

Improving the Situation of Girls in Malawi



A Report on Mnjolo Village Initiative

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT
CEDAW	CONVENTION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
CIDA	CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
CP	COUNTRY PROGRAM
CRC	CONVENTION FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
DEO	DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER
GOM	GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI
GVH	GROUP VILLAGE HEADMAN
NGO	NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
NORAD	NORWEGIAN AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT
TA	TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY
UNICEF	UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1991 UNICEF has supported the Government of Malawi to improve access and retention rates of children in primary school. Using the experience of the BRAC project in Bangladesh, UNICEF assisted communities to establish schools within easy and safe walking distances for their children. In 1994 government removed tuition fees, the requirement for school uniform and provided assistance to all community schools. These measures have succeeded in increasing access, but unfortunately very little progress in retention rates has been made. Children and in particular girls continue to drop out from school in alarming numbers.

In 1999 a review of the Education Project revealed that some of the factors that contribute to the high drop out rates are cultural. Traditional leaders who were present during the review pointed out for example that the practice of initiation for girls and boys contributes to the high drop out rates of children from school. Among the reasons given for this is that the initiation process, besides passing on Malawi's cultural values of respect, mutual faithfulness, love for one another and communal responsibility, catapults children into the adult world. It was pointed out for example that the initiation curriculum on sex education is inappropriate for the target group since it is based on the assumption that the initiates will get married immediately after the ceremony. As a result, initiates regard themselves as too "mature" to proceed with their education and therefore some of them drop out of school to get married. What is of greater concern was the revelation that in some communities the initiation process includes rituals where young girls are subjected to sexual activity with older men. Such practices are dangerous as they expose young girls to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

On the positive side, the review recognised the importance of traditional leaders in addressing issues in their communities. These leaders have a wealth of information and expertise that can be used in the problem solving process. Such expertise is indispensable in particular in areas that deal with cultural beliefs and practices since it is the traditional leaders that are custodians of culture. It was also observed that traditional communities have structures that can be effectively used for community based interventions. Unfortunately the review noted that both chiefs and the community structures are often under-utilised and in some instances even ignored. These findings led UNICEF in the year 2000 to sponsor a study to find out what cultural values, beliefs and practices exist in communities and the impact that these have on the education and health of girls in Malawi.

Among the findings was that initiation ceremonies are part of a traditional education system aimed at passing on Malawi's cultural heritage to the young. It was also found that in some communities, sexual activity plays a significant role in

some customs like those marking pregnancy, birth, puberty and death. This exposes young people especially girls and women to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

In 2001 a pilot project was started in Mnjolo village, a rural community outside the City of Lilongwe in Malawi. Mnjolo is home to about 600 people of which 50 percent are of school going age. The people of Mnjolo belong to the Achewa tribe, which is probably the largest ethnic group in Malawi. The people in this community are very traditional and observe many of the customs that were identified as having an impact on the survival and development of girls.

About 50% of Mnjolo's children are in school. The rest dropped out and many of them are married. There are as many girls in school as there are boys. But like other schools in Malawi, Mnjolo suffers from high drop out rates in particular during the first four years of primary education.

The major problems in the community include poverty, high drop out rates of children from school and poor health that includes high levels of HIV/AIDS infections. An earlier study had established that among the factors contributing to these problems are the following:

- The predominant role of sexual activity in some of the rituals involving child rearing, coming of age and death of the husband. These often put the lives of girls and women at risk.
- Non-supportive home environment for children's education
- Poverty that sometimes forces children into early marriages, prostitution or employment.
- Lack of information on HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and growth monitoring
- Lack of water and sanitation facilities. This contributes to poor health.
- Poor learning environment characterised by lack of class rooms, teachers houses, learning materials, recreation equipment
- Poor teacher /pupil relationship. It was reported that some teachers use abusive against pupils while others exploit girls sexually.

The overall goal of the initiative in Mnjolo Village is to create a safe and supportive environment for girls' survival and development. This requires behaviour change that must be generated from within the community. Since the people in Mnjolo are very traditional and since issues that are rooted into the culture often require a cultural approach, the initiative has made a deliberate effort to incorporate a process that is in line with Malawi's cultural heritage.

First, the initiative recognises chiefs as the custodians of culture and therefore major agents of change. Chiefs have therefore been given an opportunity to play a leading role in influencing behaviour change. Secondly, the initiative has a positive approach. Instead of condemning the community for the "harmful" practices, a deliberate effort has been made to identify and strengthen the positive aspects in

Malawi's culture and build upon these to bring about the change that would benefit the child. Thirdly, knowledge and information is crucial if people are to make an informed decision. The initiative therefore oriented all duty bearers and rights holders on HIV/AIDS and human rights as enshrined in the CRC and CEDAW. It was on the basis of this information that the community analysed its problems and sought solutions that are sustainable.

The results are encouraging. Traditional leaders have taken up the challenge to fight the spread of HIV within their communities as well as to promote the education of girls. What is most encouraging is that chiefs have proposed solutions that are cost effective, sustainable and take into account Malawi's cultural heritage. The following are some of the achievements so far:

- Chiefs have decided to be open in discussing the issue of HIV/AIDS
- Chiefs have composed songs that communicate messages on HIV/AIDS and girls' education.
- Chiefs have instructed their anamkungwi to substitute all sexual rituals pertaining to certain customs with herbal medicines.
- Community based facilitators are holding village level meetings to create an awareness on HIV/AIDS as well as mobilise support for the education of all children and in particular of girls.
- The anamkungwi will review the sex component of the initiation curriculum in the light of information on HIV/AIDS and the problem of school drop out rates
- The girls in Mnjolo School now feel closer to the female teachers and are coming to accept them (the teachers) as people who are genuinely interested in helping girl's complete school.

The Way Forward

The need for an integrated approach in this initiative is crucial and so is the mobilisation of technical, financial and moral support. For example the move by anamkungwi to replace sexual rituals with herbal remedies in the child weaning custom needs to be supported by establishing growth-monitoring programmes in the area. If this is not done and children start dying probably from malnutrition, the community can easily attribute these deaths and illnesses to non-compliance of their cultural demands and the temptation to revert to the old ways may be strong. It is also for reasons such as the above that this report is making the following that this report is recommending the following recommendations:

Recommendations

☛ UNICEF should strive to get other NGOs in Mnjolo area in particular those that deal with issues of poverty such as food insecurity, lack of income and high illiteracy levels. This proposal is in view of the fact that many of the problems in Mnjolo are linked to poverty.

