



## HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN ZIMBABWE A MAJOR CONCERN

*Poverty, early teen pregnancy, religion, culture and lack of parents and or guardians?*



### EARLY MARRIAGES AND CHILD HEADED FAMILIES .

HIV/AIDS and Covid-19 have claimed lives in Zimbabwe. In poor communities many homes have been left in the hands of children. Moreover, early teen sex, pregnancy and marriages exclusive to the teenage girl are being witnessed. Young boys are forced by circumstances to do illegal gold panning whilst girls becomes maids to take care of siblings. This result in them dropping out of school.

### POVERTY .

This is the most common cause of school dropouts in Zimbabwe. Shortages of financial resources has resulted in high school children sitting home and exposed to societal illnesses such as drug abuse, prostitution, pick pocketing, violence activities among others. Those who are considered to be responsible children, look for other means to support their younger siblings. The common being searching for piece jobs such as digging wells, gardening, doing laundry chores for the richer for few rewards thereof.

### RELIGION .

Religious beliefs is also another common cause of high school dropouts. Reinforcement of some norms and values which see especially the girl child as basically created for marriage is mind disturbing. The Masowe sects are among those religious groups which allow teen marriages and polygamy. Parents marry off their children in some cases as they think that they are obeying their deity. The law has not been vocal enough on these issues and human rights advocacy is key.

### POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.

Poor academic performance is another cause of high school dropouts. The marginalized are hit the hardest. Covid-19 has seen the educational structure moving from physical to online lessons. Most high school students from marginalized areas are failing dismally as they have no access to necessary devices and the internet to contact online lessons. Moreover there is a common belief that females are less intelligent than boys. It seems that most girls have less confidence and low self-esteem as they lag behind in academic performance. Some girls may discourage their parents to continue paying their fees as they persistently fail and repeat and would feel that it is a waste of resources as they end up being dropouts. Boys on the other hand are devoting themselves to illegal gold panning resolution where they idulge into dangerous activities like drug abuse

### Lack of school uniforms and school supplies.

Lack of School Supplies is another strong determinant of high school dropouts. Many families cannot afford tuition fees, school supplies & school uniforms due to economic hardships in Zimbabwe. High unemployment rates and inflation being key notable factors. Children drop out to go to work and help put food on the table. Children also may be kept home to help with domestic chores or caring for siblings when the parents or guidance spend the whole hunting for piece jobs striving to make ends meet. Older children, orphans, and girls are most likely to be left out in social programs by Non-governmental organizations hence are forced to drop out due to lack of support.

### ABUSES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In the Zimbabwean context there are a lot of complicated issues that surround teen marriages such as domestic violence and abuse as adults take advantage of the immature bride. Poverty and hunger has resulted in many adult relations being ticking bombs ready to explode. As they say 'a hungry man is an angry man', violence is being experienced in different forms; emotionally, physically and verbally. Many grown up children look for different ways to avoid tearful discomfort at home and resolute towards early marriages or living in the streets. When the streets provides an environment with peace through street gangs; boys are attracted by a different life style. Girls easily indulge into prostitution and all the hope, dreams, potential and aspirations are doomed. Everyone in life deserves a chance to live, breath and exercise humanity. That is only possible if the living conditions are promoting humanism. Some guardians have become animals, by abusing drugs themselves; becoming agents of violence. Without peace and rest children who are deemed mature perhaps make immature decisions '*drops-out*'



*Exodus 15:2 The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory.*

### LACK OF PARENTS COMMITMENT AND GUIDANCE; CULTURE AND BELIEFS.

Lack of parents or guardians fosters lack of guidance. Parents and or guardians especially in marginalized communities seldom values education. Their commitment towards their children's communities is always questionable. Their dedication determines how they hungrily work to pay tuition fees, school supplies and school uniform. When there is no push from the parents and or guardians high children end up dropping out of school as they do not have the zeal and inspiration to study or obtain any form of education. To add misery on such a topic, cultural beliefs reckons to torment the already burdened children. Beliefs are much heavier on the girl child than the male child. Most African societies value the education of the male child than that of the female child. Some girls drop out of school because the parents and or guardians decides to only pay for the male child. Many girls are passionate about school and would want to realize their full potential but do not have the means and access to tuition fees, school supplies, school uniforms and descent sanitary wear.

In Zimbabwe, dropouts are not experienced at the same rate. A girl child dropout rate, both in rural and urban secondary schools remains higher than the other gender. As mentioned earlier, this may imply that the girl child is overburdened by domestic chores which may also results in low academic performance and dropping out from school. The Zimbabwean school policy allows the affected pupils by early teen pregnancies to rejoin school after delivery but in most cases there are problems associated with that, such as, lack of funds to hire a maid. The future of such girls is bleak and lacks job prospects; their dreams are thwarted and are doomed.

### In Conclusion ...

There is high rate of high school dropouts both in the rural and urban areas of Zimbabwe. Girls drops out school at higher rate than boys. Dropouts face extremely bleak economic and social prospects. Compared to high school graduates, they are less likely find a job and earn a living wage, and more likely to be poor and to suffer from a variety of adverse health outcomes. The major essences influencing school dropouts were found to be students' socioeconomic status, lack of parental support, low family education, family mobility, students' absenteeism and truancy, lack of interest in education, child bearing and domestic chores, students delinquent behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, poor economy among others.

### Intervention

Provision of tuition fees, school supplies and school uniforms to the marginalised. Having workshops, trainings, guidance and counselling, campaigns with children and also to promoting high school children finishing their education despite their gender. Talk to them about career realities and encouraging them not pressurize themselves to do too much. Most importantly to pray for them.

**'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. "' — Jeremiah 29:11**