



SUCCESS STORY

Scholarships Realize Girls' Dreams

Scholarships and clubs keep girls in school and teach life skills



Photo: Cornelius Chipoma

More than 700 Zambian girls benefit from the Ambassador Girls' Scholarship Program.

"I have benefited so much from SAFE," Elizabeth says. "Before I used to be so shy. Now I can stand up in front of people and express myself. I can speak out on my own."

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Elizabeth Matonga is one of the most successful students at the Mukamaambo Girls School in Chongwe, Zambia. The 12th grader is treasurer of the school's Student Alliance for Female Education (SAFE) Club and wants to be a medical doctor. But two years ago, Elizabeth almost had to give up that dream because she couldn't afford her school fees.

"It's always been part of my dream to be a medical doctor," she says. "It pained me to think of having to give that up."

Elizabeth's mother works long hours as a maid, but doesn't make enough money to support her six children and pay school fees. Like many other students at Mukamaambo, Elizabeth did odd jobs to raise money, but so much of her energy was focused on working that her schoolwork began to suffer.

That's when one of her teachers told her about the Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program, an initiative supported by USAID and the Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia (FAWEZA) that benefits more than 700 Zambian girls who would otherwise not be able to pay secondary school fees.

"Most of these girls would be on the street doing nothing if it weren't for FAWEZA," says Rhoda Kalaula, head teacher at Mukamaambo, where there are 53 scholarship recipients.

The scholarships cover all school fees, including boarding and incidentals. Eligible girls are identified by a selection committee of two teachers, a student leader and representatives of the parent-teacher association and local church.

In addition to providing scholarships, USAID also helps FAWEZA improve the social, economic and cultural conditions that often force girls to leave school. The SAFE Club program offers girls education in HIV/AIDS, adolescent health issues and life skills, which they are encouraged to share with other students and community members. The group has empowered many girls, including Elizabeth, and raised their self-esteem.

"I have benefited so much from SAFE," said Elizabeth. "Before I used to be so shy. Now I can stand up in front of people and express myself. I can speak out on my own."