

# WOMEN ADVOCACY PROJECT “WAP”



## Interim Report for Together Women Rise “TWR” June 2022

### 1. Organizational Information

1.a. Organization Name: Women Advocacy Project “WAP”

1.b. Project Title: Using Soap to Empower Girls in Zimbabwe

1.c. Grant Amount: US \$ 31,960

1. d. Contact Person: Constance Mugari

1. e. Address: 4495 Sandton Park, Harare, Zimbabwe (This is our new address, where WAP office in currently based).

### 2. Recap briefly what outcomes the project was designed to achieve.

WAP’s main goal is to fight and reduce poverty, which is the major driver of child marriage in Zimbabwe. WAP has a vision of a society without child marriage in which girls and women have the same status as boys and men and can develop their full potential in all areas of their lives. A society

in which women and girls recognize, improve and maximize their social, cultural, economic and political potential as Zimbabweans.

The *Using Soap to Empower Girls in Zimbabwe* project – generously funded by Together Women Rise – aims at empowering young women and girls who are victims of child marriage, as well as those exposed to the risk. It does this by training them to produce and sell all-purpose soap, named *Clean Girl* as a way to prevent poverty and help them resist early marriage.

We began this work in 2019. TWR's support has enabled us to extend the project to two more communities - Mbare and Waterfalls in addition to Epworth and Chitungwiza.

**Results:**



Forty young women and girls from Mbare and Waterfalls know how to produce soap and are fully equipped with necessary materials and machinery to do so.

**Purpose:**

40 Young women and girls from Mbare and Waterfalls are able to sustain themselves and their families as a result of the income-generating activities learned through this project. Their independence is strengthened and they are able to finance their own and their children's education.

**Further objectives:**

1. Poverty and unemployment are reduced
2. The prevalence of child marriages is reduced

3. Girls and young women are better able to avoid unwanted pregnancies at an early stage and reject unwanted sex.

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

WAP is very pleased to inform TWR that funding for our project has significantly improved since our grant application was approved by Together Women Rise (formerly known as “Dining for Women”) in October 2020. WAP has managed to raise over US \$ 33,000.00 from soap sales. 50% of the funds raised has been shared equally among the participating young women and girls. The other 50% has been used by WAP to re-invest in the project and cover other project costs. The rest has been invested as savings.

WAP has also been able to attract other new funding from the Fund for Development and Partnership in Africa (FEPA- Switzerland), which has supported another new group of 30 young women and girls in the Eyre Court community.

In addition, WAP has received an additional construction grant support from the Rockflower fund which has enabled WAP to construct a soap-making factory. The building is a temporary solution, but can sustain our work beyond ten years. In June 2022 WAP signed an agreement with the Embassy of Switzerland in Zimbabwe to receive a new vehicle which will support our staff transportation needs.

WAP also enjoys a strong relationship with Action for World Solidarity in Berlin, Rockflower in New York, and The Advocacy Project (AP) in Washington, both of which have supported WAP activities for the past 5 years. We hope to renew our agreements with these organizations early next year.

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

Ever since WAP’s proposal was approved by TWR, WAP has seen tremendous growth in its activities, particularly soap sales. We have seen high demands for soap with a handful amount of orders from customers within the local communities and towns around and outside Harare. The project has opened a new market and an opportunity for self-employment for young girls throughout the communities around Zimbabwe.

Even in the most challenging times, such as Covid-19, in the past year, we exceeded our sales target of 16,000 bottles, and have made over 11,000 bottles in the first half of the year 2022. What began as a way to help girls resist early marriage, has now become a significant community contribution to families facing the serious effects of the pandemic.

Despite having faced all the many challenges such as inflation, quarantines, and curfews, the girls continue to prevail. With many active members, the soap-makers transformed their life barriers into momentum, opportunity, and solidarity to create a reputable brand among the consumers.

