

## MOTHER SUPPORT GROUPS

### ZIMBABWE

#### THE STORY:

African girls are one of the most susceptible groups to HIV/AIDS, poverty and lack of education. Yet, a band of small Mother Support Groups in rural Zimbabwe are actively changing this statistic—with peanut butter. These grassroots organizations, founded out of the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), use their business savvy to produce and sell commodities such as peanut butter in hopes of generating enough income to fund the education of dozens of young, marginalized girls in their respective communities.

CAMFED began operations in 1993 to support underprivileged African girls who had been excluded from education. They provided these girls with school supplies and fees as well as mentoring. Today CAMFED has expanded and now supports girls in rural areas of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana and Tanzania with a variety of programs and support networks which aim to sustainably regenerate rural communities through education.

Because CAMFED cannot reach every girl living in rural Africa, community members have joined in the struggle through their creation of Mother Support Groups. Gertrude, a member of a MSG, explains the motivation for her group, *"We take our inspiration from CAMFED, who came here to assist our children. Now we want to help other children."*

The MSGs are now creating sustainable grassroots social change in their communities in a variety of modes including "income generating projects". These projects include soap making, sewing, and producing peanut butter and pottery in order to raise money for girls who are on the verge of dropping out of school. With the money earned from these projects, MSGs provide marginalized girls with pens, text books and writing pads as well as sanitary protection so they can confidently attend school and be both emotionally and financially sound. The MSGs are also creating change through their exchange visits in which they organize trips to meet with other rural MSG groups and share their knowledge, projects and experiences in hopes of strengthening their organizations. In addition, the groups have begun to attend district-level workshops on running businesses and providing social support for their communities. The groups play a significant role in supporting the welfare of girls, for MSG members mentor and support children who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. MSG groups also support the neediest families in their regions—such as those headed by the very young, very old or malnourished—by providing the families with various aid, such as help with domestic chores as well as emotional support. Furthermore, MSGs serve as a support group for the members themselves, as the mothers can share skills and boost their confidence.

The impact of the MSGs has been immense: last year alone the 333 MSGs, which span across Zimbabwe, Zambia and Ghana, supported the education of over 25,000 children, while providing aid and support to hundreds of impoverished families. The success of the MSGs is a testament to the change which is underway in rural African communities. Angeline Mugwendere of CAMFED explains the significance of the MSGs: *"Mothers' Support Groups have broken the glass ceiling and made rural women visible as human beings and social actors by making it possible for the many orphaned children to remain in school and at the same time provide each other with the much needed shoulder to lean on and motivation."*

#### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Support Spark in raising money for the MSGs in Zimbabwe at our ***Cocktails for a Cause* event on Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup> from 6-9pm**. Purchase your tickets at [www.sparksf.org](http://www.sparksf.org). With your help, SPARK's funds will work to allow:

- \* 20 Mother Support Groups to extend their income generating activities. Each group supports 80 children, thus with your help SPARK will touch the lives of 1,600 children;
- \* 80 MSG members to attend district-level business workshops;
- \* 80 MSG members to conduct exchange visits with transportation, lodging and meals provided.



## Fact Sheet: Girls Education in Africa

### **Africa:**

- 24 million girls are excluded from education in Africa.
- School fees average about \$250 a year which is also the per capita income of the average African family.

### **Sub-Saharan Africa:**

- 80% of Children in rural areas are not enrolled in primary school.
- For every 100 boys enrolled in secondary school there are only 89 girls.
- According to UNESCO, “The region accounts for 39 % of the world's out-of-school children. 52 % are girls.”

### **Zambia:**

- 86% of the population is below the poverty line and over 2/3 of the population live on less than a dollar a day.
- 23% of children do not attend primary school.
- Public expenditure on education: 2.8% of GDP.
- Over 30% of Zambian children are out of school.
- 65% of female children and 66% of male children attend primary school.
- 21% of female children and 26% of male children attend secondary school.
- 4% of females and 6% of males attend university.
- 19.3 % of adult males are illiterate while 25% of adult females are illiterate.

### **Zimbabwe:**

- 80% of the population is below the poverty line
- 10% of children do not attend primary school.
- 83% of female children and 82% of male children attend primary school.
- 42% of female children and 47% of male children attend secondary school.
- 3 % of females and 5% of males attend university.
- 9% of adult males are illiterate while 13% of adult females are illiterate.

***“The education of girls is the single most important investment that can be made in the developing world.”***

***- Lawrence Summers, World Economics Forum 2006***

