

A letter to my father





A letter to my father

The voices from girls

Funded by:

Canada 

Introduction and Background

The Girls legacy is pleased to bring to you a publication of a collection of nineteen letters written by girls. The title of the publication is A Letter to my Father. Contributions for the publication were drawn from 60 letters which were collected from the communities of Glen View, Chitungwiza and Domboshawa from the target groups which The Girl's legacy is working with as an organisation. Its premise is to assert the voice of girls in writing and deepening their articulation on issues which are affecting their lives due to the rife patriarchal practices within our Zimbabwean culture. The issues highlighted within the book have been normalised in the day to day lives of girls and yet they are oppressive and detrimental to the full development of girls.

Against this background, the Girls' Legacy with the support of the Canadian Local Initiatives Fund has published A letter to my Father to shape the narrative of the lived realities of girls as they bear the brunt of challenges which they are facing due to patriarchal dominance in society. This publication regrettably acknowledges that most sources of power which bring in transformation in our society are held by men. As is, the girls saw it fit to address their letters to diverse male symbols of patriarchy in different sectors so that they can compressively highlight how they are being affected by those challenges.

As the Girls' Legacy, we are hoping that this publication will assert and amplify the voices of girls in demanding the kind of change they want for them to live dignified lives. Moreso, it is an advocacy tool that is reaching out to the different faces of leadership such as traditional chiefs, ministers, local government, religions leaders, the police and many more. Therefore, as we distribute the publication, the focus is to bring to the attention of policy makers the urgent issues which need to be addressed in the context of the concerns which the girls raised.

Our Mission:

The Girls Legacy seeks to build the capacity of young women and girls in Zimbabwe through leadership development and mentoring so that they can live empowered lives and become models and change agents in their communities. The Girls Legacy seeks to invest in young women's education and leadership through responding to their educational practical needs, mentorship and enabling them to form networks amongst themselves. These are very essential to social change now and in the future.

Our objectives:

1. To strengthen the capacity of young women and girls by providing resources to support their education.
2. To facilitate the empowerment of young women and girls so that they can become models and change agents in their communities.
3. To facilitate mentorship for girls and young women for continuity and sustainable development across generation at community, national, regional and international level.
4. To facilitate an enabling environment for young women and girls to realize their full potential.
5. To create spaces and platforms for young women and girls to engage on issues that affect their lives.



To Minister of Health and Child Care

Greetings to you sir. I hope my letter finds you well. I am writing to you sir on behalf of girls in Zimbabwe having been worried about the drug problem which is now rife in our communities. It has also greatly affected the health of the girl child which is why I am bringing this challenge to your attention.

The culture of drug abuse is increasing in many schools. We have been hearing reports about school children misusing drugs and ending up being mentally disturbed. My worry is, these drugs are finding their way to the street yet they are medicinal drugs which must be prescribed for specific medical conditions. In our communities, they are being sold to everyone without the consideration of age or sometimes consent of use especially for young girls.

This challenge is complicating our health as young people are misusing drugs which have long term effects on their bodies. They end up suffering from diseases because of that. Some of the drugs which are on the street are Mosombondia, Broncho, Mangemba, drugs for psychiatric patients and painkillers are also on the street. Most of which are being acquired on the black market. The people are accessing them from pharmacies or in the streets.

According to my view, to prevent this medicines should be sold to people who have prescriptions from the doctor. Some of the medicines should not be made available to the public over the counter without a prescription especially those which have a high alcohol content. Please help us with this. In Zimbabwe, we need a strong medicines control policy. A lot of girls are being introduced to drugs and most of them are vulnerable as they get introduced to drugs by men and boys.

My hope is that you will find ways to help on this issue so that we can protect girls from this challenge.

Yours sincerely

AC

To the Police

I am writing to you as the chief of this community. I have a serious challenge with the way we are being treated by commuter touts who ply the route from Domboshawa to Harare. This is the same route which we are using on our way to school. These people are posing a threat to the security of girls of school going age who use public transport.

