

# **Success in Girl Education and Women's Empowerment - An African Perspective:**

## **The Case of Saker Baptist College.**

### **The Project Proposal**

#### 1. Description of the topic and its importance.

Girl's education is globally recognized as a tool for closing the gender gap and achieving national development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Education is a powerful tool for women's empowerment as quality education enables girls with the tools; opportunities and choices to make decisions that impact their lives as well as transform society to view women positively and create the conditions for their empowerment. By educating girls we empower women to contribute actively in reducing poverty, improving family wellbeing, increasing school participation, improving health outcomes for themselves and their families. Educating women empowers them economically and socially to participate in the public sphere and improves their coping skills for unexpected outcomes. In short, education opens a universe for women and enables them to use their voice for their self-empowerment.

Gender disparity in education is highest in developing countries many of which are in Africa. As a result, investments in girl's education have been flowing into African countries bringing strategies and ideas that have shown promising results in other countries and are being tested in these countries. However, there are successful examples of girl's education in Africa by Africans, which can be scaled up and easily replicated. These examples are indigenous to the African context and are relatable to many of the stakeholders promoting girls' education in Africa. This proposal aims to highlight such an example with the hope of inspiring policy makers, donors, families and the girls themselves to the possibilities of an affordable, impactful and successful girl's education program.

Saker Baptist college is a girls' secondary school in Cameroon, Africa, established by North American Baptist Missionaries in 1962 with 36 girls enrolled. It was a five-year program until 1993, when it added a two-year upper sixth program graduating girls with both an ordinary level ('O' Level) five-year program and advanced level ('A' Level) certificate. The average age of admission is 13 years, and over 8,000 students have graduated since the school's 56 years of continuous activity. These girls have gone on to higher education and have achieved success in their areas of specialization locally, nationally and globally. They have in turn educated their children, grandchildren and relatives as well as acted as mentors to many others. They have set a standard for girl's education and women's empowerment thereby influencing gender relations and elevating the position of women in their country and beyond. This project aims to study the contributing factors to this success with the hope that the results will be used to develop similar girl's education programs in Africa especially for the hard to reach urban and rural girls.

The project will begin with interviews of some past and current students as well as teachers, policy makers and parents to ascertain what they believe to have been the most important and influential contributing factors to their success in Saker and beyond. These findings will be analyzed and scored and those with the highest score will form the basis for a data collection and analysis of the factors that have been identified as the most important and effective contributing factors to their learning and achievement. The results of the data analysis will be presented in the form of a report which can be used as a guideline for those interested in replicating the Saker

model. A documentary will also be produced for use as a tool for advocacy and fund raising to inspire girls, parents, policy makers and the private sector to fund similar projects in girls' education.

2. The originality of the proposed study (explain what makes the project distinctive);

Studies in girl's education have tended to look at the challenges to girl's education and then define strategies to address these problems. In contrast, this project will demonstrate how solutions to girls' education have been applied using an integrated approach by addressing all the challenges at the same time in the school environment with support from stakeholders from a variety of sectors. It will highlight the role of partnerships between the school and local government, the private sector, parents and communities. It will provide comprehensive and conclusive evidence on what works in girl's education in an African context with a diversified group of girls representing different ethnic, cultural, social and economic differences.

This project will let the main players (the girls, teachers, parents, families etc.) tell us what they believe has made the school a success in producing talented and successful girls for the last 56 years. They will identify the activities, values and conditions that enabled their learning, and subsequent progress and achievements post-secondary school. As each person's experience is different, the results will allow us to draw conclusions from a variety of experiences and sources hence providing a more comprehensive view of the main contributing factors to a successful girl's education initiative. The study will look at what worked by conducting individual and focus group interviews of students, teachers, policy makers and parents; analyzing data on enrolment, completion, teacher and parental participation, the curriculum, values, etc. and from this prepare a report which will serve as a guide for those who wish to replicate the experience. A documentary will be produced featuring a selected number of girls representing ethnic, geographic, economic differences and year of enrolment. Parents and teachers will also be interviewed. The documentary will be used as an advocacy tool for promoting girl education and for fund raising.

### 3. The basic ideas and hypotheses.

In conducting the study, we will try to prove the following hypotheses:

\* Girl's education can be affordable, inclusive, impactful and sustainable

\* Partnerships in girl's education are effective efficient and profitable even in Africa.

\* Girl's education can empower women and have an impact beyond the girls to affect their families, communities, nation and the world. The return on investment is great.

\* Africans have the knowledge, skill, determination and vision to educate and empower girls and women.

\* Empowered women can be role models and advocates for girls and women's rights and empowerment.

\* Public private partnerships (entrepreneurial philanthropy) is the future for girls' education)

4. The methodology to be used (including the activities undertaken to gather the data for your project and the techniques that will be used to analyze the data in order to prove the thesis stated above).

a) Questionnaire and focus groups addressed to current and past Saker girls, as well as parents and teachers: The project will begin with a questionnaire to all Saker graduates and current students to determine what in their view contributed to making their education successful. The questionnaire will help us identify the conditions that contributed to making the girls educational

experience at Saker outstanding and will serve as the basis for an in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data.

b) Qualitative and quantitative analysis of data for the activities identified from the questionnaire and focus groups above. The areas of focus for data analysis might include; access and enrolment, the quality of education and survival rates (dropout, transition, repetition, and learning outcomes) completion rates, the policy context, parental participation, the learning and school environment, and teacher management etc. We will work closely with the school to collect

information on the following plus those identified from the questionnaires.

- \* Student enrolment and completion for all classes over the 56 years of the school's existence by ethnicity, income and cultural differences. The data will be analyzed for student performance, transition and completion.

- \* Curriculum and subject choice to see preferences between the STEM and liberal arts and student performance in these subjects.

- \* Teacher qualifications, training, years of service etc.

- \* Parental engagement, scholarships, fees, partnerships etc.

- \* For each class analyze student success rate at completion and post-secondary

- \* Second and third generation of students at Saker or other schools

The findings will be summarized in a report which will show how the main contributing factors to making Saker a successful model of an impactful, sustainable and empowering girls education initiative.

c). A documentary of the Saker experience will be made featuring a select number of interviewed students (past and present) teachers, parents, and the Baptist Mission to hear their experiences, contribution and opinions on why Saker is a success. Participants will be identified to represent ethnic, economic, cultural differences and enrolment year. The documentary will be aired to promote girls' education and women's empowerment targeting areas where female literacy is low and women's empowerment is lagging.

5). The relevance of the project to the programmatic goals of girl's education and women's empowerment.

a. Increase visibility of African girl's education by Africans for Africans.

b. Fund successful and affordable models of girl's education in Africa for the underserved rural and urban girls' and women.

c. Mobilization of African women around girls and women's rights and empowerment. Produce a documentary of their journey as inspiration for other girls and women. Begin a movement on girls and women's rights by acting as advocates, mentors etc.

d. Engaging the private sector to fund similar projects.