*Clean Girl Soap* has now become an excellent product with high demand and has successfully helped girls in the program eradicate child marriage and poverty in their lives. We have seen girls who couldn't continue school enrolling back in school to finish their secondary education. We have seen young mothers being able to pay for their daughter's education. In some families, girls help their parents with their financial responsibilities.

Adding to that, our programs have also had zero early marriage victims. And lastly, through our weekly meeting assessments, we have seen a growth in girls' aspiration and desire to pursue a career path after high school and continue further education. In addition, while our current core team has not changed, WAP has been able to extend soap-making to another new community of Eyre court in Harare, and selected one more ambassador who have joined our team of group leaders.



Since 2018, WAP has hosted graduate students from [the Advocacy Project](#), our fiscal sponsor organisation in the US to spend 10 weeks in Zimbabwe during the summer, working with WAP. This year we had the pleasure to welcome and work with Dawa Sherpa, a master's student at The Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. Dawa is pursuing an International Affairs degree concentrating in Women, Peace, & Security, and Conflict and Development. Dawa believes that every girl deserves a quality education and the opportunity to lead a life of choice, independence, and freedom.

Her work at WAP this summer has been very fruitful and effected tangible results, despite many challenges faced – weeks without electricity and water, having difficulties with transport after WAP’s only vehicle broken down. However, we were able to accomplish most goals that were set for this summer. [Dawa has written ten very good blogs about her work with us which can be read here.](#)

On the other hand, WAP has seen one major setback. The group of Mbare dropped from the project in December last year due to a lack of leadership and accountability to the project. As a result, WAP has focused activities on the 3 remaining groups (Waterfalls, Epworth, and Chitungwiza) which have now been joined by the Eyre Court.

## **5. Have the number of beneficiaries changed?**

Despite having lost the 20 participants from our previous group in Mbare community, WAP has increased the total number of beneficiaries.

WAP’s Girls Clubs are currently serving 98 young women and girls between the age of 12 to 25 years old. The profiles of the girls vary greatly. On one hand, we are helping girls as young as 12 to have the economic means to continue their education. On the other hand, we have young women around the age of 25 years that are single mothers working to support themselves and their children.

To ensure that our project is providing the benefit it was intended to, in every community, girls conduct weekly assessment meetings. These meetings have proven to be a safe space for the girls to share the knowledge and skills they learn, and discuss the danger of child marriage and how to combat them. We are humbled and proud that ever since introducing this project, no girls from the project have been a victim of early marriage.

## **6. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?**

We are more thoughtful in addressing unexpected challenges, lessons learned and are growing slowly with all our goals being well accomplished. Some of the challenges we have faced during this period have been:

1. The loss of the Mbare girls club: The decision to end our efforts in Mbare was very difficult, but we recognized that our efforts were much more fruitful in other three communities where girls were more serious and committed to the project. Before ending the project in Mbare, many efforts were made to increase commitment of the beneficiaries, but they did not recognize the benefit of the project and the dropout rates stayed high.

2. Lack of transport to take girls to the production site and deliver soap to the market: The girls live in communities that are remote and far away from the city which means they need to commute 1 to 2 hours to get to the facility. This cost was handled by WAP. We then found that we could not pay the cost of transport for every girl and made the hard decision to decrease the number of girls involved in production to only 4. All of the girls are helping to sale the soap, however and benefiting financially.

3. Covid – 19 pandemics: We saw declining commitment and high dropout rate during the Covid-19. Girls couldn't go out to sell soaps or participate at the weekly Saturday meetings that kept them motivated in prior years. We are seeing that number of girls joining the project is rising again, now that the pandemic is nearing to an end.

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

Our initial goal for this project was to economically empower the girls from communities we are serving in order to abolish early marriage. We are still keeping that mission at the centre of our project and working towards strengthening the project to be more self-sufficient and sustainable business in long term.

