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### THE SOCIAL CHANGE INITIATIVE REPORT

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## **Abstract / summary**

Ever since the period of COVID 19, Corner Kamdini in Oyam district, Northern Uganda, has been experiencing the high rate of teen age pregnancies, leading the increase of the child mothers with its associated problems to the societies. These child mothers have been suffering in many ways, and majority of them could not afford the basic needs for themselves and their children. The main accelerating factor behind such situation in Corner Kamdinin is the existence of the negative social behavior being exhibited inform of prostitution, early marriages and poor parenting.

The purpose of this social change initiative was to empower the child mothers through train on job and entrepreneurship training so that they are able to support themselves and have a sustainable living.

On a sad note, some of these child mothers were forced to stay with their relatives or friends since they were rejected from their parents because of producing children through immoral act.

In addition to that, affording the basic needs is difficult to some of these victims, therefore living in a miserable life.

This social change initiative was designed to include the mediation discussion in order to reconcile the victims with their family members. Others include training, sharing the success stories, skill acquisition through training on job.

During the implementation phase, many child mothers were reconciled with their families through mediation. The training was done on entrepreneurship, financial literacy and train on job. Besides that, the weekly cash round was also initiated.

The implementation of this social change initiative has caused a fundamental change in the lives of the child mothers despite the fact that the time frame was short. This project has charged the assistant district community development officer of Oyam district to conduct massive training on positive parenting to reduce the teen age pregnancies.

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## **CHAPTER ONE:**

**Introduction:** This Chapter give a detailed information about the background including the geographical location of this social change initiative, goals, objectives, challenges and strategies

### **1.1Introduction and Background**

Corner Kamdini is a small growing township located in Kamdini Sub County, Oyam district, northern Uganda.

It is located at the busiest junction that links to Ugandan cities of Kampala, Lira and Gulu respectively. The distance from Corner Kamdini to Kampala capital city is approximately 216Km while from Gulu city is approximately 59 Km.

On the other note, Corner Kamdini is a meeting point and a passage to South Sudan, Democratic republic of Congo where many trucks and traders from Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, Zambia always meets at this small township for various economic and social reasons before departing to various destinations. (Sunday monitor, May 12<sup>th</sup> 2024)

According to Uganda bureau of statistic (UBOS) 2018 publication, Corner Kamdini has a population of 6,672 with the population of males as 3122 while the females counter parts as 3550.

The areas consist of many tribes from Uganda such as Bagandans, Langi, Acholis, Bagishu, Banyoro, among others. While the cargo drivers and traders from Kenya, Somalia, Zambia, Tanzania always meets and socialize with the communities of the area.

The daily economic activities of the area consist of subsistence farming, selling the edible items like roasted meat, chicken, chapatti, fruits and vegetables, among others.

Prostitution in the area is very alarming with the high rate of teen age pregnancies among young girls of 14- 18 years old.

On the other hand, the crime rate is high ranging from gambling, drug abuse, robbery, theft, to mention but a few.

Facts on the ground indicates that there are more than 220 child mothers in the area, while the men that impregnated them are now where to be seen. On the sad note, some of these child mothers have been facing rejection from their parents, while others were chased away from their homes. Therefore, many of them are struggling for survival to afford basic needs for them and their children, but in hardly ways.

(District community development officer's report, oyam district local government, 2023)

Having identified and learned the challenges facing these child mothers, the purpose of my SCI was set to empower the child mothers through “train on job and entrepreneurship short skill training” as well as creating income generating activities.

My social change initiative aimed to improve on the life status of the child mothers, composing of girls between the ages of 14-17 years old in the area of Corner Kamdini Township.

## **1.2 Problem Statement:**

As mentioned earlier, Kamdini Township is located at the junction that connects several routes to Kampala, Gulu and Lira cities respectively. Besides, several cargos long vehicles from Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia normally converges in this township for shelter before proceedings to other destinations such as South Sudan, DRC, and republic of Sudan. Therefore, the life styles in the areas is so harsh in terms of social co-existence.

The rate of prostitution is so rampant which exposes the young girls to dangers of several situations.

The rate of the teenage pregnancies is also rampant especially the children ranges from 14 -18 years of age. In addition to that some of these child mothers have been facing rejection from their parents, while majority of them are unemployed and are struggling to take care of themselves

(UNFPA, Fact sheet on pregnancy, page 2, 2021)

We organized this matching to express the growing concern among leaders and stakeholders on increased teenage pregnancies, forced marriages that are demonstrated with increased statistics in

the region,” said Jolly Acen, UN Women Programme Specialist and Head of UN Women Sub Office in Gulu.

