his or her aggressor, and the loss of control lies at the core of trauma, ABH's central goal is to restore the child's control over his or her life decisions and healing journey. At ABH, children decide which psychologist they will work with, choose the group activities they want to join - or can choose not to participate - select group therapy topics, organize vocational therapy activities, and participate in board meetings, team meetings, and evaluations.

Gender is addressed in the context of human rights. Boys and girls are encouraged to participate in the same therapies and activities. Although girls are more often the targets of sexual predators, sexual abuse against boys is often underreported due to the stigma attached to same sex contact and questions about the victim's sexuality.



"When I arrived at CUBE, I saw so many other girls who had gone through the same horrible experiences I went through. I saw them smile, dance, and laugh. That gave me courage and made me think that one day, I would, too."

—SARAH, SURVIVOR



4 Basel van der Kolk, M.D., *The Body Keeps the Score*, 2015.



A Breeze of Hope
 “provides indispensable accompaniment to victims in the torturous criminal process and in the restoration of their lives and families. Their activities are also transcendental for society to assume awareness of its responsibility in the victims’ recovery.”

–DR. NURIA GONZALES ROMERO, PRESIDENT, DISTRICT COURT, DEPT. OF COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA

The team of psychologists oversees the following types of activities:

- **Trauma-focused play therapy** for the youngest children who cannot explain in words the abuse they experienced. There is a specially outfitted room for this purpose.
- **Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy** for individuals that focuses on personal restoration: building each child’s sense of self, sense of agency and capacity to dream and plan for the future. ABH’s psychologists also work to improve each child’s relationships with supportive, non-offending family members.
- **Alternative therapies**, including sand play therapy, dance therapy, yoga, jewelry making, tai chi, mindfulness meditation, and vocational therapies such as cooking and the beauty salon, which also contribute to developing skills for economic independence.
- **Self-help groups**, where sexual violence survivors and parents can support each other by sharing their worries, experiences and advice.

Social support may also include making sure the school environment is safe and welcoming. School environments can be very difficult for the children who come to ABH if teachers or their peers have heard rumors about the abuse. Girls who are pregnant as a result of rape cannot hide what has happened to them, and can suffer intense social stigma at school. In these cases, ABH has helped girls to study from home, if they desire.

Shepherding Child Survivors Through the Legal System

Perhaps most remarkably, ABH’s work has revolutionized the criminal trial process for child sexual assault victims in Bolivia. By directly engaging as legal advocates and expertly managing a convoluted and burdensome process for the families, ABH has vastly improved how these sexual violence victims experience the legal system. In these cases, ABH works with schools to reduce revictimization, provide emotional and academic support, and raise awareness about sexual violence.

BEFORE ABH	AFTER ABH
Children had to face the accused in court	No longer required. ABH can represent the child during the legal process, reducing the number of times she or he has to testify and relive the experience.
Judges and lawyers only accepted physical evidence of rape, making it difficult to prove assault that is not immediately reported	Judges and lawyers accept evidence on psychological and emotional trauma. ABH psychologists provide expert advice to prosecutors. Attorney General’s office has now hired psychologists to provide similar advice.
Investigations were completed by police officers with no expertise in sexual violence against children	ABH lawyers work with the police to carry out investigations, including crime scene inspections

RESULT: Conviction rate for cases of childhood sexual assaults rose from just 2 percent to 96 percent in the oral trials in which ABH participates

In interviews in Cochabamba and Quillacollo, judges and district attorneys praised the legal skills, reliability, and, especially the perseverance and persistence of ABH’s team of lawyers. Judges and district attorneys emphasized that they relied heavily on ABH’s support and diligence to bring cases to justice, and that many cases would likely fall through the cracks without ABH’s commitment. They particularly appreciated access to the professional materials that ABH publishes and the courses and training opportunities ABH makes available to them. Several mentioned the value and utility of a detailed legal procedural roadmap that ABH developed on the comprehensive management of cases of sexual violence against children and adolescents.



GOAL 2: PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

ABH's work does not only address sexual violence once it has happened. ABH takes a broad approach to sexual violence prevention, aimed at transforming Bolivia's society and addressing cultural and structural drivers of sexual violence. ABH prevention efforts are informed by years of best practice research and accumulated insight gained from providing direct services to victims and their supportive family members.



“We’ve realized that we can’t separate our prevention from our direct services. If we separate them, we end up engaging in uninformed legal and policy advocacy, which though helpful in some way, might not account for the lived experiences of children struggling to heal and navigate a collapsed judicial system. And our direct services, if separated from prevention, won’t result in a broader social transformation aimed at stopping the abuse before it starts.”

—PARKER J. PALMER, CO-FOUNDER OF A BREEZE OF HOPE.