Aside from our work with soap we are also expanding the benefits we provide to the beneficiaries by helping them with their education. The Advocacy Project (AP) has offered to raise funds for an Education Fund that will enable all of the WAP girls to complete secondary school and we are very pleased that the first donations have been raised by High School students in the US, [as seen in this video from AP](#).

But at the core, our goal remains to uplift girls and help them lead their financial independence and choices.

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

WAP have worked diligently towards accomplishing its goals for this project, as well that of the organisation as a whole:

**1. Select two girls Ambassadors through WAP clubs in Mbare and Waterfalls, ensure that the two soap teams are run by strong girl leaders.**

In January 2021 WAP selected two intelligent, diligent and hard-working girls – Dorcas Bore from Waterfalls and Lynn Mwawa from Mbare – to lead the two groups of beneficiaries in these two communities. Both girls did well until the Mbare group was forced to drop from the project in January 2022 after Lynn's members failed to provide proper monitoring. Dorcas Bore in Waterfalls is working together with other three ambassadors in Epworth, Chitungwiza, and Eyre Court.

**2. Training the 40 girls.**

After having gone through a thorough selection process for the 40 girls from our existing clubs both in Mbare and Waterfalls, WAP offered two months of training in chemical formulary. This course aims to build the capacity of young school leavers, entrepreneurs and people in the local communities, with the aim of imparting them with basic manufacturing skills and concepts of chemical formulation for basic household and industrial products. It is a building block for success in the making of

detergents and solvents for small cleaning businesses. The course also introduced participants to marketing skills, financial management, and book keeping. Several mothers and guardians also benefited from the project.



Most of these young women, girls and mothers have managed to master the art of soap-making and can now produce their own soap both at WAP's production facility for those working for WAP and at their own homes without requiring any monitoring.

### **3. Production and sale of 16,000 bottles of soap in 2021 and 2022**

WAP is very pleased to report that from the start of this project in September 2020 to date, the girls have produced a total number of 34,602 bottles of soap. 6,330 bottles were produced between September and December 2020, 16, 902 bottles between January and December 2021 and 11, 370 bottles between January and June 2022.

These were all sold and have raised \$33,889.00 in these two years. \$5,064 between September to December 2020, \$16,534 between January to December 2021 and \$12,889 between January to August 2022. More than half (\$17,087) of the income has been shared equally among all participating girls.

*Clean Girl* soap is being sold in small tuck-shops, supermarkets and households within the local communities of Epworth, Chitungwiza, Waterfalls, Eyre Court, Mbare and in small towns around Harare. The soap has gained momentum as many people are now used to it.

In addition, WAP is now focussing more attention on helping the soap project become an established business that can be more self-sufficient: to achieve this goal, we have implemented many cost cutting measures.

This summer, we have found ways to reduce cost of production in packaging of soaps, level making for soap bottles, and reducing use of plastic in production through recycling the soap bottle caps. In addition, we have also equipped the new soap facility to be completely run on solar. This allows the soap project to run smoothly and not be impacted by constant power cuts that Harare suffers from.

With the goal of expanding our market, we have expanded WAP soap market to new community this summer and we aim to continue expanding markets in the future as well. In the long term, we hope to be able to expand our market to include big brand supermarkets and grocery stores. In order to build a better foundation for the internal business process, we have also strengthened our financial management system. We have created different files to organize our financials and keep track of progress.

Overall, we have many moving parts geared towards self-sufficiency goals!

#### **4. Child marriage: The “Give us Books, Not Husbands” girls clubs to help their members discuss and avoid early marriage and alert WAP to other families that appear vulnerable.**

To ensure that our project is providing the benefit it was intended to, in every community, girls conduct weekly assessment meetings.

The WAP’s “Give Us Books Not Husbands” girls clubs remain an important way for young women and girls to stay away from early and child marriage In Zimbabwe. The clubs have proven to be a safe space for the girls to share the knowledge and skills they learn, and discuss the danger of child marriage and how to combat them.