I am a girl aged 17 and would like to bring to your attention to the story of my assault by one of the touts. Last year when I was using a commuter omnibus one of the conductors paid for my trip for one way. I refused the offer but he insisted on paying for it. The next time I saw the same individual he tried to propose love to me and I refused. He then assaulted me and accused me of swindling him of some money in public. What hurt me the most was that, the people who were present when I was being assaulted refused to help me and accused me of being a prostitute yet initially I had refused to have him pay for my trip.

I am worried by the behaviour of these conductors as a lot of girls have fallen prey to this trap on their way to school. Some have even been impregnated on their way to school. The other challenge is that the touts also call us names and label us on our way from school. Please help us so that we can get to school safely

Moreso, they do not observe the road rules. Most of the time we get by our journeys in fear as the driver's speed whilst violating road rules. I am particularly worried by this culture. Please help us on this issue so that we girls are protected from the behaviour of these touts on the road.

I hope you will team up with other stakeholders to protect us from this challenge.

Regards

CD



Proudly
Anti-GBV!
NO to violence against ♀

Proudly
Anti-GBV!
NO to violence against ♀

PROVIDERS
FOR ALL
GIRLS AND
BOYS
AGE 15 AND
UNDER



GBV,GBV

It hurts me to see how women and girls are treated these days
They are hurt, abused, played and used
Gender based violence is perpetrated on women and girls in different ways
Physically, verbally, emotionally and financially
The nature of this abuse kills person from within it creates a society that thrives on
fear and degrades girls.
Girls must be safe and they should live their lives fully
Every day we are becoming vulnerable
When will this end?
Women and girls are suffering the most from this abuse.

As a girl child, I encourage the responsible leaders of this country
To work on ending violence against women and girls
We must practice societal norms and values which protect our women and girls
These should breed respect for our bodies
Respect is the embodiment of humanity
We are humans too.
We should live lives free from violence
We long for safety

We should embrace peace and freedom for women and girls
As a girl child, I foster a violence free social environment
Perpetrators of violence's need not to be given a free reign
Together as a nation we can make a difference on this issue

By CKG



Dearest Babamukuru (My sister's Hubby)

This letter serves as a complaint of the ill-treatment you have subjected to me as your wife's younger sister. I'm very sorry because I am sometimes very aggressive towards you but I want you to feel my anger because of what you have done to me. It might appear disrespectful but you have done worse things to me. Babamukuru, you should sit down for this because it is affecting me physically, mentally and emotionally.

From the day, my parents died, I never had the strength to laugh again as you have prohibited me from communicating with my relatives. I did not force you to live with me but you volunteered which makes me wonder why you ill treat me like this. You even promised my relatives that you will take care of me but is this the protection, proposing to me aggressively, raping me and letting me not go to school?

As someone married to my sister, when you proposed to me aggressively, I accepted because I was afraid that you will kill me. You raped me and infected me with HIV. Now my life is lost because of that. How am I even going to rise from this? I am always feeling out of place amongst my peers because I am the only one taking ARVs. I now constantly feel anxious and fearful because of what you have done to me. I never asked to become an orphan and never wish it on anyone.

You always accuse me of having a boyfriend because you took my virginity and you want to cover up with that lie. I know that you have a quest to make me your second wife. You have tormented me with shame and have taken my child hood away. You filled me with dreadful, horrible and painful torture. The hatred I have for you will never go off easily like a flame.

Why do you abuse me like this? Every time you get drunk, you loiter around using vulgar language. Your verbal abuse affects not only me but everyone in the household. No wonder why people call you names like aMusombodhiya, Akazedhi, and drunken master. In addition, you beat me every time I refuse to sleep with you when my sister is not at home.

You treat me like a street kid. You don't buy clothes for me or do anything yet you think you have a right to have sex with me. If I had a choice I would go and live at a children's home because with you my life is in danger. Voiceless cries of pain are now a part of my everyday living because of you. How can I live with such an animal with me?

Babamukuru, you think the bruises and wounds are only physical injuries you inflict me but you don't consider the emotional torture you have put me through. I thought you were supposed to protect me as you promised instead you are destroying me. How am I going to live with the pain you've inflicted me with? You made me your wife and abused me by making me wash your underwear.