☛Traditional healers as well as birth attendants are important in this initiative. Their orientation however should go beyond the rights of the child. It should help them in their profession. It is for this reason that UNICEF should collaborate with the Ministry of Health to prepare a comprehensive briefing package for this group of duty bearers. Similarly, teachers need assistance to make their lessons lively and interesting.

☛Traditional and religious counsellors as well as traditional healers and birth attendants are constantly in touch with the people. It is recommended that these groups should be exposed to HIV/AIDS counselling techniques so that they are better equipped to give people living with AIDS the type of support that they need.

Finally, support for girls' education needs to be strengthened. The highest drop out rate is during the first four years of primary education. Again, studies have shown that sexual activity in Malawi starts at a very young age. It is for these reasons that efforts should be made to start a serious dialogue with children when they are in Standard 3 when they are about eight years old. The dialogue should aim at keeping the children free of HIV/AIDS and helping them to complete primary education. This monitoring should include identification of children from poor families who have the potential to do well in their studies. Such children should be sponsored so that they can complete their studies up to secondary school level. If this is not done, Malawi will continue to lose many children due to HIV/AIDS and poverty and hence fail to tap on the tremendous human resources that it has at its disposal.

INITIATIVE FOR IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF GIRLS IN MNJOLO VILLAGE

1. THE CONTEXT:

1.1 UNICEF's Support to the Education Sector in Malawi

Since 1991, the objective of UNICEF support to the Education Sector in Malawi has been "to assist government improve access and retention rates of children in primary school". Two projects were initially developed in order to achieve this objective. These were "Keeping Kids in School" supported by NORAD and "Closing the Gender Gap" funded by CIDA. Both projects focussed on girls' education since it was observed that due to a variety of reasons, girls' participation in the education system is relatively lower than that of boys. Both projects used "Bringing schools closer to home" as a major strategy. Using the experience of the BRAC project in Bangladesh, communities were assisted in establishing schools within easy and safe walking distances for their children. In addition to this, parents were encouraged to be actively involved in the running of their schools.

The above strategy combined with the Free Primary Education Policy that government introduced in 1994 resulted in tremendous increases in enrolment in particular for girls. Unfortunately, there was minimum impact on retention rates. The education system continued and still continues to lose children at an alarming rate in particular during the first four years of primary education. *More than 60% of children continue to drop out of school during the first four years of primary school.*

1.2 Mid Term Review of the 1997-2001 Programme of Support Key Observations

In 1999, UNICEF reviewed its 1997-2001 programme of support to government. The Education review was participated by a cross section of people that included traditional leaders, parents, teachers and representatives of school committees. The key question "why do girls continue to drop out of primary education in spite of the efforts being made to retain them" was the main point for discussions. Among the various factors that were cited was the role that cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices play on the survival and development of children. It was observed for example that *in certain communities the practice of initiation for girls and boys contributes to the high drop out rates of children in school.* One of the reasons given for this is that the initiation process, besides passing on Malawi's cultural values of respect, mutual faithfulness, love for one another and communal responsibility, catapults children into the adult world. It was pointed out for example that the initiation's curriculum of sex education is inappropriate for the target group since it is based on the assumption that the initiates will get married immediately after the ceremony. As a result, initiates regard themselves as too "mature" to proceed with their education and therefore a considerable number drop out of school to get married. What is of greater concern was the revelation that in

some communities the initiation process includes sex rituals where young girls are made to have sex with older men. Such rituals are dangerous as they expose young girls to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

On the positive side, the review recognised the tremendous role of leaders in addressing issues in their communities. Traditional leaders have a wealth of information and expertise that can be used in the problem solving process. Such expertise is indispensable in particular in areas that deal with cultural beliefs and practices since it is the traditional leaders that are the “gate keepers” of culture. Unfortunately, chiefs are not given an opportunity to play their designated leadership role in many initiatives and are often regarded as passive recipients of “tailor made interventions”. It was also observed that traditional communities have structures that can be effectively used for project implementation. Unfortunately these structures are often over looked in project formulation and implementation.

1.3 Follow Up to the Mid Term Review

It was in the light of these findings that in 2000 UNICEF commissioned a desk study to:

- ☛ Find out what cultural values, beliefs and practices exist in communities and the impact that these have on the education and health of girls in Malawi.
- ☛ Recommend a course of action for UNICEF that incorporates the key findings of the Mid term review.

The study that confined itself to two ethnic groups, the Achewa and the Ayao found the following among others:

- ⇒ Malawi’s rich culture promotes values of fidelity, mutual faithfulness and communal obligations to each other among others.
- ⇒ Initiation ceremonies are part of a traditional education system aimed at passing on Malawi’s cultural heritage to the young. They mark a transition into adulthood.
- ⇒ Traditional education is value based with social sanctions liberally used to bring about conformity and the required change in behaviour.
- ⇒ The pedagogical process of initiation ceremonies is much more active and effective. The knowledge and experience gained lasts for a lifetime
- ⇒ In some communities, sexual activity plays a significant role in traditional customs marking pregnancy, birth, puberty and death. The risk of spreading HIV/AIDS through these rituals is high.
- ⇒ Traditional leaders are very influential in their communities. They have the potential to influence behaviour change in particular in cultural matters

2.0 MNJOLO VILLAGE PROJECT

These findings, prompted UNICEF in 2001 to pilot a project in Mnjolo village aimed at creating a community that is safe and supportive of girls’ survival and development.

Why Mnjolo village?