(UN Uganda Bulletin, Eva Sibanda, November- December, 2021 page 5)

Therefore, the rampant pregnancies among the young girls, coupled with unemployment has created a life of struggling among these child mothers. On others sad note, many of these child mothers have being facing rejection from their parents, hence forcing some them out of their families to join the street with their kids, while others are staying with their relatives. This is coupled with the harsh social economic situations in the area. The common economic activity within Corner Kamdini is agricultural subsistence farming. Other activities include the selling of roasted meat, maize, fruits, among others to the passerby and travelers as well. These activities are normally managed by the young girls and boys within the same location of Corner Kamdini, making them to be vulnerable and exposed to the truck drivers for sexual manipulation, hence leading to pregnancies.

“One of the greatest problems causing the teenage pregnancies in the area is the high rate of school drop outs, where majority of them are young girls, as a result, many of them are normally lured to sex at earlier level, hence pregnancies”, said by the Local council one (LCI) chairperson of Corner Kamdini Mr. Juma Sidi. To make matters worse, Juma Siadi explained that unemployment for these young mothers is rampant, and many of them cannot afford the basic needs. For these reasons, many of these child mothers are sometimes compelled to practice unethical behavior such as the prostitution, drug abuse, child abandonment, theft, among others.

Therefore, something must be done to address and change the life status of these young girls and child mothers who are suffering.

### **1.3 Vision**

Having an empowered child mothers for social and economic self-sustainability

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## **1.4 Objectives**

1. Restoring the relationship between the child mothers and their parents.
2. Supporting child mothers through training and creating income generating activities.
3. Enabling the child mothers to be self-employed through train on job.

However, the beneficiaries were the Child mothers and their parents.

## **1.4 Challenges and mitigation strategies**

The first challenge that I encountered was the mobilization of these child mothers because they were staying in many scattered places and yet I needed to meet at once. Again, many of them had lost hope in life and they were isolated and having miserable living. It was the chairperson local council one of the areas that helped me with such mobilization. Besides, there was high expectations from the child mothers (beneficiaries), from day one after mobilization. On the other hand, there were many child mothers who wanted to benefit from this project were so many, that is, 60 in total and yet I had planned for 20 child mothers. This was due to the fact that they were so desperate and needed support on any kind. But through counseling and the encouraging words, they understood and became calm after screening through their elected leaders.

On the other note, the beneficiaries had high exception in terms of the financial support from me because of high level of desperation. Another challenge was also the financial constraints in terms of the cost of paying trainers. In order to mitigate such challenges, some 5 hectares of land was donated by some concern elder of the area, so that these child mothers can be able plan some crop. The intention was to raise some income that they can be able to raise some money to meet the training cost. In such situation, I bought for them some maize seeds and they planted in the land that was donated to them freely by the concern parents as said.

In order to make the child mothers to be organized, I encouraged them to elect some representatives among themselves, including the chairperson and other executive steering



committee members. They also formed a cash round system, where money is collected weekly to the tune of 5,000UGX to each member as a starting capital. These helped partly to address the challenge of the financial constraints.

While the problem of the distance was a big issue to me sometimes because the location where Corner Kamdini is located from my home is more than 40 Kms. This has been tiresome and can take long hours before reaching the location. In order to mitigate such challenge, I used to fuel my motorcycle and ride in order to make follow up on some previous action points. Many child mothers wanted to be in the program and yet my target was for twenty beneficiaries. While others expressed their emotional feelings and shown willingness to participate and yet I did not want to move beyond the target to achieve the tangible result. I mitigated such challenges by proper explanation with passionate encouragement.

Some of these young girls faced rejection from their parents and others were chased away from the family homes. I reconciled nine of them with their parents through mediation. Therefore, they were reunited with their families and guardians much as affording the basic needs for their young ones were problematic.

I realized that the time frame for the implementation of the project was short and yet many things needed to be done. I mitigated this challenge by continuous meetings and implementation as well.

In order to realize the sustainability of the social change initiative, I managed to form a community-based organization (CBO), and this will help to check on the issue of sustainability.

