**GIRL CHILD NETWORK **

GIRLS AT RISK SUPPORT UNIT (GARSU)

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### ZIMBABWE

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**Executive Summary**

This report captures the main activities carried out in the Girls at Risk Support Unit Department. Several cases of abuse were reported to GCN and the affected girls at risk needed various forms of assistance ,ranging from cases follow up ,reunification and reintegration ,reinstatement into school , police, court and hospital escorts .The situation of the girls was negatively affected by the dollarization of the economy ,poverty and the ever increasing costs of living ,which has been worsened by the effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic which has left most children orphans and living in child headed families .Issues of harmful traditional and traditional practices such as appeasement of avenging spirits were also noted .It is in this context that the Girls at Risk Team driven by passion intervened and became the lifebuoy for the once hopeless and helpless vulnerable girls to achieve their goals through the provision of essential relevant services.

**Summary of the main activities carried out**

During the period under review 148 cases of abuse were reported to GCN Team driven by Passion which provides 24hour emergency services to abused and vulnerable girls. Out of the reported cases ,89 were cases of sexual abuse ,22 of physical and emotional abuse, 28 of neglect and all sexual and one physical abuse cases were in desperate need of medical attention ,so they were assisted by Family Support Trust at Zimbabwean general hospitals Since there was no funding for the whole of this year GCN successfully assisted /rescued 3 girls with cases of sexual abuse with the assistance of Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) and were further on issued with medical affidavits .The hospital escort reduced time that was being taken target beneficiaries in the queues to access medical attention as 90 girls were given effectual medical attention with the case management officer’s facilitation for diverse prescription of STI,s and other opportunistic infections and also accessed ARV,S for the recommended positive living with HIV.GCN case management officer also escorted abused girls to the local law courts which enabled them to access legal representation .Out of these court cases on one court case was achieved and some cases are still pending in the courts on trial .

**Statistics of reported cases 2011**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of abuse** | **Number of girls abused** | **Percentage** |
| Sexual abuse | 89 | 61% |
| Physical and Emotional abuse | 22 | 15% |
| Neglect /Other | 28 | 19% |
| Rescue | 3 | 2% |
| Forced marriage | 2 | 1% |
| Early marriage | 2 | 1% |
| Murder | 2 | 1% |
| Total | **148** | **100%** |
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**GCN Empowerment Village**

The Girls at Risk Support Unit’s rehabilitation and reintegration programme cannot be left out since through GCN,S Empowerment Villages strategy ,which served as community backed safe houses ,many girls found a haven that kept hem in safe hands away from the perpetrators .Whilst in these centres ,some of the girls as well as those outside the centres were also provided with food ,sanitary ware, school fees for first term 2012 ,and medical assistance as well as being escorted to police ,court and hospital .This comprehensive 24hour emergency package provided by GCN resulted in the triumphant rescue ,counselling ,rehabilitation ,reunification and reintegration of abused girls and those at risk of abuse ,as these girls required such strategic intervention. A total number of **16 girls** were reunified with their families and their family members were able to reinstate them into school.

**GCN DUCATION AND BASIC NEEDS**

A total number of **108** girls visited the department in the Education and Basic Needs Department requesting for tuition and exam fees assistance. Out of that numberGCN managed to pay first term 2011 school fees for **8** boarders. They were also given stationery, uniforms and sanitary-wear .GCN also managed to pay examination fees the girls who were in form 4 and form six i.e. Lisa Bonongwe, Regret Chifaka and Constance Madotsa .They were also given tuck for term 2, which included food items, sanitary wear and toiletries .Day scholars were however not assisted with school fees but stationery, sanitary wear and uniform items when available. Girls also got clothes that were donated by a local church and well wishers .On New Season scholarship a total number of 15 girls were considered for the scholarship out of a total number of 40 applicants. To date 1girl Rumbidzai Chikava had made it by passing SAT Examination well .Other girls are in the process of writing their tests. We held SAT orientation workshops with the girls from July up to September with 10girls out of 15 as preparation for the SAT Examination.

**Observation and Lessons Learnt**

An overwhelming number of girls presented their needs to the department ,most of them were requesting for school fees and some need their cases to be followed up A number of cases were recorded and some files were opened .Most of the girls who visited the department came from within Chitungwiza ,also with those in other districts communicating their needs through the Social Welfare Department .Quite a number of the girls looked desperate and were orphaned ,rape survivors and visibly vulnerable .The demand for school fees remains high as most parents and guardians cannot afford the current fees prevailing in most schools .Some girls are dropping out of school because they cannot afford to pay tuition fees ,levies and exam fees .The period under review has been one of the most difficult and challenging that girls we support in Zimbabwe have ever faced .This is because financial resources meant to assist them progressively dwindled .The organization ,s funding deteriorated significantly during the period under review due to reasons beyond our control ,some which include the global economic recession that affected the budgets of a number of our partners .This unfavourable situation was worsened when some long term agreements underpinning key areas of our work eventually lapsed. Reduced funding opportunities by both former and prospective funders saw the organization streamlining and downsizing its operations .This adverse situation of limited support from the organizations funders compromised our delivery of empowerment interventions for girls and ,no doubt compounded the girls, vulnerability .

**Challenges**

In spite of severe financial shortages to assist girls at risk, the Girls at Risk Support Unit continued to offer emergency services to vulnerable girls and those abused, particularly rape survivors. During the period under review, the unit managed to undertake several strategic interventions for girls at risk and other vulnerable girls.

The case management officer had to deal with frustrating matters of rape where the family was involved and where although the rape would have been reported ,the family tries to cover up .At times they would even relocate the girl in order to frustrate the justice delivery system

In some cases, issuing of bail to some perpetrators led to grievous consequences as some of them went into hiding or breaching bail conditions and this consequently led to some beneficiaries strategically escaping the course of justice .Also some perpetrators in custody are not being brought to court as a result of acute fuel shortages and incessant travelling challenges, which led to some cases not being completed when they were meant to.

It is worthy to note that another negative accelerator was resistance in being state witnesses by some abuse case witnesses if the case involves relatives or neighbours as perpetrators.

**Conclusion**

This report has attempted to cover the main activities undertaken in the department, as well as highlighting the challenges it faced.