The selection of Mnjolo was based on the following reasons:

- During the 1992/97 GOM /UNICEF Country program, a school catering for children in Mnjolo Village was assisted under the CIDA funded project “Closing the Gender Gap”. Through this assistance, the community constructed four classrooms, a teacher’s office, furniture and the head teacher’s house. Water was provided. Children were provided with learning materials. The school also received support from the Norad Funded project “Keeping Kids in School”. Under the project, teachers were trained in child centered approaches to teaching.
- However, recognizing that a school can only thrive with the active involvement of the community, UNICEF supported the training of school committee members in April 2001. The training included a briefing on human rights with particular focus on the rights of women and girls as specified in the CRC and CEDAW. Among the issues that were highlighted during the training was the high drop out rates among girls. This was in part attributed to cultural beliefs and practices prevalent in the community.
- Mnjolo is a rural community just outside the City of Lilongwe and therefore easily accessible for monitoring purposes. Most of the inhabitants belong to the Achewa tribe- one of the tribes studied in the early phase of the project

2.1 Location, the People and the Traditional Lines of Authority

The village of Mnjolo is situated 20 km east of Lilongwe the capital city of Malawi. It is accessible by road throughout the year using four wheel drive vehicles. A village is the smallest administrative unit in the community. It consists of a number of households and is headed by a village a chief¹. Data collected by primary school teachers in 2001 showed that Mnjolo village has 124 households the majority of which are male headed. Given a national average of 5 people per household, Mnjolo’s population is therefore estimated at 600 people. About half of these belong to the Under 18 age group.

The Missing Children

According to the baseline data, half the population that is more than 300 people, are of school going age. Out of this, one hundred and thirty (130) attend school. This represents 43%. But what is surprising is that the door to door survey revealed that only 150 and not 300 people is of school going age. What has happened to the other 150 children? The only possible explanation is that the 150 “*missing*” children are married. According to Malawi’s custom, young people join the adult ranks upon marriage. Indeed during the data collection exercise, there were cases of girls and boys aged 14 and 15 years who were included in the adult group because of their marital status. What is happening in Mnjolo a scenario where *adolescents are being catapulted into adulthood through marriages and parenthood.*

2.2 Community Administrative Structure

¹ In this report, the words “chief” and “village headman” are used interchangeably.

A number of villages are grouped together under the leadership of a group village headman (GVH). The GVH for Mnjolo is Mbuna. Several group village headmen are under a traditional authority (TA). This is the highest level in the community's administrative structure. The TA for Mnjolo is Kalumba.

Chiefs are not elected. Among the Achewa a chief is selected by a group of matriarchs related to the chief. They are known as KUKA. Being a matriarchal society, a chief is always selected from his or her mother's lineage. Some of the matriarchs also act as the chief's counsellors in particular on issues affecting women. Chiefs are very influential.

Chiefs have a number of traditional advisers² or counsellors. Three of these are worth noting among the Achewa. There is a male counsellor known as *wakunjira*. One of his major responsibilities is the initiation of boys through *Gule wamkulu*. Then there are two female counsellors known as *anamkungwi*. These are responsible for girls' initiation. These counsellors have important roles in the community because they also act as the chief's counsel. They are personal to the chief and relinquish their posts when a new chief is installed. Their duties are to help the chief in all matters that affect the community. The female advisers are in particular useful in matters concerning female members of the community. The counsellors' role is powerful. Because advisers are personal to the chief, whatever they do needs to be sanctioned by the chief. For example if someone requires information from advisers, especially if such information concerns sensitive matters, he/she should approach the chief. The chief will not only identify the appropriate counsellor who can supply the information but also give that counsellor his permission to talk about the issue.

Mnjolo village has a *mzinda*. *Mzinda* refers to a traditional establishment that allows a Chewa chief to initiate young men into manhood in accordance with the Chewa customs and tradition of *Gule Wamkulu*. Another important group in this hierarchy is the "*Atsabwalo*". These are people who are responsible for the whole organisation of the performances of *Gule wa Mkulu* and are therefore crucial in the communication chain. Their role can be likened to that of a secretary general.

Having a *mzinda* means young girls can be initiated into womanhood through a special ceremony called "*Mkangali*". Not every chief has a *mzinda*. Therefore for Mnjolo to have one is a sign of achievement and great respect. This tradition has always been at loggerheads with Christianity. The missionaries believe that the custom, with its strong beliefs in the ancestral spirits is heathen and any one associated with it will be condemned to hell.

2.3 Some of Malawi's Cultural Values

² The words counselor and adviser are used interchangeably.

Children are very precious in Malawi's culture. Traditionally, the more children one has the better. Malawians believe in **collective responsibility**. Every man or woman is expected to help mould the young. As such, if a child misbehaves, one does not have to be a parent to rebuke that child. Similarly, a child is expected to **respect** older people regardless of whether or not they are relations. This concept of collective responsibility led to the institution of various customs that are observed by the whole community for the welfare of an individual. For example a whole community is expected to abstain from sexual activity for a number of days if there is a death in the village. To ensure compliance, women vacate their houses to spend a night with the bereaved family. This helps to condole the family as well as to make sure that the requirement for abstention is observed. **Communal obligation** is also manifested in the care of orphans. This explains why people are often ready to take in orphans because of the belief that a child belongs to the community. Among the Chewa there are several parables and sayings that strengthen this value. Among them is one that says "*Mwana wa mzako ndi wako yemwe...*" which means "Any child is your child..."

Marriage and the family are important institutions in Malawi's society. A marriage is a union not just of one man and woman but of families and clans. Malawi has a strong tradition of the extended family system that reinforces the concept of communal obligation. Unfortunately this is breaking down due to the ravages of HIV/AIDS as well as economic hardships.

Promiscuity and pregnancy out of wedlock are not condoned in Malawi's culture. Traditionally, girls were encouraged to marry young in order to minimize these problems. Today, one still finds parents who encourage their girls to marry at an early age so that they do not bring shame to the family. Initiation ceremonies were originally intended to prepare girls for their adult roles including married life. Since sexual intercourse is an integral component of a marriage, the young initiates were thoroughly prepared for this function and in some communities this preparation included practical experience often with older men.