The girls have also adopted the Ending Violence and Harassment against Women and Men in the World of work training manual series by ILO, UN Women and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development (Gov. of Zimbabwe). We are humbled and proud that ever since introducing this project, no girls from the project have been a victim of early marriage. These meetings have seen a growth in girls' aspiration and desire to pursue a career path after high school and continue further education.



## **5. Education fund.**

With the help of our partner organization Advocacy Project (AP) we have been working towards establishing an education fund that will help the beneficiaries complete their secondary education. To achieve this goal, this summer we have gathered preliminary information about school fees, beneficiaries' profiles, and eligibility, and created a database that gives detail information required for the education fund.

In addition, our partner organization is working towards raising the fund needed for this goal.

## **9. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the time-frame outlined in your proposal?**

The biggest challenge in achieving our goals and objectives is funding. Most of our funding will run out this year. Our goals are ambitious, and we recognize that we will still need external funding. As a result, we are focusing on extending our partnership with our current funding partners while also looking for new partners who are willing to join us to achieve our goals. Another serious concern is the economic downturn in Zimbabwe. Once again, Zimbabwe is facing economic challenges that impact the cost of raw materials we are buying for the project. We hope to double our production in 2022 but the rising cost of raw materials could make this difficult.

### **Some remarkable achievements:**

- ***Registering and obtaining an official certificate for the Clean Girls Business:*** In order for *Clean Girl* soap to be sold in the formal market (supermarkets and bigger shops) WAP had to acquire an official registration certificate. The certificate was obtained through a formal registration application process by WAP team under the company registry office of the government of Zimbabwe in 2019. We received the document in December 2020. The certificate will also help to legally protect the brand name under the law of Zimbabwe. This means that the *Clean Girl* business name cannot be used by any other business and protect the product brand from copying or imitation.

- ***Clean Girl Unique Bar Codes:*** WAP has also managed to acquire a unique bar code for *Clean Girl* products. This will make it easier for us to approach big supermarkets who may be willing to sale our soap in Harare and outside of Harare.

- ***The Standard Association of Zimbabwe test:*** The third remarkable achievement is the testing and approval of the *Clean Girl* soap by the Standard Association of Zimbabwe. In September 2020 WAP submitted bottles of *Clean Girl* soap to the Standard Association of Zimbabwe for testing. The results that came out were good. The soap was found to be working effectively with all other ingredients like perfumes and dye, odour and cleaning ability, freedom from foreign matter, rinsing properties and water, and insoluble matter. All complied with the standards.

Only two elements failed to comply at the first process- Packing and Marking, and storage stability. For this reason, WAP redesigned a new label and added all the information recommended by the Standard Association of Zimbabwe. We then resubmitted our application. for the second time which worked out positive.

These results increased the confidence we have in the *Clean Girl* soap and has even improved the girls' ability to market their product.

### High resolution photo



**Our Message to TWR members about the impact the grant is having on those being served and/or WAP and its mission:** We are delighted with progress so far in the face of many obstacles, and truly grateful to Together Women Rise and its members and chapters!

**Expenses incurred during the reporting period which have been paid for by TWR:** The total amount spent during this reporting period is \$ 30,930 as detailed in the attached 2021 and 2022 Budget Spending sheets.

Here are the nine component of funding covered by this grant as defined in our original proposed budget:

- Soap Making Material: \$ 15, 900.00
- Manufacturing equipment (1 Electrical Mixing machine): \$ 500.00
- Packaging Material (bottles and caps): \$ 4,800.00
- Labelling (bottle stickers): \$ 2,080.00

- Safety Equipment: \$ 680.00
- Executive Director's Salary (50%): \$ 3,000.00
- Ambassadors stipend (50%): \$ 1,600.00
- Club Coordinators stipend (50%) \$ 1,600.00
- Staff Transport/ Vehicle Fuels \$ 1,800.00

**TOTAL: \$ 31,960.00**