

Iganga Female Headteachers Association (IGAFHA)

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Background Information

Iganga Female Headteachers (Principals) Association is a non-profit organization that brings the female headteachers together to provide a platform for the girl child articulate critical issues that affects her socially, economically and morally as a result of the rigged cultural rules of the area. The organization further provides assistance to the abused girl children.

IGAFHA was founded to articulate and address cultural issues that hinder women's educational advancement. Iganga district has 329 primary schools but only 93 of those are headed by female teachers. Reason being that in Iganga district it is believed that women can not manage leadership positions and this is a cultural belief. Men have to believe, because if you go down to the ground, women are the best administrators. The few of us who have made it up to the top positions have gone through a number of huddles. This should not be the case with the young girl child. IGAFHA has started a revolution and there is hope for the girl child to access quality education that could cause equal employment opportunities and eventual bigger say in the family decisions.

It is a taboo to reintegrate an adolescent mother into school in Iganga district because marrying off young girls in the area is the order of the day. Education for girls in Iganga is not a priority. The rate of the girl child drop out from school is becomingly alarming particularly in primary (Elementary) schools.

National Statistics carried out by the Ministry of Education in 2001, indicate that;

- 45% girls complete primary seven
- 18% girls complete secondary education
- 8.7% girls complete Advanced level education
- 2.5% girls complete University and college education
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Men believe that when one marries an illiterate woman, he has landed the opportunity of having a donkey, tractor, cook, cleaner and servant in a home. IGAFHA wants to see a highly educated woman who can compete in the job market. She could contribute to the family income by not acting the role of a donkey, but providing cash from her pocket.

IGAFHA'S mission is to raise the status of the girl child in society. There are many groups in Uganda that have come up to advocate for equal opportunities for the women but that is done at the national level where seminars are organized for the elite women

whose effect on the rural woman is negligible. IGAFHA has come up to fill the gap where the rural women have not been seriously addressed. The rural woman is a prisoner to the cultural norms. For fear of losing a marriage she can not oppose a husband, but to adhere. We have therefore found it appropriate to start with the young girls because they will grow up with a culture of knowing their rights and would not be intimidated by men. As we pursue our philosophy of empowering the girl child, the rural woman is put on board because she is the mother to that child we are targeting.

Organizational Principles

IGAFHA has an executive board in place. It is the responsibility of the board to implement the decisions of the general assembly. The Link Secretary is faced with the challenge of making the outside world aware of the plight of the women head teachers and rural girl child in Iganga.

IGAFHA uses the existing organizational structures in schools to reach the grass root girl child. There is a senior woman teacher in every school whom we use to mobilize the girls for us to address. IGAFHA has not made much progress because of lack of logistics. We intend to have programs for Out of School girls. They are to be organized at sub county levels.

IDWHA Programs

Bi-weekly visits to schools

2 hours session with the girls per visit
Transport and meals-----\$ 210

Monthly Executive meetings

Transport-----\$ 50 per meeting

Quarterly General Assembly

Transport-----\$ 196 per meeting

Counseling services to the abused girls

Guidance and counseling sessions per week
Transport-----\$ 11 per session

Payment for the visits

Members pay a subscription fee of \$ 10 and these funds are used to facilitate the visits. Members who have vehicles offer to transport others to the venue of the sessions. You will realize that a Principal of a Primary School earns a monthly salary of \$ 250. Coupled with family commitments, one can be able to contribute only \$ 10 to voluntary work.