2.4 Some of the Beliefs and Customs that have an Impact on Women and Girls

Pregnancy and Child rearing

Among the Chewa care of the baby starts with conception. When a woman becomes pregnant, the anamkungwi advise her on how to take care of herself, what to eat, how to dress etc. Male counsellors advise the man on the need to be faithful and how to take care of the wife's physical and psychological needs. The couple is advised that having sexual relationship from the time the lady is 8 months pregnant until the baby is about four months old is detrimental to the mother and child. It is believed that the unborn baby is susceptible to infections that can be passed on during the sexual union. Restrictions after the birth of the baby are designed to protect both mother and child. The child needs maximum attention from the mother and sexual activity could result in pregnancy. The man is advised to be especially

faithful when the wife is pregnant and when she is nursing the new baby. Any unfaithfulness on his part could result in the child being afflicted with a serious illness called “*tsempho*”.

When the baby is “of age”(four to six months old), a ceremony *Kutenga mwana* is performed. This has three functions. It allows parents to resume sexual activity, it “protects” the baby from certain illnesses and death and it marks the baby’s entry into the mainstream of society. It was reported that the ceremony has a sexual component that the mother has to fulfil. There are no problems if the mother has a husband. But if she does not, then a partner is identified for her. The risk of HIV/AIDS in this case is obvious.

Initiation into Adulthood

Malawi’s values of respect for elders, hard work, resourcefulness, honesty, punctuality, mutual faithfulness in marriage and communal obligation to each other are passed on to the young through a traditional system of education of which initiation ceremony is a major component in traditional communities. Among the Achewa, girls are initiated as soon as they reach puberty. The same thing is true for boys.

Initiation ceremonies mark the transition into adulthood. Traditionally, girls used to get married soon after they reached puberty. Accordingly, many were engaged at an early age of 12 and 13. Since sexual activity is a very important aspect of marriage, the girls were therefore thoroughly prepared for this important function and the curriculum of initiation ceremonies devoted considerable time teaching girls how to be successful sexual partners. Girls who were already engaged got married soon after the ceremony. For those who were not, the elders selected some men from the community to perform the ritual of *fisi or kuchotsa mafuta*. This is a ritual that involves initiating the young girls into actual sexual activity. The term “*kuchotsa mafuta*” probably means breaking the hymen since prior to this the girls are virgins.

Unfortunately in many communities including Mnjolo it appears that the initiation curriculum has not been revised to conform to the changing times and circumstances. The continued practice of *kuchotsa mafuta* puts girls not only at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS but also subjects them to psychological trauma. This is because the initiates do not have any say in the matter and they are made to perform the sexual act with a man they do not know. It is also argued that the intense sex education arouses in some girls the desire to experiment what they learn. The ritual also influences the way initiated girls are perceived in the community. Their sexual experience gives the impression that they have no grounds to say no to sexual advances. It is argued that the girls’ sexual desires aroused during initiation ceremonies need to be fulfilled.

Among the Achewa, the initiation of boys is linked to the secret fraternity known as “*Gule Wamkulu*”. The fraternity is characterised by masked dancers who represent the spirit world. Although information in this area is very scanty due to the strict

code of secrecy observed by members, it appears that the socialisation process during boys' initiations indirectly contributes to the problems that girls face in the community. Among other things, boys are encouraged to be strong and to prove that they are men. Unfortunately to some boys this means sexually harassing girls.

Because initiation marks a transition into adulthood, children who go through the process feel that they have been transformed into men and women. They (in particular boys) also regard as a "child" anyone who has not been through the process. It is this attitude that sometimes gets such children into trouble in the school system. Unfortunately teachers who are not initiated are incapable of appreciating and understanding the psychological conflict that such children experience. To them, the children are unruly and need to be disciplined through punishment. Indeed it has been observed that in communities that have initiation ceremonies, the drop out rate is higher after the children graduate from this traditional practice.

3.0 SOME SELECTED SOCIAL INDICATORS

3.1 Health

The people in Mnjolo are generally very poor. The majority of families depend on charcoal and firewood selling for an income. The health indicators for the village are poor. HIV/AIDS is contributing heavily to the negative health status. Poor personal hygiene, made worse by lack of safe and adequate water supply, contributes to such diseases like scabies, diarrhoea and bilharzia. Malaria is also a major menace³. There were no NGOs working in the village during the time when this report was being compiled. There is lack of information on HIV/AIDS as well as on reproductive health and growth monitoring.

Mnjolo Village has no health facility. The nearest health facilities are Nathenje and Lilongwe 15 and 20 kilometres away respectively. The only water point in the village belongs to the school and is located on the school's premises. Since the school has about 800 children, the water is grossly inadequate and the well is not appropriately located to serve the whole village. There are no acceptable sanitation facilities.

3.2 Education

The village has one primary school that was started by the Presbyterian Church in 1910. Because of this, many members in the community are Christians. However, this Christian background does not prevent the people of Mnjolo from following their traditions. In fact there are cases where families oscillate from Christianity to traditional religion in order to achieve certain objectives.

Of the almost 800 children who attend the school, about 130 come from Mnjolo village. This represents an enrolment rate of over 87 per cent for the village. There are as many girls in school as there are boys.

³ Ministry of Health "WES Activities Development Proposal for Mnjolo Village"

But like other schools in Malawi, Mnjolo suffers from high drop out rates in particular during the first four years of primary education. The enrolment pattern is heavily skewed with only 16 % of the 800 children in upper classes from standards 5 to 8 while 84 per cent are in the lower classes. In 2001 for example, standards 1 and 2 had, between them, almost 500 children while only 33 pupils were in standards 7 and 8. The drop out rates for both boys and girls is almost the same.

