

# EDUCATE 300 RURAL GIRLS-AT-RISK IN UGANDA

## SITUATION ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION AND GIRLS IN UGANDA

Uganda has the world's second youngest population after Niger. Up to 48.7 per cent of Ugandans are under 15 years of age (Population Reference Bureau, 2010). With a population growth rate at 3.2%, Uganda has one of the world's fastest population growth rates. It is estimated that 25% of Ugandan female teenagers have already had children hence high rate of early marriages, school drop-out and maternal mortality. Meanwhile 85% (approximately 28 million) of Ugandans live in rural areas with extreme poverty where access to basic social services like education remains largely unmet.

In the Uganda National Development Plan (2010) the Ugandan government has prioritized education as a key strategy to achieve socio-economic transformation but there is lack of sufficient facilities to guarantee quality education services especially in rural areas where the Ugandan majority live. Whereas educating girls is widely regarded as one of the best ways to improve the economy and health of developing countries ([www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org)), the Ugandan girls do not have equal opportunities of access to secondary education and face high drop-out rates as compared to boys.

Although the trends indicate that enrolments in absolute terms have increased, gender disparities in secondary education remain a major challenge in Uganda. According to the Uganda's Ministry of Education statistics (2006-2010), the percentage of girls in secondary schools stood at 45.5%, 45.8%, 45.9%, 45.7% and 45.3% in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. Furthermore over 68% of the Ugandan girls who join secondary schools do not complete senior four (first/basic level of secondary education in Uganda). The situation is worse in rural areas especially Sironko district where socio-cultural factors like abject poverty, preference for boys, huge orphaned-girls, domestic chores, circumcision, early marriages and teenage pregnancies make the girl child disadvantaged.

## PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPROVING GIRLS EDUCATION IN UGANDA

The project will contribute towards increased access to quality secondary education in Uganda by creating an enabling environment for 300 rural girls-at-risk in Sironko district to enroll and complete secondary education through the following interventions.

**Bursary scheme:** The project will provide comprehensive bursary scheme for 300 rural girls in Sironko to cater for school fees, scholastic materials, uniforms, food and other basic needs.

**Coaching and mentoring:** The project will conduct tutoring and mentoring sessions for rural girls so as to positively influence their mind-set and improve chances of their academic success.

**Health care support:** The project will provide health care support for 300 rural girls in Sironko which will focus on preventive and curative health care such as health education, treatment, supply of sanitary and mosquito nets.

**Community Partnership:** The project will conduct community outreaches for promotion of girls' education in Sironko. We intend to engage parents/guardians, families and communities to eliminate social-cultural factors that hinder girls from attending and completing school.

## **ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT**

The project will grantee the best possible education performance for unprivileged girls in Uganda so as to empower them to become self-reliance citizens free from absolute poverty. Consequently this will reduce gender disparities, illiteracy levels and foster achievement of Millennium Development Goals as well as education for all.

An educated Ugandan girl has higher earning potentials, enjoys good health, she is less likely to marry as teenager/start a family too early, has fewer children, less likely to be victim of gender base violence, more likely to educate/care for her children and be productive to the community and the country at large.

### **The Story of One Girl in Sironko**

Madina is the eldest of nine children. Her mother was a house wife while her father operated a retail shop in a trading centre in village. In 2003, Madina's mother became ill and was often in and out of hospital. Madina did not know what was wrong with her mother. In 2006, her father also became ill. Her parents' illness meant that most of their income went to expenses so Madina was usually absent from school due to lack of fees but also to take care of her sickly parents.

In August 2007, Madina discovered that her parents had HIV/AIDS. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2008 her mother died and about five months later her father also died. At the age of 16 years in 2009, she was forced to drop-out of school. Her only uncle advised her to get married as soon as possible so that she could take care of her siblings. Madina was not prepared for marriage and she was always among the best-three students in her class. Madina and her siblings started doing casual jobs mainly digging and fetching water and firewood for other people so as to meets the basic needs including school dues.

In April 2010, Madina failed to pay for registration of her senior four national examinations (Uganda Certificate of Education) due to lack of money. The figure in question was 65,000 Ugx (\$29). When Madina contacted her uncle for assistance, he only described her as a proud and undisciplined girl who disregarded his advice to marry.

Madina was at the cross-roads without any help, she cried for three days only to be discovered by a volunteer of Jesus Is Alive Ministries (JIAM) while she was considering committing suicide. Madina was counseled and assisted by JIAM to pay for her examinations fees and also school fees. Madina's performance in school has been very good and she sat for her Uganda National Examinations in October/November 2010.

There are very many girls in Sironko whose stories are unknown to the world but face similar or even more difficult limitations to education. Supporting us through this project will therefore enable us to make a difference in their lives.

In her own words Madina says: *"JIAM has permanently changed my life. They (JIAM) found me on my way to the grave and made me student. I now have a reason to live. I have hope for bright future. Thank you very much for this assistance."*