Now that I am over 18, its time for me to leave your house. I don't care if I live as a street kid. My life has been made hell already. The time you have abused me is too long and I now must draw a line. I don't want to find myself in this situation again. I thought that only a stranger had the capacity to abuse someone but I am now realising that even the people we trust can abuse us. You failed to fulfil your promise.

I hope you get the punishment you deserve in life

Your mainini
F



To the conductors

We are writing this letter to express concern regarding your conduct towards girls as we commute using the commuter omnibuses. We are deeply worried because your conduct falls short of respect and girls are increasingly becoming vulnerable as we travel for different purposes using your commuter minibuses.

Our concern stems from the challenge that you are always making sexist comments about our bodies as we board your omnibuses. We find this very uncomfortable and embarrassing as you call us out without having done anything to attract such comments on our bodies. This greatly affects our esteem. Labels coming from most of you show that you have no respect for women. We are worried that this behaviour is verbal abuse and it is continuing unabated.

The second thing is that you have been offering free rides in turn for transactional relationships and in turn ask girls for sexual favours. Some of you have been known to beat girls who refuse your advances as punishment for getting free rides from you. This practice has been more prevalent to girls of school going age. You are taking advantage of them because you know that they are too young to negotiate themselves out of trouble. Please stop giving girls free rides so that you can take advantage of girls.

The same issue goes for the times when you keep seats for girls and manipulate them just for keeping a seat. We are young women who are fully aware of our rights and do not need your assistance in this regard. We are tired of being taken advantage of by you and request that you stop this behaviour and protect us.

We hope that you will take our complaints seriously and change.

Regards

RT

MG

FM

NM

FC

LM

NC

ZM

RC



To Police commissioner

We are writing to bring to your attention some of the challenges which we are facing as girls in our communities which we feel must be criminalised. A lot of things are happening in our communities which affect our security and welfare. We are worried because it seems the perpetrators of crimes against girls seem to walk scot free after they violate us in one way or the other. Therefore, we are hoping that this letter will help us reach out to you and inform you about the challenges which we are facing which can be addressed with your assistance.

Lately, the number of shabeens in our community have been increasing. People are setting up bars in their homes and this means that they are a lot of drunkards loitering around committing crimes as they justify themselves saying they will be drunk. We are not comfortable with this development as most of the people who come to these shabeens grope and touch us even in broad daylight in the street. Sometimes, it is worse for girls whose families are setting up the shabeens in the home itself. They are more vulnerable as their parents will be busy with customers at the expense of protecting them.

Our second challenge is that, a lot of abuse is happening in different forms in our communities particularly sexual abuse. Our peers are being coerced into having sex by their boyfriends and in worse cases they are drugged before they are abused. The challenge we are having with reporting date rape is that the police dismisses such cases sometimes because they say that culturally there is nothing like date rape. Most girls are also not reporting for fear of victimisation. Please help us on this issue as we are suffering in silence without accessing justice.

Furthermore, they are sex parties happening in our community. These parties are dubbed Voodoo Parties. Some girls are invited to those parties without prior knowledge of what will be happening there. This is putting girls at high risk of getting infected with HIV and AIDS. Please help us. We are begging you to stop this practice legaly. This is a criminal activity which is making girls vulnerable to abuse.

We sincerely hope that the law will take its course to bring justice against these practices highlighted.

Regards
SC, MR, RN



My Rights, the foundation of our life

My rights are vital for our life
They are important to humanise our character
They are essential to activate our spirits
They protect and provision for us as girls

Girls are human
Rights are to be awarded to every girl
'it is our right to know our rights
My rights are the foundation of my life

It is my right to express my feeling
To access information
To freely express myself
To be heard
To have access to health and food
My rights are the foundation of our life

It is our right to do what we can with whatever opportunity we have
To have time to build our careers
To have a room to showcase our talents
My rights are the foundation of our life
Let us access them

By KG and TJ



To the Minister of Finance

I hope my letter finds you well. I am writing to you with the hope that you can map a way to find solutions on the problems which are facing as young women who are unemployed. The challenge of unemployment affects us a lot as we are not able to fend for ourselves just after we leave school.