The table below shows the enrolment profile for the children of Mnjolo and the surrounding villages.⁴

Table 3.21

2001/2002 Enrolment Profile of Mnjolo School by village, by Class and by Sex

Village	KM from school	Std 1		Std 2		Std 3		Std 4		Std 5		Std 6		Std 7		Std 8	
		B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
Mnjolo	0	22	21	8	12	10	14	12	8	4	5	5	5	2	2	4	1
Mphindo	0.5	29	36	11	17	20	14	16	13	7	7	11	7	6	0	0	2
Kalumbi	1	15	14	3	4	1	1	1	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mbuna	1.5	4	13	1	3	1	6	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mlinga	1.5	20	13	5	6	0	7	3	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1
Mkulekera	1	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Khambwe	1.8	3	3	2	6	3	1	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Chakumodzi	1	6	12	4	2	3	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
Chapomda	1.5	3	3	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mwanza	1.5	7	4	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chikuse	1.8	5	5	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0
Mlambuzi	2.5	7	14	3	5	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Kalezo	1.8	5	7	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0
Mkuwa	1	5	7	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mzingo	2.5	10	14	2	2	0	8	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Msanyama	2	3	8	2	4	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
Kanyenda	2	3	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ng'onzo	1.8	3	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mphanyama	2	4	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0
Kadyampakeni	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		156	187	58	65	44	65	38	35	25	27	22	18	13	5	8	7
Class totals		349		123		109		73		52		40		18		15	

An examination of school records from previous years shows a similar pattern. Over 80% of children drop out during the first four years of primary school. Unfortunately this is before they attain a permanent state of literacy. From the table, it can be seen that distance to school is not an issue as the longest total distance a child has to walk is not more than 5 kilometres. This suggests that other dynamics in the community are contributing to the high drop out rates.

4.0 PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS, NEEDS AND CONCERNS

The people of Mnjolo, just like any community, would like to lead a life that is free from ignorance, disease, hunger and poverty. They want their community to develop and prosper. They want clean water, good harvests and a good income for their families. They want to be healthy. They want a solution to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. But there are problems, which prevent the community from achieving its

⁴ Taken from the School's Records

ambitions. They lack the tools to assist them. Access to important information on HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and growth monitoring is limited. The village lacks water and this contributes to the poor health in the community. They are dissatisfied with the quality of education. They lack health facilities. Most of all they feel that poverty is making a major contribution to their problems.

What are the children saying?

Discussions with almost 100 girl's aged 11 to 18 from the school revealed that they would like to have a good future. Many see education as a means to self-development. Responses to the questions "Why are you in school? What do you want to achieve in life?" were classic. Many replied, "I want to be a teacher, a doctor, and even a President of this country". Amazingly, there was one thought provoking response from a very quiet twelve- year old girl who stated " *Ndifuna kudzakhala pa mtendere*" which means "***I would like to be at peace***". This response was used as a springboard for the discussion that followed. What peace comes from being educated? It was concluded that being "at peace" meant more than not having to worry where the next meal will come from nor whether one will have enough clothes to wear. Being at peace meant self- fulfilment. It meant being able to make one's own decisions. It meant not having to be someone's slave in exchange for economic sustenance. This is the vision that the girls in Mnjolo have.

"I would like to be at peace"

The response of a twelve- year old school girl at Mnjolo when asked why she is still persisting with her schooling instead of leaving likes her friends.

Discussions with 100 boys in the school also revealed a similar vision. In short the boys are also looking forward to the day when education will yield some returns. Many of them see education as a means of coming out of poverty.

Considerable time was spent discussing the life of their fellow boys and girls who had dropped out of school. Why did they drop out? What were they doing? What type of future did they anticipate? From the discussions it emerged that schooling was in general an uphill battle. Poverty, that leads to lack of support, was cited as a major factor. The girls gave examples of numerous cases of their fellow girls who left school and got married because parents could no longer afford to support them. They cited cases of girls and boys who failed to enter secondary school because their parents could not afford school fees. The children were also wary of the high unemployment levels in particular for pupils with a secondary school certificate. The children also indicated that peer pressure was a factor. This was particularly true for young boys and girls who rush into marriage because they think that is the most fashionable thing to do. But what was encouraging was that these boys and girls did not envy their friends who had dropped out. According to them, the children who had dropped out were condemned to a life of perpetual poverty.

5.0 PROJECT'S GOAL

The overall goal of the initiative in Mnjolo Village is to create a safe and supportive environment for girls' survival and development. This requires behaviour change that must be generated from within the community. Since the people in Mnjolo are

very traditional and since issues that are rooted into the culture sometimes require a cultural approach the initiative has made a deliberate effort to incorporate a process that is culturally acceptable.

The initiative's approach is positive. It is felt that condemnation only succeeds in alienating the very people who need to support the initiative. It should be realised that what ever happens in the community is often done in good faith and in what is probably considered to be " in the best interest of the child". What is therefore needed is to equip or bad for the child. Since people in Malawi value children, they will not resist to change if that change is meant to improve the life of the child.

6.0 OBJECTIVES

These are:

- ☆ To enable the people of Mnjolo to identify, prioritise and analyse their own problems
- ☆ To provide information on HIV/AIDS and the rights of children and women as enshrined in the CRC and CEDAW.
- ☆ To enable the community to discuss openly and constructively issues pertaining to sexual behaviour as manifested in various cultural practices.
- ☆ To help traditional leaders influence a change of behaviour that is necessary for improving the situation of girls and women.

7.0 STRATEGIES

Among the strategies were used in order to achieve the above objectives were:

- Building Trust in the Community and
- Building the capacity of the various stakeholders

8.0 THE PROCESS

Building trust in the community is not an easy and quick process in particular when one is an outsider. It requires patience and understanding. However by doing the following, the community of Mnjolo "opened up" and was able to discuss issues that were previously shrouded in a veil of secrecy:

- ***Respect for Chiefs and Adherence to Traditional Norms and Protocol***

Chiefs are very influential people in the community. They are informed of every birth and death and no burial can take place without the chief's consent. A chief is informed of every girl who reaches puberty. No initiations can take place without the chief's knowledge and consent. It was with this in mind that chiefs were the first people to be informed of the initiative and together with the consultants discussed the issues. The chiefs guided the consultants on the processes. No project committees were set up. Instead the project used the traditional community structures of authority. One of the outcomes of these consultations was the chief's recommendation that all the 28 villages that send their children to Mnjolo school be included in some of the interventions.

Traditional communities are very strict in the observance of protocol. The way one speaks and dresses in the presence of elders is very important. A breach in protocol can easily be misconstrued as rudeness and this can destroy relationships. Chiefs should not be rushed. They dictate the pace. It is also important to know what subjects chiefs can discuss and with whom. For example, among the Achewa, the subject of the Nyau Secret Society is not discussed with non-members.

Consequently, it was necessary to ensure that only those officers who were culturally acceptable in terms of age, experience, and disposition had direct access to the chiefs.

