

CONCEPT NOTE

PREVENTION OF UNPLANNED PREGNANCIES AMONG 52 AT RISK ADOLESCENT GIRLS AT BUA COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL

MCHINJI, MALAWI

BRIEF PROJECT RATIONALE

With 137 births per 1000 women aged between 15 and 19 years, Malawi has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the world¹, where 29% of girls begin their childbearing by the age of 19². At present, 45% of all pregnancies in Malawi are unplanned and among sexually active 15-19 year old girls, only 15% use any form of modern contraceptives³.

Even though the benefits of educating girls have been well researched and documented, only 11% of girls in Malawi ever graduate from secondary school⁴, with unintended pregnancies remaining as one of the leading causes of high dropout rates among girls in the country, especially among girls who live in rural areas and come from families with limited means. Every year, girls in both primary and secondary schools fall pregnant and drop out of school in large numbers. Robbed of their right to an education, they remain trapped in the cycle of poverty, much like their parents before them.

SPECIFIC PROBLEM

Between June 2016 and September 2017, **38 girls** at Bua Community Day Secondary School in Mchinji fell pregnant and subsequently left school. From inquiries that we conducted at the school and in the district, we learnt that the following factors contributed significantly towards the occurrence of pregnancies among girls at the school;

- a) **Religious beliefs**, cultural norms, traditional misconceptions and the fear of perceived side effects of modern contraceptives; these factors prevent girls from seeking reproductive health services at the local health center, resulting in very low usage of contraceptives.

¹ [World Atlas](#)

² [Malawi Demographic & Health Survey 2015-2016](#)

³ [The Alan Guttmacher Institute – “Adolescents in Malawi: Sexual & Reproductive Health”](#)

⁴ Malawi National Statistics Office

- b) **Limited reproductive health knowledge**, resulting in girls engaging in risky sexual activity without being fully aware of the physical and emotional consequences of such actions.
- c) **Ineffective reproductive health services for the youth** – Youth Friendly Health Services at community health centers do not always successfully address the sexual health needs of young people, as providers of reproductive health services are not always able to fully engage their intended beneficiaries whether on premises or via outreach programs.
- d) **High levels of poverty**; a number of girls are doing what is known as “self-boarding”, whereby a group of girls rent rooms close to the school and live by themselves, because their family homes are located too far from the school. For such girls, life is particularly challenging when their parents are unable to provide full financial support. When that happens, the girls engage in sexual relationships with older men who provide them with money which the girls use to purchase food items and toiletries, in order to sustain their lives while they live away from home. Such risky sexual behavior leaves them vulnerable to pregnancy.

A combination of the factors stated above inevitably results in some of the girls falling pregnant. When that happens, the girls are forced to drop out of school so that they can raise their infants, and a good number of them end up getting married.

It bears mentioning that early pregnancy also has other far reaching implications beyond the girls’ education. There are a number of health issues and socio-economic problems which may arise as a result of early pregnancy in adolescent girls, and these include;

- a) the increased likelihood of maternal and infant morbidity and mortality as the girls’ physically immature bodies are more likely to suffer obstetric complications during childbirth,
- b) a rapidly growing population which puts a strain on already dwindling natural resources and leaves the government unable to provide adequate social services for everyone, and
- c) the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty among people with already limited means – girls who drop out of school are less likely to secure gainful employment or ensure that their children receive a good education.

OUR PROPOSED SOLUTION

Our project seeks to address one of the factors which contribute towards high pregnancy rates among adolescent girls in self-boarding schools; inadequate basic needs of food items and toiletries.

Project Goal

To prevent unplanned pregnancies among girls at Bua Community Day Secondary School in Mchinji, Malawi.

There are currently **52 girls** at the school, aged between 14 and 21, who live by themselves and away from home, and they have been identified as being most at risk of pregnancy. This project will be implemented for the benefit of these 52 girls and will run for a period of six months, beginning in January 2018 and ending in June 2018.

Project Objective

The objective is to supplement the 52 identified beneficiaries with everyday items of food, toiletries and sanitary products for a period of six months.

Specific Activity

To fulfill the objective above, we intend to procure and deliver basic items of foodstuffs, sanitary pads and other toiletries to the 52 girls at the school every month-end for a period of six months.

Expected Outcome

We expected to see reduced sexual activity among the girls, which occurs between the girls and older men in the area, in exchange of money.

Long term Impact

The long term impact of the project is the reduction of unplanned pregnancies among girls who live by themselves while studying at Bua Community Day Secondary School. This will enable the girls to remain in school and give themselves enough time to invest their education.

BRIEF BACKGROUND - THE DREAMWEAVER FOUNDATION

Established in 2014, the DreamWeaver Foundation is a registered non-profit organisation in Malawi, whose purpose is to improve the quality of life of vulnerable individuals, particularly those who live in remote and resource-deprived communities of the country.

As an organisation, we believe that the education of women is the surest method of breaking the cycle of poverty. We therefore make deliberate investment in the education of adolescent girls by providing them with the knowledge and resources which enable them to finish their secondary school education and then go on to live healthy, productive and dignified lives.

To that end, the Foundation addresses challenges which are faced by adolescent girls in secondary school, challenges which when left unchecked, inevitably lead to unintended pregnancies, one of the leading causes of high dropout rates among girls in secondary schools across the country.

The Foundation is governed by a 3 person Board of Trustees whose primary role is to ensure integrity, accountability and professionalism in the affairs of the organisation. Day-to-day matters are the responsibility of the management team which is made up of the Managing Director, the Program Manager, the Finance Manager and the Administration Officers.

BUDGET

PROVISION OF SUPPLEMENTARY BASIC ITEMS FOR 52 UNDERPRIVILEGED GIRLS, FOR SIX MONTHS									
	DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QTY	NO. OF PEOPLE	NO. OF MONTHS	UNIT COST	AMOUNT MWK	AMOUNT USD	
1.1	Toiletries								
	1.1.1	Sanitary pads	Packet	2	52	6	650.00	405,600.00	559.00
	1.1.2	Laundry soap	Bar	5	52	6	120.00	187,200.00	258.00
	1.1.3	Bath soap	Bar	2	52	6	320.00	199,680.00	275.20
	1.1.4	Toothpaste	Tube	1	52	6	620.00	193,440.00	266.60
	1.1.5	Body lotion	Bottle	1	52	6	900.00	280,800.00	387.00
	1.1.6	Tissue paper	Roll	2	52	6	250.00	156,000.00	215.00
	Subtotal						1,422,720.00	1,960.80	
1.2	Foodstuffs								
	1.2.1	Sugar	Kg	2	52	6	900.00	561,600.00	774.00
	1.2.2	Cooking oil	Litre	1	52	6	1,100.00	343,200.00	473.00
	1.2.3	Rice	Kig	3	52	6	600.00	561,600.00	774.00
	1.2.4	Beans	Kg	2	52	6	750.00	468,000.00	645.00
	Subtotal						1,934,400.00	2,666.01	
1.3	Administration / Project team								
	1.3.1	Motor vehicle fuel	Litre	25	1	6	825.00	123,750.00	170.55
	1.3.2	Communication	Day	1	1	6	2,000.00	12,000.00	16.54
	1.3.3	Refreshments	Person	1	4	6	1,500.00	36,000.00	49.62
	Subtotal						171,750.00	236.71	
TOTAL						3,528,870.00	4,863.52		