



Interim Progress Report – WISER International

Organization Name: WISER International

Project Title: Build the Sexual, Economic, and Interpersonal Agency of Girls in Rural Kenya

Grant Amount: \$49,402

Contact Person: Zack Fowler, Executive Director, zack.fowler@wisergirls.org

Address: Physical Address - 502 Sharon Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27517

Mailing Address - PO Box 3186, Durham, NC 27715

Recap briefly what outcomes this project was designed to achieve.

In 2018, WISER International was named the featured grantee for the month of November as a part of Dining For Women's support of our project to build multiple types of agency in hundreds of girls in Muhuru Bay, Kenya. This project has four major components and corresponding sets of outcomes.

Objective #1: Create a healthy and empowering environment for 60 first-year students at the fully residential WISER Girls Secondary School. Provide access to clean water, healthy meals, and essential medicines as we improve self-esteem, confidence, and academic results and eliminate early pregnancy and drop-out.

Objective #2: Support the growth of all 180+ girls at the WISER Girls Secondary School through academic resources, experiential learning, and leadership development. Provide textbooks, school supplies, and laboratory equipment; regional academic and athletic competitions; hands-on Science and Engineering clubs; and training via the East African Girls Leadership Summit in Nairobi. Through these efforts, WISER will improve self-esteem, confidence, and academic results among students while ranking among the best educational experiences for girls in western Kenya and enrolling more than 90% of our graduating class in tertiary education.

Objective #3: Support the continued success of 145 WISER alumni through mentoring and leadership opportunities. Provide agency-building opportunities during WISER's inaugural Alumni Mentorship Day and offer an extensive support network for alumni of the WISER Girls Secondary School.

Objective #4: Empower 650 girls in the community of Muhuru Bay through sexual and reproductive health education. Through WISER girl-led initiatives, build the sexual agency of young women through sessions in local schools and churches that increase knowledge of SRH wellness, build understanding of bodily autonomy, and provide girls with opportunities to lead sessions on issues that directly affect their personal health and well-being.

Through this project, WISER aims to ensure girls in our region will receive the resources and opportunities they need to grow into empowered, educated, and healthy community leaders.



Has funding changed for this project? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?

No significant funding changes have occurred that have directly affected this project. The \$49,402 in financial support from Dining For Women is being allocated as stated in our original grant proposal. However, there is one exciting development – in January 2019, WISER received \$20,460 in grant funding from the Morris Family Foundation designated specifically for alumni-based support. This has allowed us to build on the \$2,500 in funding from DFW designated for our Alumni Mentoring Day and create a much larger multi-day event. In August 2019, we will host our second Alumni Mentoring Day, including a half-day program for our alumni who are now in training to be teachers. This will allow WISER teachers to offer classroom strategies, pedagogy, and more to up-and-coming educators who were once WISER students.

Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?

In 2019, WISER International's staff structure (in the US) changed from a co-director format featuring a Managing Director of Programs and a Managing Director of Operations to an executive director-based format. In this new structure, WISER's Managing Director of Programs has been named Executive Director and WISER has hired two new part-time staff and one new full-time staff member this year. With this change, the responsibilities in the grant that were conferred to the Managing Director of Programs now fall directly under the supervision of the Executive Director. In Kenya, our staff has grown from the reported 33 on-the-ground personnel to 37, though the manner in which the staff engage with the project remains as described.

Have the number of beneficiaries changed? To report this, please refer to the original numbers in your grant proposal under *Number of women and girls Directly Impacted and Indirectly Impacted*.

We are happy to report that the number of beneficiaries is increasing from our original projections in our grant proposal. Originally, our proposal assumed program implementation in 2018, but WISER's growth over the past year has allowed us to expand our student population, our alumni base, and our reach into the community. There are now 210 students living and learning at the WISER Girls Secondary School, not 180, and after the success of our graduating class of 2018, we now have 175 alumni, not 145. Additionally, while we projected that we would have 650 girls benefitting from WISER SRH outreach in 2018, we ended the year with 837 female youth participants in that component of the project and we expect that number to remain near that level in 2019.

Our beneficiaries who are indirectly impacted by the project remain the same – approximately 30,000 community members benefitting from WISER's community initiatives and the steady shift in the cultural value of girls.