- ***Respect for the People and their Way of Life***

The team of workers (consultants and Ministry of Education officials) made great effort to get to know and respect the people in the community. The team respected the people's problems and built their programme to suit the community's way of life. For example, meetings were cancelled if there was death in the village. The day of meetings was also important. Public meetings normally take place on Sundays to enable people carry on with their routine during weekdays. The same schedule was followed for the project's meetings. Consultants made an effort to visit the sick and offered help where needed. Teachers and community development assistants went from door to door visiting people and getting to know them. The process whose main purpose was to collect baseline data for the project yielded other results in that for the first time the teachers, many of who are not from the area, got to know the families where the children came from. In other words, the activity had the effect of bridging the gap between the school and the community.

- ***Respect for Confidentiality***

Information on cultural ceremonies such as initiation is a closely guarded secret. The community needed to be reassured that the team of workers was discreet and respected the need for confidentiality where this was demanded.

- ***Positive Approach and a genuine appreciation for Malawi's culture***

Because of Malawi's historical ties with Christianity, there is a tendency to label traditional aspects of culture as heathen. It was therefore necessary for the consultants to remind the community about the richness of Malawi's culture and its linkages to the CRC and CEDAW. The value for children is a very good example. Mention was made on why some of the social problems that are being experienced are as a result of people abandoning their traditional values. Chiefs were reassured that the project was not advocating the elimination of the Chewa customs and practices. Rather they were encouraged to review such customs, build upon those that contribute to the general well being of girls and women and modify those that were detrimental.

- ***Varying entry points to suit different target groups***

Although the main focus of the initiative is education for the Girl Child, the initiative varied entry points to suit the different target groups. For traditional leaders, HIV/AIDS and not education was the entry point. This is because education is relatively abstract while the impact of the AIDS epidemic on the community is

more concrete. People are dying every day and chiefs are the ones who preside over the funerals.

The education of girls with particular focus on high drop out rates was the entry point for discussions with members of the School Committee, PTAs and teachers as well as the children themselves.

9.0 ACTIVITIES

There were three major activities:

➔Orientation of Duty Bearers and Rights Holders

This constituted a major activity during Phase Two. Information is power. Traditional leaders, their counsellors and facilitators were oriented on CRC, CEDAW and HIV/AIDS. It was during this orientation that the issues identified in Phase One were analysed and prioritised. Chiefs took an active role in leading the discussions on HIV/AIDS and were very instrumental in proposing sustainable solutions to various cultural problems. The orientation of duty bearers and rights holders resulted in the following analysis of issues:

Table 2

ISSUE	Root Causes	Related Causes
<p><i>Less than 10% of children completing primary education with more than 80% dropping out of school within the first four years of primary school</i></p>	-Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents encourage girls to marry young so that the “burden” of support is shifted to husbands - Some children are ashamed to go to school because they do not have decent clothes to wear. - Inadequate food intake causes children to be malnourished and sickly. This leads to erratic attendance and eventually to dropping out. - Children are forced to leave school and search for paid employment in town to help families - Men from community (including teachers) take advantage of the poverty situation to lure girls into sex with monetary incentives
	Under-qualified and Uncommitted Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hostile and abusive teachers - Sexual harassment of girls by male teachers - Lessons not interesting.
	Inadequate government funding for Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor and sometimes hostile learning environment - Overcrowded classrooms - Inadequate learning materials, poor teaching lack of basic facilities like classrooms and adequate sanitation. -
	Non-supportive home environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erratic school attendance due to home related factors like workload - Lack of parental support because the parents are themselves illiterate or do not see the value of education
	Cultural and traditional practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiation customs for both girls and boys - Churches disrupt schooling by requesting children to attend religious instructions during school time.
	Lack of Incentives for Completing Primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High unemployment levels among primary and secondary school graduates is a disincentive for persistence in education - Limited opportunities for entry into secondary school - Peer pressure. The role models are the dropouts who have managed to secure a job in town
<p><i>Poor Health with very high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, bilharzia and other water borne diseases waterborne diseases</i></p>	Ignorance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate information on HIV/AIDS leads to perpetration of cultural rituals involving sexual activity. This puts the population at risk of contracting STD. - No access to reproductive health education leads to large families and hence to greater poverty - No access to growth monitoring leads to an increase in child’s poor health and hence an increase in superstitions and the search to traditional remedies that are sometimes detrimental to the mother and child
	Lack of Basic Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of water and sanitation makes the community vulnerable to diseases

➔ Searching for Solutions.

This was done through a series of meetings that took place in the community with or without the project's coordinators. The guiding principle in the above activity was that the solutions must be sustainable, affordable, incorporate Malawi's cultural values, and also that they must come from the people themselves. In order to ensure that cultural issues that are considered delicate are given the attention that they deserve, the chiefs asked the project coordinators to leave such matters to them. It was against this background that *the chiefs resolved to*:

- *Modify with immediate effect, all cultural rituals that have a sexual component.*
They instructed their anamkungwi to i) review the initiation curriculum to make it relevant to the age of the children and ii) eliminate sexual rituals from various customs. Instead, anamkungwi must use less harmful practices like the use of herbal remedies.
- *Compose Mnjedza songs that disseminate HIV/AIDS messages.*
Singing is a very effective communication tool in Malawi. Because Mnjedza is a dance that is performed by chiefs, and their counsellors only its songs are full of meaning and chiefs often use them to convey important messages to their subjects. One of the composed songs is shown in Appendix A
- *Be open in talking about HIV/AIDS.*
Chiefs, as traditional leaders, preside over funerals. They are required by tradition to inform mourners the cause of death. During the discussions, some of the chiefs proposed that they should reveal if the person died of AIDS. The proponents of this view argued that such a step, besides showing the severity of the AIDS epidemic, will discourage the practice of inheriting widows. Others however felt that this would put the surviving relations under great stress and is an invasion of privacy. The debate is still going on. What is important is that the silence on HIV/AIDS in Mnjolo has been broken.
- *Set up a task force, under the leadership of Chief Mnjolo, comprising of 4 village Headmen and 6 Traditional Counsellors to review the initiation curriculum.*
The task force will also see to it that the resolutions made by the chiefs are implemented in all the 28 villages.
- Chiefs also strongly recommended the formation of Anti-Aids clubs in all the 28 villages that send their children to Mnjolo School.

