



2023 TEENAGE MOTHERS' LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

REPORT

27th March 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Teenage Mothers' Leadership Conference is an annual event initiated by Life Again to bring together pregnant girls and teenage mothers within the Upper West region where we are currently operational to expose them to a world of possibilities where they can be anything that they wish to be. The conference brings together influential and successful women within the region to share their stories with the girls to inspire them to be ambitious and work hard to achieve their dreams. It also introduces them to leadership skills such as public speaking, team work and critical thinking among others to help build their confidence. In addition, the conference provides a safe space for these group of girls to share their painful stories, to learn from others and most importantly to network freely without fear of being stigmatized or shamed. The maiden edition of the conference was organized last year in March to mark the International Women's Day Celebrations and has since been scheduled to take place every year within International Women's Day.

We (Life Again) organized the second edition of the Teenage Mothers' Leadership Conference dubbed 2023 Teenage Mothers' Leadership Conference with the theme Embrace Equity. The conference took place on Thursday, 9th March 2023 in Wa, the capital town of the Upper West Region and was attended by over 150 participants. The event brought together 100 teenage mothers and pregnant girls from five districts in the Upper West region namely Wa East, Wa West, Wa Municipal, Daffiama Bussie Issa, and Nadowli Kaleo districts and from over twenty communities including Charia, Sagu, Manwe, Goripie, Kperise, Bussie, Fian, Wogu, Issa and Dorimo just to mention a few. Life Again provided accommodation for about 50 girls who came from far communities on the 8th of March to enable them participant fully in the conference without missing out due to long hours of travels.

THE FLOAT

The 2023 Teenage Mothers' Leadership Conference started with a float at 8:00am where the girls walked on the streets of Wa with placards containing thought provoking messages to create awareness on teenage pregnancy and the struggles of pregnant girls and teenage mothers.



LifeAgain@2023

Teenage mothers on the streets creating awareness on teenage pregnancy and their struggles



LifeAgain@2023

Teenage mothers on the streets creating awareness on teenage pregnancy and their struggles



LifeAgain@2023

Teenage mothers on the streets creating awareness on teenage pregnancy and their struggles



LifeAgain@2023

Life Again team at the venue with placards



LifeAgain@2023

Some teenage mothers at the venue with placards



LifeAgain@2023

Some teenage mothers at the venue with placards

THE MAIN EVENT

The main event started at exactly 9:00am at the Regional Library and was attended by organizations such as the Department of Gender, National Youth Authority, Complementary Education Agency, Ghana Education Service, Ghana Health Service, Action Aid, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit, Queen Mothers Association and the Media among others. The program began with a powerful acceptance speech from the Chairperson of the event, Madam Rosemary Bangzie who is the Regional Adolescent Health Coordinator and a Queen mother who is passionate about girls' education and health. Then the Executive Director for Life Again, Saudatu Mohammed gave the welcome address talking on the vision of Life Again and the need for collaborations from other stakeholders in order to achieve the organization's vision.



The Chairperson, madam Rosemary Bangzie giving her powerful acceptance speech



The Executive Director for Life Again, Saudatu Mohammed giving the Welcome Address and calling out on key stakeholders to collaborate in achieving the organization's vision

Some successful and influential women from the region were invited to share their stories with the girls and provide them with insights and inspiration on how to achieve their dreams despite the challenges of being young mothers.



The Regional Director for the Department of Gender, Madam Charity Batuure shared her story and leadership journey with the girls



The Women's Commissioner (WOCOM) for the Wa Technical University, Alice also shared her story and leadership journey with the girls

The conference also featured representatives from the Ghana Education Service (GES), who educated the girls on the GES Re-entry Policy that allows teenage mothers to stay in school until delivery and re-enter after delivery. The Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) was also present to educate the girls on how to report cases of abuse and violence and how to seek additional support. The Ghana Health Service provided free Sexual Reproductive Health Education and Contraceptives to the girls as efforts to help them avoid subsequent unwanted pregnancies.



The Regional Director at the Ghana Education Service making his presentation on the GES re-entry policy



An Officer with the Ghana Health Service educating the girls on Sexual Reproductive Health and Contraceptives

There was also a session on confidence building which gave the girls practical tips on how to work on building their confidence, self-belief and taking up leadership roles.



Resource Person giving practical tips on confidence building



Presentation on confidence building

Some of the girls were given the platform to share their stories with the audience. Six of them shared their story talking about their lives before the pregnancy, what caused the pregnancy, the struggles they went through, the support they got from Life Again and how that support gave them hope and the impact it has made in their lives. It was an emotional session with some of them shedding tears remembering of the past.



Rashida sharing her story, talking on the challenges of being a teen mother and the impact of Life Again's support in her life. Rashida just completed Senior High School.



Afia sharing her story, talking on the challenges of being a teen mother and the impact of Life Again's support in her life. Afia is in her final year about to complete her 3-year training in sewing

Though coming from different communities with different traditional dances, the girls came together as a team and practice on one traditional dance which they presented beautifully to the audience. The dignitaries on the high table enjoyed the dance that some of them came down to join them in dancing.



Beneficiaries beautifully displaying a traditional dance called Bawa dance



Beneficiaries beautifully displaying a traditional dance called Bawa dance



The Chairperson of the Event joined them in dancing



Other dignitaries on the high table also joined them in dancing

With the support of a Non-Profit Organization called Necessary Aid Alliance, the girls were each given menstrual caps and trained on how to use it as efforts to end “period poverty” among the teenage mothers since the caps are reusable.



A staff from Necessary Aid Alliance giving a training on how to use menstrual caps



Issuing of menstrual caps to beneficiaries

Some friends of Life Again also donated clothes which was also given out to the girls at the end of the event.



Life Again team giving out donated clothes to beneficiaries



Executive Director for Life Again giving out donated clothes to a beneficiary

CONCLUSION

The 2023 Teenage Mothers' Leadership Conference was a huge success. The girls got enlightened on the Ghana Education Service Re-entry policy which allows pregnant girls to stay in school and re-enter school after delivery. They also got credible information on where, how and who to report cases of abuse and violence from the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit. With support from the Ghana Health Service, they got educated on Sexual Reproductive Health and accessed different types of contraceptives for free to enable them to prevent unwanted pregnancies. They also acquired immense knowledge on confidence building from experts who shared practical tips and guide lines on how to build their confidence. In addition, the girls were provided with the platform and safe space to share their stories, learn from the stories of their colleagues and influential women within the region as well as the opportunity to network and connect freely with others. From the feedback we took from the beneficiaries, the conference was impactful and they all left the venue, feeling EMPOWERED, looking forward to the next Leadership Conference.

A key lesson we learnt from this year's conference is that, some of the girls have not healed from the pain they experienced from the rejection, stigma and all the challenges they faced during their pregnancies and as young mothers. Though our support has given them hope but their wounds are not healed and we noticed this during their story sharing session. Some of them got overwhelmed with emotions and could not complete their stories as they were in tears. Those who were also listening to the stories were also in tears because they share similar stories and listening to others tell them reminds them of their own experiences. In line of this, we are considering using the services of a professional Psychologist who will engage them in therapy to give them complete healing.

We want to say a big thank you to our donors (Cheryl Brodie, Nana Ama Buckman, Priscilla Akoto-Bamfo, Andrew Akoto and Antika Company Ltd) and our partners (Department of Gender, Action Aid, National Youth Authority and Complementary Education Agency for supporting us organize the 2023 Teenage Mothers' Leadership Conference and we count on your continuous support in creating a world in which teenage pregnancy is no hindrance to girls' empowerment.

YE BARIKA (THANK YOU)!!!