

## **FACT SHEET ON GIRL CHILDREN**

### **Girl Children across the world<sup>1</sup>**

**Girl children have less access to education than their male counterparts.** It is estimated that 60% of the more than 110 million children not in school are girls. For those who do attend school, girls receive an average of 4.4 years less education than boys by the age of 18.

**Girl children face many more challenges than their male counterparts.** Alarming, at least one in three girls and women worldwide have been beaten or sexually abused in their lifetime. It is also estimated that two million girls and women are subject to female genital mutilation every year.

### **Girl Children in East and Southern Africa<sup>2</sup>**

**HIV prevalence in girl children is generally higher than in boys.** In some countries, it is estimated that HIV prevalence in adolescent girls is up to five times higher than adolescent boys.

**Pregnancy and childbirth can be incredibly dangerous for girl children.** A woman faces a 1 in 13 chance of dying in child birth, compared to 1 in 3,200 in Western Europe.

### **The importance of education<sup>3</sup>**

**Access to education can make a world of difference in the lives of girl children.** Research shows that girls that receive at least seven years of education are more likely to wait four years more to get married and have 2 less children than a girl out of school. Research has also shown a positive relationship between higher levels of school for mothers and good child health.

**Education can lead to better income for girl children.** A mere extra year of primary school will boost a girl child's earning potential by 10% - 20%. In secondary school, an extra year can translate into 15% - 20% higher wages.

**Girl children and women are passionate investors in their families.** Over 90% of a woman's income is reinvested in her family – school fees, clothes, extra-curricular activities, food – compared to only 30% - 40% reinvestment by a man.

### **REPSSI's response**

All children have material needs such as food, shelter, health care and education. But children also have the right to be cared for, loved, encouraged and protected from harm.

Children and youth exposed to the devastating effects of poverty, conflict, HIV and AIDS are especially in need of care for their emotional and social (psychosocial) wellbeing. Many have lost parents and family, experienced extreme deprivation and abuse, been stigmatized or uprooted, witnessed atrocities, and suffered overwhelming grief.

With the right social and emotional support, these children are resilient enough to grow into capable and compassionate adults, living with hope and dignity.

REPSSI (the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative) helps children get the emotional and social support to which they are entitled. REPSSI is a non-profit organisation working to lessen the devastating social and emotional (psychosocial) impact of HIV and AIDS, poverty and conflict on children and youth across East and Southern Africa.

REPSSI partners with NGOs and governments across East and Southern Africa. With our technical advice and support, these partners implement policies and programmes which strengthen the ability of communities and families to care for and protect their children and youth.

Our assistance includes providing easy-to-use and culturally appropriate tools, and sharing innovative approaches. We train partners to provide social and emotional services to children and their communities, and we produce activities and tools that can be used with children, youth, communities and families.

Several million children are being supported by REPSSI partners in over 1000 project sites across the region.

**Contact REPSSI for more information:**

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2000), 'Millennium Report.' <http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/full.htm> (Accessed 26 October 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Girl Effect (2012), "Girl Effect Fact Sheet." [http://www.girleffect.org/uploads/documents/1/Girl\\_Effect\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.girleffect.org/uploads/documents/1/Girl_Effect_Fact_Sheet.pdf) (Accessed 20 October 2012)