



# WORLD EDUCATION'S BANTWANA INITIATIVE IN SWAZILAND

## THE POTENTIAL POWER OF EDUCATING GIRLS

Adolescent girls who attend school delay marriage and childbearing, are less vulnerable to disease including HIV and AIDS, and acquire information and skills that lead to increased earning power. Evidence shows that the return on a year of secondary education for girls correlates to a 25% increase in wages later in life. Providing girls with an education helps break the cycle of poverty, creating a ripple effect of opportunity that influences generations to come.

## GIRLS' EDUCATION IN SWAZILAND

In Swaziland, only 13% of young people complete secondary school, and while 90% of youth transition to secondary school, of these, only 47% of girls make it to upper secondary. The data partly explains why Swazi girls are not finishing their secondary education: 22.1% of girls give birth before age 18, and 29% self-report dropping out of school because of pregnancy. Virtually no educational opportunities and few social support structures exist for these adolescent mothers and wives to continue their education. The added burden of Swaziland's 26.5% HIV prevalence rate—the highest in the world, which rises even higher to 31% for women -- means that young women face huge barriers to success and well-being, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty.

## WEI/BANTWANA'S DREAMS INNOVATION PROGRAM

With funding from USAID, World Education, Inc.'s Bantwana Initiative (WEI/Bantwana) is implementing a two-year **DREAMS** (**D**etermined, **R**esilient, **E**mpowered, **A**IDS-free, **M**entored, and **S**afe) Innovations program. The program will reach 1,800 at-risk girls in Sithobela and Siphofaneni, delivering programming to retain girls in secondary school, and reach adolescent wives and young mothers who were forced to drop out of school through unique alternative education platforms. The suite of programming will work to increase educational outcomes, increase social assets, and change social norms with regard to girls' education.

### PREVENTION INITIATIVES: KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL

- Life skills education offered through clubs
- Teacher training to reduce and report gender-based violence (GBV)
- An early warning system to identify girls at-risk of dropping out
- Scholarships to keep at-risk girls in school
- Community sensitizations on the value of girls' education

### RESPONSE INITIATIVES: EMPOWERING OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS

- Accelerated Learning "Catch Up" Classes for adolescent wives and young mothers who have dropped out of the formal school system
- Life skills education offered through clubs
- Mentoring and social asset building
- Early Childhood Stimulation training to ensure that young mothers can give their children the best start in life
- Community sensitizations on the value of girls' education

**Determined**

**Resilient**

**Empowered**

**AIDS-Free**

**Mentored**

**Safe**



## PREVENTION INITIATIVES: KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL

**PROTECT OUR YOUTH CLUBS (POY):** Building on successful in-school club models implemented by WEI/B in Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda, WEI/B will establish POY clubs for boys and girls in secondary school to build social assets, offer life-skills and ASRH and address gender norms and power relationships that contribute to unwanted pregnancy and early marriage. POY Clubs will target both boys and girls, with mixed sex and single sex activities. Excluding boys would miss the opportunity to engage them when they are most open to reflection and risk, and can also foster resentment. Involving boys will enlist them as allies in combating gender discrimination and violence. Students will acquire information and discuss experiences in interactive ways through drama, stories, poems and drawings. Evidence attests to the positive impact of school clubs on girls' self-esteem, aspirational attitudes, self-confidence, decision-making aptitudes, leadership skills, and capacity to challenge violence in schools and communities. WEI/B will forge linkages between clubs and local health clinics to foster access to ASRH services, including HCT.

**TEACHER TRAINING:** WEI/B will draw on a successful teacher training curricula tested in Uganda to equip teachers and school administrators with the knowledge, skills, and tools to address violence in schools, identify GBV and report and refer GBV cases for services. Teachers will also be trained on how to link GBV victims to a Community Case Care Worker/health/social worker in their community who can provide one-on-one follow up, track progress of the girl in school, and link her to necessary services. The program will be adapted and extended to further train teachers on gender sensitization, decreasing stigma around pregnancy in schools, and pro-girls' education approaches. Teachers will be engaged in shifting prevailing norms in schools and creating a supportive school environment where adolescent girls can thrive.