## CHAPTER TWO

In this Chapter, the related literature to the theme of this social change initiative was reviewed while discussing the theoretical underpinning, the change theory and how it was applied

### 2.1 Literature Review

Teenage pregnancy is an international dilemma with many negative outcomes affecting not just the adolescents, but entire societies. Of almost 300 million female adolescents worldwide, 16 million give birth yearly, accounting for 11% of all births worldwide. The Millennium Development Goal number 5 incorporates reducing adolescent births worldwide.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, unmet need for family planning made little change in 20 years. In Japan, strong conservative norms exist about premarital sex. In the UK, a lack of consistent targeted sex education, delay in access to contraception and contraceptive use failure are associated with high teen pregnancy rates. In the United States, 750,000 teen pregnancies occur yearly, costing \$9 billion per year

Programs to reduce teen pregnancy had been emphasized on in many countries and made to incorporate family planning contraception, abstinence education, and sustained commitment of media, businesses, religious and civic organizations.

Such programs had been put in place to reduce the teen age pregnancies because of the challenges and cost associated with such teen age pregnancy.

(Holness N. A global perspective on adolescent pregnancy. Int J Nurs Pract. 2015, page 5

While in United States of America, Adolescent pregnancy, often unplanned and unwanted, has a negative impact on the physical, emotional, educational, and economic condition of the pregnant teenager. Forty percent of the one million adolescents who became pregnant in 1986 chose abortion, and, of the remainder, 61% were unmarried. Teenage mothers in greater numbers and at younger ages are opting to keep and raise their children. In 1987 over \$19 billion in federal

monies were expended on families begun when the mother was a teenager. The preferred approach to this problem was prevention of teenage pregnancy rather than abortion, with emphasis on sex education and access to family planning information and contraceptive devices for both females and males. Sex education in schools was presented in widely varying formats; in fact, prevention of pregnancy may not even be presented. Family planning clinics are subject to the whims and biases of the funding agencies. Clinicians have an important role in providing guidance for teenage patients and their parents, but can also influence school and community leadership to ensure that all teenagers receive sound sex education in school programs and that family planning agencies are permitted to counsel teenagers and provide contraceptive devices. Adolescent pregnancy in USA: (Review and recommendations and research, Fielding JE Williams, 1991)

On the on the other hand, Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the world in 2013 (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). Births to teenage mothers account for more than half of all the births in this region: an estimated 101 births per 1000 women aged 15 to 19 (ibid). The majority of countries with teenage pregnancy levels above 30% occur in sub-Saharan Africa (Loaiza & Liang, 2013). Therefore, government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have attempted to address this via policies and other initiatives. Despite huge investments and refinement of these policies: Teenage pregnancy continues to reach crisis proportions in most African countries (UNFPA, 2010)

In many parts of Sub Sarah Africa, teen age pregnancies have been posing many problems to the communities especially for young girls below 18 years of age. This ranges from health complication that might even lead to the death of the child mothers. Others consequences include rejection from the family members (especially when the girl produce a child out of the wedlock, such a girl can be rejected and send away from home), and such situation tend to create a negative social trend within such communities.

(Teen Pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa, Sibusiso Mkwanzani, Clifford Odimegwu, 2014, page2)

On the side of Uganda, the teenage pregnancy remains a major social and public health issues, with far-reaching implications for the wellbeing of children and adolescents. According to the

most recent Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS 2016), 34 per cent of young women between 20 and 24 years old were either married or in a union before the age of 18, while 7 per cent were married before the age of 15. The numbers are equally disturbing for teenage pregnancy, with approximately one-quarter of all Ugandan girls between the ages of 15 and 19 having already begun childbearing. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have worsened the situation. A study commissioned by the Forum for African Women

Educationalists Uganda (FAWE-U 2021) suggested that during Uganda's first COVID-19 lockdown (between March and June 2020), pregnancies among girls between 15 and 19 increased by 25.5 per cent above their pre-COVID average, while pregnancies among girls between the ages of 10 and 14 increased a staggering 366 per cent. Indeed, data taken during and after the COVID-19 lockdowns suggests that Uganda may be in the throes of a far larger crisis with longer term social, cultural, and economic ramifications for the nation.

Such data is sobering given what we know about the effects of teenage pregnancy and child marriage on the life opportunities of girls and young women. Indeed, early and more frequent childbearing increases the risk of maternal morbidity and mortality, while child marriage is associated with heightened risks of gender-based violence, low educational attainment,

and high levels of unpaid labor. Moreover, unprotected sexual activity increases the risk of HIV exposure among girls and young women, who are already a vulnerable demographic when it comes to this disease. (The national Strategy to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy 2022/2023- 2024/2027, page 5 by Munir A. Safiaddin).