Facilitators

Orientation for ten facilitators not only covered issues of HIV/AIDS, CRC and CEDAW but also aimed at equipping them with facilitating skills. Facilitators focussed on the issue of high drop out rate among girls. In their search for solutions the facilitators resolved to:

- Brief the school committee of the issues that were discussed and share their work plan. In that plan they intend to hold weekend meetings with parents and youth in all the twenty-eight villages. The objectives of the meetings are mainly to:
 - ❖ Urge parents to support their children's education
 - ❖ Inform the community of the rights of the child

- ❖ Inform the communities of the dangers of HIV/AIDS in particular among the youth.

Appendix B is a list of communication messages that facilitators develop and which they are using in their weekly meetings.

Church Affiliated Counsellors

The third group to be trained was church affiliated counsellors. These are men and women from various churches who are responsible for advising boys and girls when they reach the age of puberty. They are also in charge of advising young couples when they get married as well as young pregnant mothers. These men and women are the counterparts of the *anamkungwi* and *wakunjila* in the traditional culture.

Because of the important role that these men and women play in shaping the lives of young people, a one- day seminar was organised for them during which they were briefed on HIV/AIDS and CRC and CEDAW. During the discussions, the group identified gaps in their work. The women counsellors for example indicated that they felt frustrated when parents (in particular mothers) do not support them”. They cited cases where mothers openly encourage their daughters to marry young because of the anticipated financial support from the son in laws. The group agreed on the following course of action:

- Counsellors terms of reference should include advising mothers on good parenting
- In compliance with Malawi’s culture of communal responsibility, counsellors should feel free to advise or rebuke any child regardless of religious affiliation.

School Children

School pupils from standards 4 to 8 constituted the fourth group. These had two days of orientation. The first session was to help them through a process of articulating what they want in life and identify the issues that prevent them from achieving their goals. The second session was to orient them on their rights and responsibilities as well as discuss issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS and the Youth.

At the end of the training sessions, the community generated an action plan that focussed on three main issues. This is shown in Table 3.

Plan of Action

1.0 Objective: To improve the retention rates of all children in school				
Problem	Key Strategies	Key Activities	Time Frame	Key Responsible
<i>Less than 10% of children completing primary education with more than 80% dropping out of school within the first four years of primary school</i>	-Make school environment conducive to learning	-Community to mould bricks for additional classrooms and teachers houses -Local leaders to solicit support from MASAF, EU, WVI for the construction of school facilities and the provision of water and sanitation -Provide adequate teaching and learning materials -Avoid overcrowded class rooms -Teachers should get to know their pupils -Teachers to prepare for lessons thoroughly and make them interesting -Provide footballs and net-balls -Introduce sports in the school -Introduce inter-school sports competitions -Facilitate role models to visit the school and talk to the pupils	June 2002 May 2002	Chiefs Chiefs and the School Committee Teachers and UNICEF
	Create an opportunity for girls to talk about their fears and concerns with respect to sexual abuse in and out of school	-Female teachers to avail themselves to all girls in the school regardless of whether they teach those girls or not. -Teachers not to overstay in the school, that is, they should be moved around frequently to prevent them from being too familiar with the pupils -Ministry of Education to transfer all teachers who are alleged to abuse girls -Head teacher to initiate discussion of issue of sexual exploitation during staff meetings -Female teachers and facilitators to meet with parents and urge them to refrain from encouraging their daughters to have sexual relations with teachers and other men from the community - Ministry of Education to enforce code of conduct and discipline any teacher who is guilty of exploiting school girls		Head teacher
	Help parents to Create a supportive home environment for children	In collaboration with chiefs, school committee and PTA, hold weekend meetings with parents in all the 28 villages aimed at : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitising parents to send children to school at the correct age of 6 • Ensuring that children are fed and properly clothed when going to school • Provide adequate time for their children to attend school and do homework 	15 th June to 12 th October	Facilitators in groups of five

2.0 Objective: To reduce the incidences of new HIV/AIDS infections in particular among the youth				
Problem	Key Strategies	Key Activities	Time Frame	Key Responsible
<i>Increase in HIV infection rate in the community</i>	Saturate community with information on HIV/AIDS	-School to organise Health Information Day for all school pupils. Issues to include HIV/AIDS, Hygiene and rights and responsibilities as pupils and children.	June 21, 2002	Head teacher and UNICEF
		-Orient all duty bearers on HIV/AIDS, CRC and CEDAW	May to October	UNICEF And Facilitators, UNICEF
		-Establish AIDS TOTO clubs in the school		Chiefs
		-Anamkungwi to substitute all rituals involving sex with herbal medicines unless the sexual union is between husband and wife.	Immediately	Chiefs
		-Anamkungwi to review initiation curriculum to make it relevant to age Set up task force of chiefs to orient fellow chiefs on HIV/AIDS		Chiefs
Modify cultural practices that put girls at risk of contracting HIV	Chiefs to compose songs for Mnjedza and Chisamba that incorporate HIV/AIDS messages	Chiefs		
	Chiefs should be open in talking about HIV/AIDS	Chiefs		
3.0 Objective: To assist the community access basic facilities such as water and sanitation				
<i>The village has high prevalence of malaria and water borne diseases due to lack of water and sanitation</i>	Assist community to have access to safe water and sanitation as well as public health education	UNICEF to contact government and key partners to mobilise technical and financial support for the provision of basic services.	May/ June	UNICEF

➔ **Bringing the message to the rest of the people in the community.**

Facilitators have started a campaign to mobilise support for the education of children in particular girls. Every weekend they hold village level meetings with parents and youth. Similarly chiefs have started work on HIV/AIDS in particular in the area of cultural practices while religious advisers will continue to work with the youth as well as parents.

10.0 SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The following is a summary of some of what has been achieved so far.