As girls, we are largely affected by economic problems which we encounter more than the boys. The fact that when we leave school the expectation is that we bring an income into the household puts pressure on us. We have our relatives pushing us to look for job so that we assist in bringing income in the home. My challenge in all this is that a lot it has made us vulnerable to abuse.

The search for jobs is hard for young women. Most of the jobs in this community are low paying for young women like me who only have their Ordinary level certificate. Furthermore, when you are a girl and you are looking for a job, men tend to take advantage of that and propose love in exchange for jobs. This is making us vulnerable in our journey for searching for jobs.

At household hold level, we are also being affected. Sometimes our parents or guardians are impatient with us if we take long to get jobs. It has been hard for us as the get agitated with the fact that we are staying at home whilst we are not working. In this case one hardly has money to buy a packet of pads or any basic sanitary products for themselves. They just aren't enough jobs. Against this background, we are largely abused verbally and emotionally and pushed every day to find jobs.

The challenge with this is that girls are settling for manual jobs such as being house maids or shopkeepers and are also getting abused in setups like that. My worry is that our lives will never improve if we continue to be subjected to such abusive situations in search of jobs.

Other young girls are also getting into transactional relationships where there are prone to HIV infections just because they want to survive. This confirms that if you do not have an income of your own, you are not truly free. Is there anything that that you can do to help the girl child as a ministry.

I know that as the Ministry of Finance you can fund or finance specific programmes of a programme to help the girl child who is leaving school so that she is vulnerable to abuse because she is poor.

I hope my letter gets a deserving response. We rely on sound economic policies to reduce our vulnerabilities such as the ones I have listed above.

Regards

LM



the girls'le

Aiming at building the
women and girls in Zim
leadership development
so that they live empow
me role mod
in the

(1)
Eg) What are the 7...
1) ...
2) ...
3) ...
4) ...
5) ...
6) ...
7) ...

A Complete Girl Child

My name is confidence
My surname is courage
My nickname is strength
With my identity, I have gone through life situations
I have overcome them and fought with my circumstances
I have walked through my obstacles and exceeded my limitations
Hail to my surname of courage which makes me overcome
My life proves that I am a complete girl child

I grew up lacking most things
Coming from a less privileged family
I was deprived of my right to education
In the moment, I thought I'd never be successful
But the fact that I am a girl gave me strength and I knew I could fight to get my way
through
But still I am complete
Strength and good will, I have enshrined the courage to push on for greatness
I demonstrate strength of a compete girl

I had to shell myself out of inferiority complex
I refused to be looked down upon
All this despise flows to nothing
Encouragement is my bone
I stood for what I believed in my situation
In all this I used my name confidence to overcome
I rise and strengthen my ability for fight off any disadvantage I have.

I have learnt to be peaceful
Carrying my spear which is my inner strength and my shield of courage
My Confidence, My Strength, My courage
As a girl I know I have the courage, ability and it is my responsibility to change the
world even
My ambition shows that I am a complete girl child
My dream is alive not just for myself for the whole world

By LT



PLAY YOUR PART



the girls' legacy

Baba here?

Inga ndichiri bunha zvaro
Nzvenzvana zvayo isakaziva kuvhunura
Chingondora chirikutodzidzira kufura
Nhengeni mbishi inosvota moyo

Pamwe ndaizovawo ruva rinodakadza
Ndaizoteyawo nyuchi nguwa yerudziya kamwe
Ndichizoitawo hchi hunomorwa nevavhimi
Huchizodyiwa vanhu vachikora moyo

Inga baba makandiitira zvimwe
Kubva mandipa ndichiri kashere here
Kubva mandisveta sendichiri ipwa , mwana wenyu here ?
Kundibata ndichiri mwanana kudai hwe svaturo chihwo

Mandiita mvana ndichiri mudiki
Ndinoonei muhupenyu pakakdai
Makandionensa Harare ndiri Dande