**EARLY WARNING SYSTEM:** Complementing these youth and teacher engagement activities, WEI/B will develop an early warning system in secondary schools to identify girls who are most vulnerable to drop out so that they can be targeted with appropriate support to help them be retained in school. Teachers will be trained to use a simple early warning tool developed by George Washington University, to track patterns of behaviors linked to drop out. The tool incorporates the "ABC" risk indicators for dropping out: absenteeism, behavior and course failure.

**SCHOLARSHIPS/EDUCATIONAL SUBSIDIES:** While the costs of attending primary school in Swaziland are largely covered by the government, students attending secondary school must cover the cost of their full tuition, and often room and board, and other fees. These costs can be substantial, particularly for poor parents or caregivers, who very often prioritize investing in boys' education over that of girls'. WEI/B will provide a scholarship program – offered through school block grants - to help increase the enrollment of girls. Identified at-risk girls will be eligible for the scholarship if she attends school regularly, gets good grades and does not get married while in school. Research has shown that this type of program helps keep girls in school, encourages high academic achievement and delays early marriage.

**COMMUNITY DIALOGUES:** At the community level, WEI/B will seek to shift social norms and expectations that keep pregnant girls and teen mothers out of the formal education system by reducing stigma around pregnancy and stressing the value of education for girls. Sustained advocacy efforts through community dialogues with traditional and religious leaders, older male partners and key opinion leaders will sensitize communities to the value of education for girls, reduce stigma related to teenage pregnancy, and address harmful gender norms.

## RESPONSE INITIATIVES: EMPOWERING GIRLS WHO ARE OUT-OF-SCHOOL

**ACCELERATED LEARNING "CATCH UP" CLASSES:** WEI/B will collaborate with Emlalatini Development Centre to offer distance education courses, and will engage secondary school teachers to provide remedial education teaching and support to out-of-school girls in need of basic literacy and numeracy, as well as those interested and eligible to sit for the Grade 7 Primary School Certificate Examination (PSCE), Junior Certificate, or O level exams. The Emlalatini Development Centre follows the same curriculum as formal secondary schools with learning materials converted into distance learning workbooks. Class schedules will be flexible to accommodate the needs of pregnant girls and teen mothers and will be held in primary schools or other community 'safe' spaces in afternoons, on weekends, and during holidays.

**LIFE SKILLS, SOCIAL ASSET BUILDING, AND OTHER WRAP AROUND SERVICES:** Using existing, evidence-based curricula and materials, WEI/B will provide all girls enrolled in OSSG with life skills, HIV prevention, comprehensive sexual adolescent reproductive health, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial training. Wrap around services will be provided by community volunteers who will undergo extensive training, and will receive regular support supervision from WEI/B as well as modest stipends to ensure quality. In addition, in collaboration with DREAMS partners, WEI/B will create linkages with clinical service providers offering PMTCT, HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT), family planning and GBV services. WEI/B will also connect OSSG members with community-based Case Care Workers/Home Visitors where available, who can provide additional support/service referrals where needed. Access to a supportive platform that retains pregnant girls and teen mothers on an education pathway, combined with wrap around services that build self-confidence and offer clinical linkages for HCT services, will ensure targeted AGYW make better decisions, decrease their risk to HIV infection and improve the health and education outcomes for both themselves and their babies.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD STIMULATION:** WEI/B will equip pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers with early childhood stimulation and parenting skills. WEI/B will identify and train early childhood stimulation volunteers who will coach mothers using a combination of lecture and hands-on demonstration. Research on ECD programs demonstrate that the benefits of early intervention are far-reaching and lead to reduced instances of stunting, heart disease, and mental illness; increased school attendance; improved social and gender equality; and enhanced prospects for income generation throughout life.

**COMMUNITY MENTORS AS ROLE MODELS:** Female university students, young or retired professionals (i.e. teachers, nurses, and government employees) will be identified and trained as volunteer community mentors using WEI/B's highly successful mentor training curriculum developed in Swaziland. Community mentors will meet regularly with girls to discuss topics related to transitioning to adulthood and will also help them to navigate the many challenges that could potentially prevent teenage mothers from regularly attending classes. Community mentors as role models will encourage and inspire school girls not to drop out of their education program, and share with them their own success stories in the midst of personal hardship, as well as provide them with guidance to help them to navigate difficult personal and cultural situations.