- The culture of silence surrounding HIV/AIDS is breaking.
- Mnjolo Village is beginning to be recognised at district level. The Ministry of Health has started rehabilitating the school's borehole while waiting for the construction of a new water point. Other initiatives in the area include the AGLT project.
- The pupils in Mnjolo are regaining self-confidence and feeling a sense of worth. What is even more important is that the pupils are talking about HIV/AIDS as well as the issues that affect them in the education system.
- Chiefs are satisfied with their level of participation and the opportunity to lead in the initiative.
- There is a closer working relationship between female teachers at Mnjolo and girls in the school. Girls are beginning to look up to female teachers for guidance and assistance.
- Female teachers are helping girls through the system> They are also helping to fight any form of abuse in the school and community.
- Both traditional and conventional counsellors have indicated their preparedness to play a greater role in ensuring that girls in the community survive, develop and are protected from all forms of harassment.

11.0 MAJOR CHALLENGES

One of the challenges in this initiative is the concept of "Rights" in Malawi's culture. Because the concept of "Rights" seems to be alien to Malawi's culture, it has no Chichewa equivalent. The Chichewa translation "UFULU" means "Freedom" and this is being interpreted, as freedom to do whatever one likes. This is worrying some elders in the community who feel that this will encourage children to be disobedient. These sentiments were expressed by members of the school committee. It is for this reason that the consultants are strongly recommending that when communities are being briefed on the Rights of the Child, they should start with responsibilities as these are not "culturally controversial". These language problems which reflect Malawi's culture, point to the need to develop a communication strategy that will ensure the efficient delivery of messages on the CRC at community level.

The second challenge is poverty and ignorance that have been identified as the roots of all the major problems in Mnjolo Village. For the initiative to make an impact, these problems need to be addressed.

The third challenge is what the community sees as the value of education. All the people we talked to felt that primary education should lead to secondary education and then to a white collar job in an office. If this is not achieved, then education is useless. There is need to change this perception and convince the people that education is good in ways other than office work. But this is not an easy task.

12.0 THE WAY FORWARD

The need for an integrated approach in this initiative is crucial and so is the mobilisation of technical, financial and moral support. For example, the community has started replacing sexual rituals with herbal remedies. But if this move is not supported with proper growth monitoring activities and children start dying from all sorts of diseases, the community can start attributing such mishaps to non-compliance of certain rituals. What is required therefore is to give the community the necessary support to enable children grow up healthy in the absence of these rituals.

The work in Mnjolo is on going. Facilitators have just started holding discussions with parents. The work will continue up to October this year. Similarly, chiefs have just started their work of composing songs on HIV/AIDS. Traditional and religious advisers are also working on their roles as counsellors. There is need to monitor these activities on a regular basis and provide guidance. A formal review of the project needs to be done in December. This should be done in the village and should be attended by chiefs, facilitators, as well as the children. It is after this review that a decision can be made whether the project should go to another area or not.

13.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

☛ UNICEF should develop a communication strategy on the Rights of the Child that takes into account Malawi's Cultural Heritage.

☛ UNICEF should strive to get other NGOs in Mnjolo area in particular those that deal with issues of poverty such as food insecurity, lack of income and high illiteracy levels. This proposal is in view of the fact that many of the problems in Mnjolo are linked to poverty. The Hunger Project is one such NGO that has an integrated approach to people's basic needs and that could benefit the people in Mnjolo Village.

☛ Traditional healers as well as birth attendants are important in this initiative. Their orientation however should go beyond the rights of the child. It should help them in their profession. It is for this reason that UNICEF should collaborate with the Ministry of Health to prepare a comprehensive briefing package for this group of duty bearers. Similarly, teachers need assistance to make their lessons lively and interesting.

☛ Traditional and religious counsellors as well as traditional healers and birth attendants are constantly in touch with the people. It is recommended that these groups should be exposed to HIV/AIDS counselling techniques so that they are better equipped to give people living with AIDS the type of support that they need.

✦ Finally, support for girls' education needs to be strengthened. The highest drop out rate is during the first four years of primary education. Again, studies have shown that sexual activity in Malawi starts at a very young age. It is for these reasons that efforts should be made to start a serious dialogue with children when they are in Standard 3 when they are about eight years old. The dialogue should aim at keeping the children free of HIV/AIDS and helping them to complete primary education. This monitoring should include identification of children from poor families who have the potential to do well in their studies. Such children should be sponsored so that they can complete their studies up to secondary school level. If this is not done, Malawi will continue to lose many children due to HIV/AIDS and poverty and hence fail to tap on the tremendous human resources that it has at its disposal.

Appendix A

Mnjedza Song on HIV/AIDS Composed by Chiefs

Mutu: Makolo Tithandizane Makolo tithandizane kulera anawa Makolo Inu aaa Makolo mudachita dala Kuyenda yenda muleke 2X Mudzakumana ndi Edzi Omwewo wa ku manda Wana wanuwa 2X Adzasunga ndani? Wana wa masiye avala sanza Wana wa masiye sadzaphunzira	Title:Parents let us help each other Parents let us help each other to raise these children Parents stop being promiscuous Parents stop being promiscuous You will catch AIDS And you will die Your children, your children Who will look after your children? Orphans are in rags Orphans are not in school
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Appendix B

Some of the messages targeted at parents.

- Children should start school at age 6 so that they should complete their primary education at an appropriate age
- Children should have breakfast before going to school to enable them to concentrate
- Parents should desist from forcing their girls to get married for economic reasons
- Parents should discourage their children from night games because this is where many of them engage in sexual activity
- Parents should monitor their children's school- work to ensure that they are not skipping school.
- Girls should not be given tasks which prevent them from going to school
- Children should be assisted to choose good friends
- Parents should avoid receiving money from teachers since such money could be an enticement to gain sexual favours from their girls who are in school.
- Parents should discourage girls from distilling "kachaso"
- Parents should be on the guard and assist their children not to get into the habit of smoking hemp and beer drinking
- Parents should not allow their children to go into town to be employed as child minders or as courier boys in the market places. Instead these children should go to school

Some of the Messages Targeted at Girls

- Don't rush into marriage, stay in school
- Avoid loose life, Avoid AIDS
- Respect your parents
- Respect your teachers but **Say No** to their Sexual Advances, Report them to your Head teacher
- Stay in school. That is the only route to economic empowerment