Ko mai vangu , mavarwadzirei Mukai
Machivei chavakasakupai mudura
Kubva mapedza nyota pandiri mwana wenyu
Kundionesa magaro enyoka inini mwana wenyu

Muchairodza sei tsvimbo yemakuvhuro
Muchaiwana here yechimanda pagura renyu
Muchamuringa sei nzira makakura imi

Ndogara sei nemi baba imi ma va mhandu yangu
Ndokudeedzai sei pamoyo pachdzimba
Ndfamba sei pasi pano in ndava rengenyu

By MK



To the headman

I hope my letter finds you well. I am writing this letter to inform you on the challenges which stress girls our community in Molife. This letter comes as a flagship activity with an organisation which we are a part of called the Girls Legacy. I am happy to be part of a project like this as it has empowered me to speak out and strengthen my voice in regards to speaking out on issues which affect girls.

Some of the challenges which we are facing are sexual abuse, failure to access education and health services. Since girls are perceived to be vulnerable, a lot of them are vulnerable to sexual abuse as well as other forms of abuse. My worry is the community has not been able to build up solutions to protect girls within our community from being abused by people we know and spend time with. Most of the girls are abused by close relatives mostly rather than strangers. This is really saddening on our part as the very people we put our trust in to protect us violate us. My request to you is to help us build safety net for girls who are in situations in which they are abused as a community. It is important for us to ensure that every girl is safe in this area.

My other plea is that in our community the education of boys is still being prioritised over that of boys. Is there a way to address this issue at a communal level so that parents or guardians can teach each the importance of educating the girl child. In this generation, it is important to build a culture of educating girls because they also have something to contribute to the development of this community.

For school leavers, a lot of them have been falling into the trap of being forced to get into relationships for them to get jobs. This has made a lot of girls vulnerable in this economic environment. A lot of us are seeking jobs in shops at Mvrenchena and Showground areas and we are facing the same problem. Is it possible for you to convene a meeting with the businessmen in those areas and discuss this challenge so that it comes to an end?

As for me, I just want my voice to be heard and to use that voice to defend myself. Therefore, my wish is that this community becomes more tolerant to the needs of the girl child. I hope that you will be able to mobilise the community to that effect.

Regards

M



To the Gender Commission

I see stars falling, bringing a difficult life for the girl child. It seems there is darkness consistently in our lives as girls due to abuse and discrimination we face every day in our lives. Sometimes I wonder why life is this unfair to girls? Why are we treated differently just because we are girls?

I have decided to write this letter on behalf of the girls in the world. All over the world girls face the challenges related to gender. This has made them fail to reconcile their dreams with reality. The government of Zimbabwe has made strides to bring in change by enlightening people on the importance of gender equality. However, the social space still has challenges ensuring that girls are treated fairly and have equal opportunities with boys.

A lot of girls are being married off early because their parents or guardians do not see the value of educating the girlchild and thus giving her an opportunity to empowerment and success. This worries me a lot. Are we not as important as the boys? Furthermore, when girls fall pregnant in school, the boys are never at a disadvantage. It is the girls who suffer the most when such challenges arise? I long for a life in which girls and boys experience life fairly.

For how long shall gender equality remain a pipe long dream for girls? The case of education has been a key sustainable development goal but we still have socio-cultural practices which prevent girls from accessing fair opportunities politically, economically and socially. As girls, we have so much potential in everything that we are doing. As the Gender Commission, we are hoping that you will assist in mapping a way forward to ensure that girls have equal opportunities to develop in their lives.

We can only move forward if we are treated equally as girls and boys.

Yours sincerely

NN



Dear father

I am writing this letter to you as a concerned daughter. I have never come to understand why the women and the girls in our family are not called in to make decisions the way man and boys do. Why is it that is prevalent in this family?

My concern is rising from the fact that girls are never given an opportunity to make decisions fairly the way boys are. Last year during the farming season we all toiled and worked hard in the fields as a family. It was such a great show of family unity when we were toiling in the fields. To my surprise, I am shocked that not one of us got anything when the money for the produce came in. you announced that the boys are the ones who you will be paying fees for. This has left a heavy burden on our mother who now must take up vending to support education for the girls' education in the family. Why baba?