On the other hand, the northern part of Uganda had the highest pregnancy rate in the country before COVID-19. However, the number increased during COVID with Oyam district registering with the highest number of cases of teenage pregnancies. For instance, by the time the lockdown was lifted, one in every five households had a teenager with either a child or pregnancy. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to the sexual and reproductive health rights of adolescent girls. There is a lot of literature on teenage pregnancy, but its scope is limited to the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy. There are, however, very limited studies published that report on the predictors of unwanted pregnancies in Uganda during the COVID-19 pandemic

(Ponsiano Okalo,et al, Predictors of unintended pregnancy among adolescent, 2023 page 2)

While at Kamdini Sub County, the numbers of the teen age pregnancies exceed 200 in the year 2024 and the majority comes from Corner Kamdini, according to the chairperson of Corner Kamdini Viilage Mr Juma Saidi. This situation has created the existence of many child mothers in the area. Above all, many of them were unemployed and yet facing rejection from their guardians.

## **2.2 Theoretical underpinning**

My social change initiative was grounded in theories of youth empowerment, social participation and reinforcement theory of motivation (Reinforcement theory of motivation, compiled by integrated institute of professional development magazine, June 2020 page 20)

These theories provide a unique conceptual framework for developing programs to enhance positive youth development. Normally, youth develop specific skills and positive assets, but also that they become motivated to actively apply these skills and knowledge to become agents of positive change for themselves and in their communities (Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). Thus, programs based on Empowerment Theory focus on building positive assets, connecting youth with local resources and adult role models, and engaging youth in community service activities.

Such theories motivate the youth by engaging them in pro-social, meaningful, and community-enhancing activities that the youth themselves define and control, that can enable them gain vital skills, responsibilities, and confidence necessary to become productive and healthy adults.

I have chosen these theories because it focuses on processes that enable participation; enhance shared decision making; and create opportunities to learn, practice, and increase skills among the child mothers.

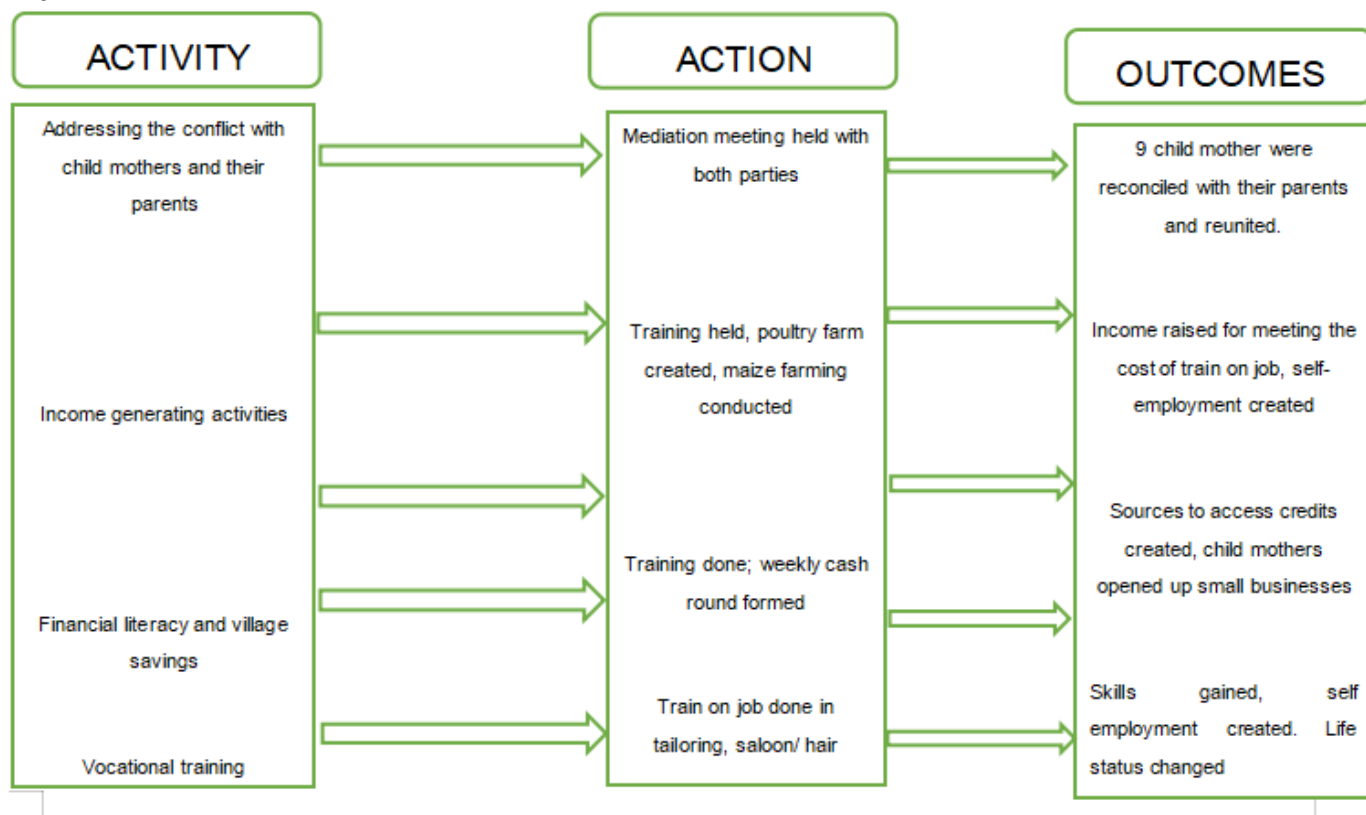
In other words, it gives opportunity for developing the skills and abilities necessary to succeed in various areas of life, building self-belief and assurance in one's capabilities, fostering relationships and networks that provide support and opportunities for the young people. I