International Human Rights Advocacy

As part of its prevention efforts, ABH engages in human rights advocacy and litigation. These efforts have reached the international stage, with ABH's attorneys and psychologists presenting thematic hearings before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. These hearings have focused on how Bolivia's justice system systematically violates the human rights of adolescent girl survivors of sexual violence. ABH's advocacy has resulted in the 2013 repeal of Bolivia's Rape Marriage Law, a statute pardoning sex offenders of their crimes if they marry their victims.

Domestic Legal and Policy Reform

ABH's domestic legal and policy reform efforts are also helping to reshape Bolivia's justice system by advocating broad systemic reforms. These efforts focus on bringing Bolivia legal codes and justice system practices into compliance with current international norms. One of ABH's most experienced attorneys alluded to the patience and diplomacy required for these changes, stating, “If we want to make lasting change, we must be the State's friends. Working with the State is a beautiful, often difficult, and always lengthy process. Our goal is to help our government in its efforts to comply with international norms.”

Research & Publications

Since its inception, ABH has maintained close ties with social service organizations in Bolivia as well as with institutions and professionals in other countries, and has assembled a body of information on theoretical frameworks and best practices in addressing child sexual abuse. ABH has developed A Manual on the Comprehensive Management of Sexual Abuse, which serves as a foundation for ABH, for other organizations and especially for the justice sector.

ABH continues to conduct research, not only for their own use, but also to help others understand the complex underworld of sexual violence against children and adolescents. ABH also provides books, materials, and bulletins on subjects ranging from early childhood development and learning to a uniform guide to criminal procedure it published together with UNICEF for judges, prosecutors, police and forensic psychologists and physicians.

Training and Awareness Raising

Changing people's perceptions and treatment of young sexual assault victims is critical to ABH's mission. Since 2004, ABH has trained more than 100,000 people, including judges, attorneys, psychologists, law enforcement, teachers, and high school and university students through workshops, conferences and post-graduate courses. The post-graduate course in Child Abuse Prevention and Comprehensive Case Management, taught by ABH's team is offered in various departments in Bolivia.

To build awareness of the issue among the general public, Dr. de Angulo initiated Bolivia's National Day of Solidarity with Victims of Sexual Violence. Each year on

August 9, ABH organizes a walk in Cochabamba to commemorate this day. In 2016, 15 simultaneous walks took place around the country with thousands of participants. ABH also participates in other walks throughout the year.

ABH frequently provides mass media information segments and news spots to local stations. Representatives from ABH give frequent radio, TV and press interviews. They also go to speak at local schools to raise awareness and knowledge among students and teachers about what constitutes sexual abuse and how to report it. Dr. de Angulo and the ABH team are invited speakers at international conferences and workshops in various countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Perú, Brazil, Ecuador, Costa Rica, México, the United States, El Salvador, Canada, and the United Kingdom on the dynamics of sexual violence, its impact on the individual, family, and society, as well as early childhood development.

As mentioned above, many beneficiaries of ABH have become its strongest advocates, and passionate crusaders against sexual abuse. The Youth Network against Sexual Violence, created by survivors from ABH and their supporters in 2016, participates in school conferences, media interviews, and community fairs and events in effective peer-to-peer outreach.



GOAL 3: PROMOTING HEALTHY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

ABH also promotes healthy childhood development as a form of upstream prevention that aims to break the generational cycle of violence. ABH's broad approach provides an ideal opportunity to address violence at its roots through reinforcing values of gender equality, respect, and celebration of diversity. ABH's childhood development program focuses on three interwoven initiatives:

(1) **Prenatal.** By providing workshops for expecting mothers and fathers, ABH aims to foster antenatal emotional bonding, focusing especially on the mental representations parents have regarding their coming baby. ABH also helps expecting parents develop healthy stress reduction and conflict management skills, healthy infant care practices, and income generation skills for mothers.

(2) **Early childhood:** A Breeze of Hope's core practice within this initiative is "accompanied autonomy," which encourages parents to build strong and healthy emotional bonds with their children so that their children will flower as secure, creative, and self-directed explorers and learners. Moreover, ABH helps parents—especially fathers—receive the guidance and information they need to build healthy emotional bonds, adopt healthy parenting practices, and engage in their children's development.

(3) **School age children:** ABH focuses its effort on children ages 3 to 10, providing full educational programming through its Comunidad Educativa para la Vida (CEV). In 2016, 128 children attended CEV, benefiting from child-directed learning methods such as Montessori and activities that promote gender equity, nonviolence, self-agency and respect for human rights. Parents are encouraged to participate in their children's education and volunteer their time to contribute to the school's upkeep.