Adding on, our older brother was not present when we were tilling the fields but you could send money to him yet he is working in town. Shouldn't he be sending money back home to support us instead of you sending money to him. You always prioritize helping him in his drinking sprees at our expense. Are we not equal as your children? If you do not take up the responsibility to cater for needs what will become of our future?

I am also worried about the fact that mother cannot make decisions on the money which she brings home at times after her long days selling things in town. Why are women in this family not allowed to make decisions in this family even over the things they have worked hard for? Baba, you have been very unfair to us in regards to this. As girls, we have a lot to contribute to the future. Please help us be a people who are something of worth. Give us an equal chance to make decisions in the family and prioritise us the same way you are doing with our older brothers.

My desire is that this culture ends in this family. As women and girls, we are humans too. Its farming season again and I shudder to think that this toil is for the men of this family only. It hard to work knowing that we are not even going to get anything from this. Please father consider my plea.

Yours faithfully

NN



To the Ministry of Education

I am very sad to write this letter to inform you of some of the challenges which we are facing as girls. As girls, our opportunities for accessing quality education are limited. I am worried that girls may not have the same educational opportunities as the boys have.

Sometimes when we need fees from some of our guardians they ask for sexual favours in turn. Some of the girls are beaten by their fathers just for daring to ask for fees from their own biological fathers. My request in the form of a question is that how can the Ministry of Education intervene to assist girls in situations such as these? I am worried that a lot of the girls will not be able to access education because of practices such as these.

In addition to this, in 2017 we find families which are prioritising educating boys over girls. It is sad to note that even in class I have observed that boys are likely to have a torn uniform than girls. They also usually have books pens and other resources alike than girls. Such discriminatory treatment of girls is demeaning and presents unfair advantage to the treatment of girls as we also want fair educational opportunities which the boys also have.

The general treatment of girls in the home set up has also affected how girls learn in school. We are expected to clean and do domestic chores first thing before we go to school. Our brothers have the privilege of waking up and getting ready for school without much responsibility. Already, this means that the boys are at a great advantage of learning with a refreshed mind which the girls child is tired from the work which she must do before and after school. This way in which the boys are socialised makes them bully us in the school setup. I am deeply worried about the challenge in which patriarchy outplays itself in our learning space.

A lot of girls are falling pregnant in schools and the boys who impregnate them are largely not affected as they continue with their education. Girls in turn must stay at home and take care of their babies mostly. We have heard of the second chance education programme. Can we have more information on it in the rural areas so that girls can be inspired to go back to school after whilst at the same time they are being empowered to take care of their children.

Therefore, I am requesting that the ministry of education makes an effort to ensure fair opportunities in educating both boys and girls.

Yours faithfully
PC



To the Minister of Health and Child Care

We are not pleased to be writing to you. As sisters, we are concerned about the challenges which we are facing in accessing sanitary wear during menstruation. As girls, this issue is important to us and we would like to bring it to your attention.

The cost of pads is generally very high for the average girl. We are failing to buy adequate sanitary wear. The challenge has been worsened by the harsh economic conditions which our country is facing. Our parents cannot afford to buy sanitary wear as its cost is still very high. We are therefore requesting that this issue be considered. We find it very unfair that there is free distribution of condoms but the cost of pads is skyrocketing each day.

The other challenge is that girls who cannot afford sanitary wear are resorting to the uses of pieces of cloth and other unconventional means. This has exposed them to the risk of all sort of diseases. We are worried that this will lead to health complications like cancer in the future. Please sir, can you please run a campaign to advise girls against using unhygienic alternatives for during their menstruation as a ministry. This will save a lot of lives.

Some girls have missed school because of this challenge. It is difficult for them to come to school when they are feeling vulnerable about the method of sanitary wear which they are using. Boys usually laugh at us if we spoil our clothing because of the poor sanitary wear which we will be using.

We are therefore seeking your assistance on this issue. There's need for a plan to ensure that every girl's life is not affected by the lack of sanitary wear to use during menstruation.