What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

Our primary challenge moving forward relates to the management of WISER's sexual and reproductive health outreach in the second half of 2019. In our original grant proposal, written in 2017, much of the coordination regarding this outreach and the subsequent monitoring and data-reporting was handled by our Deputy Principal acting as a monitoring officer. In 2018, we moved to address this by hiring a full-time Program Officer who would take over these responsibilities. However, in June 2019, that Program Officer is departing. To ensure that no programs are affected and that our data remains reliable, we are shifting back to a structure similar to that reported in the 2017 grant. Our Deputy Principal will be responsible for school-based M&E and another long-time school administrator will be picking up programmatic responsibilities, including M&E for community SRH. WISER has complete confidence in this realignment and we do not expect the change to substantially affect the project.

Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?

No changes have been made to our goal of increasing the sexual, economic, and interpersonal agency of girls in rural Kenya during WISER's historic expansion. All originally-stated objectives are still valid, noting only that our initially projected outputs reflect supposed implementation in 2018 and, therefore, our progress is likely to exceed the data in the original objectives.

What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.

Objective #1: WISER has successfully welcomed 57 new students into our first-year class. While our original target was to welcome 60 girls, we reserved a number of admissions spots to be filled by partner organizations and, due to circumstances outside of WISER's control, a few partners were unable to fill the spots as planned. However, all 57 students to join WISER in 2019 were provided, as planned, with access to clean water, healthy meals, and essential medicines in the first six months of their schooling. We have also met our commitment for maintaining enrollment, as we have had no instances of drop-out in this class and no instances of early pregnancy. In fact, school-wide, WISER has had a less than 1% pregnancy rate in the first 6 months of 2019.

Objective #2: WISER has a current student population of nearly 210 students; an increase from our projected 180 provided in our original proposal. That entire student population, in accordance with this objective, has been provided with essential academic resources including textbooks, school supplies, and equipment for our on-campus science labs. The ultimate purpose of this objective is to provide academic resources and hands-on learning opportunities for young women and we have been in alignment with this purpose in the first half of 2019. To date, students have participated in both athletic and academic competitions throughout the region. WISER girls have had top-3 finishes in geography, history, and



mathematics competitions in the first half of the year and four WISER teams reached the regional level of the Kenya Science & Engineering Fair. We are also on-track to send three students and two faculty mentors to the East African Girls Leadership Summit (EAGLS) in Nairobi this August for the first component of the Dining for Women-supported training, and again in December. Also in line with our desired outcomes, WISER graduated our sixth-ever class in the first half of 2019 and this class is on-track to send 93% of its students on to tertiary education in Kenya.

Objective #3: WISER is more committed than ever to supporting the continued success of our now 175 alumni (projected 145 in original proposal). We have scheduled our Alumni Mentorship Day, meant to be set of agency-building opportunities for WISER alums, for August 2nd. In addition to this event, we have added skills-building programs in business, entrepreneurship, health, education, and STEM for 2019 and we are proud to have had a number of these programs executed in the first half of this year.

Objective #4: We are also well on our way to our target of working with 650 girls in the community of Muhuru Bay through sexual and reproductive health outreach. As of June 25th, WISER has reached exactly 325 adolescent girls through our girl-led outreach. Being perfectly halfway to our objective's primary target only halfway through the year suggests that we will outpace this objective in July-August when our girl-led sexual and reproductive health outreach reaches the majority of secondary school students through weekly SRH sessions. All of these sessions, those already successfully completed and those still to come, exist to build the sexual agency of young women. Already-offered sessions cover critical topics including understanding the human body, developing general SRH wellness and hygiene, and STI prevention. Between 2016 and 2018, WISER SRH has expanded more than 1,500% - we expect numbers to be high yet again for 2019.

Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?

The WISER team does not anticipate any difficulties in completing this project within the timeframe outlined in our original proposal. All components of the grant will be executed by December 2019.

Also include:

- 1. Several high-resolution JPG photos of the project depicting women/girls should be posted to your Dropbox. Must be submitted with the right to use all. Include confirmation of the grantee's right and consent to use photos/videos as per local law.**
- 2. Any message you would like DFW to convey to membership and donors about the impact our grant is having on those being served and/or your organization**
- 3. Detailed list of all expenses incurred during the reporting period which have been paid for with the Dining for Women**