ABH Revenue Sources

2016



- Grants (46%)
- Contributed Services (23%)
- Awards (15%)
- Income Generating (9%)
- Individual Donations (6%)
- Member Contribution (1%)

Financial Status

In the United States, A Breeze of Hope Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, exempt from U.S. income taxes due to its nature as a charitable institution. In Bolivia, A Breeze of Hope center for child survivors and its early childhood development program are registered as an independent national non-profit known as Fundacion Una Brisa de Esperanza.

With an extremely modest budget and a 23-person staff, ABH is able to provide extensive programming free of charge to the children and families who use their services. ABH spends approximately \$90 per child per month for legal, psychological and social services. However, there is no lower or upper limit, as it depends on the amount of time ABH professionals spend with each person. Staff often spend more time with young people who are new to ABH, and less with those who have been using the services (such as group or individual therapy) for years. Each child determines how much support they need from staff.

RESULTS

Judges, lawyers, and survivors interviewed for this case study extol the quality of ABH programs and the dedication of the staff. In the past 12 years, ABH has generated impressive results, including the following:

- Since ABH's founding, it has provided free, comprehensive services to more than 1,500 survivors of child and adolescent sexual violence - healing them physically and psychologically, helping them win justice, keeping them in school, and supporting their hopes and dreams.
- ABH's legal accompaniment has dramatically increased conviction rates for childhood sexual abuse, reaching a 96% conviction rate in oral trials in which they represent the survivor. Before ABH, this rate was negligible - just 2 percent. Increasing convictions creates a greater sense of security among survivor, and dispels society's notions that abuse is somehow the fault of the child.
- ABH has trained more than 100,000 people since 2004 in conferences, workshops and post-graduate courses, building understanding of sexual assault within the legal community, school systems, and government. In 2016 alone, ABH trained more than 8,000 people.
- To raise awareness and increase solidarity with survivor of childhood sexual violence, ABH persuaded the Bolivian government to declare August 9th the National Day against Child Sexual Assault. Since then, ABH has mobilized thousands of Bolivians to march in parades and hold events. In 2016, there were 15 such marches in Bolivia.
- Young people who have benefited from ABH's services created the Youth Network Against Sexual Violence in 2016, which offers important peer-to-peer contact at schools, community events, fairs, and interviews in local media. Through youth-led activism, adolescents are learning how to advocate for themselves and others, and speak out to shape a better society for all.

Factors Contributing to ABH's success

Interviews with staff and other stakeholders revealed key elements that have contributed to ABH's success:

- Brisa's experience and willingness to publicly share her own story of sexual violence: As a survivor, Brisa was determined to establish a safe haven where other victims could receive the legal, psychological and emotional support in Bolivia that she did not. When Brisa broke the silence about the abuse she suffered, she didn't just tell family members or the court system. She knew that publicly sharing her story would empower others to do the same and decrease the stigma and shame around childhood sexual assault.
- Empathy with victims from dedicated professionals: All staff at ABH interact with the children/adolescents who come, openly showing affection and support. There is no "professional distance." Staff often say that seeing a child or adolescent at ABH smile again is the best compensation they can receive.
- Creative and strategic program for volunteers: ABH effectively recruits and supervises volunteers, mostly from the United States and Europe, in support of its activities. In many cases, they can obtain college credit in many for their work.
- Alliances with government institutions, universities and non-governmental organizations in Bolivia and internationally: ABH gives post graduate courses at several universities in Bolivia, works, or has worked, with other organizations such as Terre des Hommes Holland, Terre de Hommes Germany, Novo Foundation, Light My Fire, Together for Girls, and Save the Children, Dining For Women, Global Fund for Children, Fundacion Vidanta, Star's Foundation, Comic Relief, and Equality Now.
- Supportive relations and use of positive reinforcement with other institutions, praising what they do right, not criticizing what they get wrong: ABH has found this an effective strategy for working with judges, prosecutors, legislators, and other officials who then feel supported, rather than attacked. This strategy creates champions for the issue within other institutions, and builds ongoing positive working relationships.
- Team building exercises and activities with staff: ABH shows appreciation and support for the dedication of their staff by offering yoga classes on site, retreats in peaceful locations, and nights out for staff. They have built a family-like environment where both victims and staff receive encouragement and support.
- Horizontal management structure where each person assumes individual responsibility for his/her work, and is in turn supported by the others: ABH reinforces teamwork and a supportive, non-competitive working environment. There are no supervisors or time clocks. One person at ABH said that this type of environment was the most important antidote to the stress of their daily work.





A Breeze Of Hope



www.abreezeofhope.org



**Together
for girls**

Ending violence against children

**The Global
Women's Institute**

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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