Yours sincerely

N and RT



Chogugudza Primary School
P. O. Box 10578
Harare

10 December 2015

Dear Pastor/ Priest

I am writing to inform you of the challenges which we are facing in our community as girls because of religious practices particularly in the Christian circles.

I have been observing as a girl child that girls are disadvantaged largely within our community. A lot of us are discriminated against in different forms. Thus, the value of the girl's child has not been prioritised in a lot of ways. I am dismayed by the fact that even within a church set up the discrimination is also prevalent. As a young person who appreciates the guidance which the church gives, I am not happy with the ways girls are being treated in the church.

Some practices make us vulnerable. Some church leaders are taking advantage of the fact that we look up to them as our leaders. Thus, they ask us out in the name of religion and lie to us that God has sent them to bring some form of deliverance. They justify their actions by telling us that they had dreams confirming that we are supposed to marry them. This comes as a challenge to us because some of the propositions they make for relations do not even consider how young we are. This has resulted in child marriages occurring in the church.

Furthermore, it seems the church is silent about the abuse that goes on in speaking out against the abuse which is rife within the church or even in general outside the society. I am worried that a lot of abuse goes on without being reported in such circumstances. Why is it that the church is not speaking out against abuse especially of young girls? A lot is happening in our communities and I feel that the church should be a part of the watchdogs that protect us in a community. The church must protect us rather than make girls vulnerable to abuse so that we can have freedom to worship without being disturbed.

It is my hope that the church will not cover up abuse and they cooperate with law enforcement agents to report any abuse going on in the church. So that we work together to end abuse of girls in our community.

I sincerely hope that my plea will be acted upon.

Regards
RC



Proudly
Anti-gender Based Violence

To my dad (biological Father)

I hope my letter finds you well. I am well despite the challenges which we are facing here. I am writing to you with a heavy heart and I have a huge request from you. I hope you will understand where I am coming from.

From the time, you left me and my younger sister after you and mum divorced also following her death, we have suffered a lot. You left us with grandmother who can barely afford anything. This decision you made to leave us with her has really made our lives difficult as we have gone through all sort of difficult experiences. We are living in an overcrowded space with extended family. Our mother's brothers always harass us because they are angry since you are not sending anything for our upkeep. Thus, we are literally slave driven in this household. We are not allowed to have friends because they are afraid that we may reveal details of our abuse to them.

We are not going to school because there is no money for us. We are made to go to the garden work and till but the money made from selling the produce is taken by sekuru's (mother's brother). I really wish you were here to help us. It has been a living hell.

I am also not happy because our sekuru's, call us to their bedroom to wash their clothes and abuse us in the name of a traditional practice which identifies us as their wives. They have been raping us for a while now every time goo is away. When will this end dad? I really want to know. Can you find ways to come and protect us? Over and above this they fondle our breasts. They follow us to the granary and rape us. We have told gogo and she said we must not tell anyone. We are in prison because of this and sometimes we think of committing suicide.

Please come and get us so that we can have a better future. Resolve your differences with mum's relatives and take us with you. I know that when you get this letter you are going to be unhappy. please don't forget us.

Your loving daughter

T



Dearest Minister of Finance

It is my great opportunity to write this letter on behalf of the voiceless girls in Zimbabwe, who are living their lives miserable due to poverty in their homes.

Due to poverty, young girls are being forced to get married at an early age by their parents because of the serious need of money. Early marriages may cause girls to suffer from blood pressure, stress leading them to commit suicide. I also know that, their bodies will not be fully developed to give birth or carry babies to full term. This poses a threat on their health. This means that if they do not have money they cannot access adequate health services and we may have a health crisis in our country. Problems like this are worsened by poverty. A lot of these girls are getting divorced as well and they end up homeless. So, I am kindly asking you to build a shelter for young hopeless mothers and babies like these.

The other thing which is worrying me is that due to poverty again, a lot of girls do not have access to income and yet they are expected to fend themselves due to their impoverished backgrounds. Girls are now resorting to prostitution to earn money so that they can have the most basic of needs such as food, clothes and shelter. Some involve themselves in prostitution because their classmates laugh at them because of their poor status. This need for a better status might cause them to sleep with business men in exchange for survival. In the case of prostitution many girls are contracting Sexually transmitted disease like genital warts, chancroid, gonorrhoea, herpes and syphilis. Some are infected with HIV and AIDS,

Please may you organise a programme of feeding children in schools. Some of our peers come to school hungry and it affects their learning. For most of these girls, they are not affording school fees. Girls should be in school so that they are not vulnerable to abuse. Is there a way you can increase the quota for BEAM for girls? So, that we can have a lot of girls who can contribute to the future of the country?

The drug problem is also not affecting boys only in this country. A lot of girls are also involved in drug abuse. They are usually introduced to drugs by their boyfriends who promise them money. They are using drugs like weed, musombodiya, bronco and mangemba. Is there a way that you can protect us from this by stopping the smuggling of drugs into the country? Some girls are also selling drugs to earn a living.

Some girls are also stealing in shops. This problem is increasing as they get into town to go and steal things and sell them. It is sad that girls are getting into a life of crime for them to survive. Some of them are assisting gangs to steal goods from people in shops and in homes which is showing that girls are vulnerable in harsh economic times.

Lastly, some girls are dropping out of school because they do not have money to pay school fees. Adding on, some of our peers are also missing school because they cannot afford sanitary pads. This is making them miss school and they lag.

Please sir can you find ways to address these challenges.

Yours sincerely
SOM

To the headmaster

I am writing my letter to inform you of some of the challenges which I am facing as a girl child in this school. My hope is that these issues I am raising will be addressed so that my journey in learning will improve and I can enjoy my time being at school.

As you know in our culture girls are looked down upon. I find it sad that the same treatment occurs in a school setup. I have therefore decided to write my letter in regards to this so that the school prioritizes protecting the girl child in the school setup.

Learning with boys is hard for us. It is my sincere hope that you will get a chance to talk to them on how they can treat us better and regard us as equals at school. Boys usually disrupt us when we are learning. They do this in several ways. Sometimes they propose love to girls so that they can disturb them. If we refuse to accept their requests for relationships, they threaten to beat us up on our way home. Sometimes they take our bags from us and threaten not to give them back if we don't get into relationships with them. This bullying affects us in our learning space as girls.

Boys have a tendency of making us uncomfortable as well. Sometimes they bring mirrors to school which they throw under our skirts to see the colour of our panties so that they publicise them to other scholars. This is really embarrassing to us and it lowers our esteem. Sometimes they pull chairs from us before we sit and laugh at us when we fall. I find this stressful as this shows that a lot of them do not respect us just because we are girls. They also make fun of us when we spoil our uniforms during menstruation as if it's our fault when that happens.

The other challenge which I want to raise is that, during sports when we are wearing sports attire the boys make fun of our bodies and call us all sorts of names. I have been labelled a prostitute for wearing a short during sports and it really hurt me. Bos always call us names and accuse us of seeking male attention because of our dressing. Please help us on this issue as it has stopped a lot of girls from participating in sporting activities. The irony of this is that when we are wearing long skirts or long uniform dresses they also call us old women. This has influenced some of my friends to cut their uniforms so that the boys stop labelling them. They are so many labels which we are getting from the boys and I would really wish the school would intervene and help us.

My last complaint is on boys who are impregnating girls in school. Most of them refuse responsibility and this has resulted in some girls committing suicide. For the girls who choose to keep the babies, their academic life is cut off as they must take care of their children. The school must have a support system for such cases so that opportunities for girls to learn despite making mistakes remain available for them. In this regard, we need comprehensive sex education in our school so that we do not fall pregnant in school and we are better informed on the choices we make around sex.

It is my hope that, the school takes an initiative to educate boys on how to treat girls as an equal. I am requesting you to help build a culture of zero tolerance of bullying by boys to girls. They must value us and treat us like human beings. This will make us enjoy our learning environment. We are looking forward to a change on the issues which I have raised in this letter.

Yours faithfully

TC, 21



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