therefore combined the three theories together in order to have a program that support and motivate child mothers so that their vulnerable status was uplifted economically and socially in Corner Kamdini, Oyam district, Uganda.

During my SCI implementation, I therefore engaged the youth (Child mothers) using these theories, using the join participation in planning and execution of all the activities with the aims of empowering them to gain vital skills through train on jobs, entrepreneurship and restoring relationship with their guardians. All these empowered them to attained self-employment, responsible and self-confidence necessary to become productive and healthy adults.

### **2.3 Change theory and how it was applied**

In my social change initiative, I applied the youth empowerment approach, where I involved the child mothers, their parents and some stakeholders. My social change initiatives aimed to make the child mothers attain a sustainable living through motivation and empowerment in a joint participation. In order to make the child mothers achieved the set goals and objectives of the social change initiative, the theory was applied as summarized below:



## 2.4 Methods and design

In my social change initiative, I used the following methods in order to realize the outcomes:

Group discussion: I used the group discussions in many ways in order to realize the outcomes that I was looking for. In order to restore the relations with the child mothers and their parents, I first met them individually and then later on as a group. In this process, I mediated between the two parties and all of them reconciled together. Many child mothers were then rejoined with their families and peace returned among them as well. In other families, the meeting took many days for the reconciliation to happen.

Besides group discussion, I also used questionnaires as one of the methods to derive the capacity needs or the interest of the child mothers. In the process, I was able to know their areas of interest and needs to be supported with. Therefore, the numbers of the beneficiaries were identified and were supported.

Training: After discovering the training needs, training was done several times in financial literacy, creating income generating activities, among others. The group members then formed the association of twenty members. They involved themselves in maize farming and poultry keeping. Therefore, creating self-employment and the income generating venture was realized.

Some of them were also trained through (train on job) in tailoring, saloon and hair dressings.

Sharing the success stories: Telling the success stories was very instrumental methods that I used in order to encourage other beneficiaries to learn from one another and build confident. In this situation, many of the child mothers gained courage and started small scale business such as fruits and vegetables selling, wine making, among others. Therefore, the income base was created and self-employment were realized as well.

Weekly meetings: The weekly meeting was also one of the methods that I have undertaken in order to assess the performance of the beneficiaries. This created a strong bondage among the child mothers that led to the formation of the CBO, hence widening the networking.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

Introduction: This chapter explained in detailed the actions that was done in order to cause intervention during the social change initiative implementation. The key findings and the impact were also derived.

### **3.1 Interventions and Activities**

In the first place, many of the child mothers were rejected by their families. Therefore, some of them were getting shelter from their relatives and the well-wishers as well.

In order to address the above challenge, mediation was done between the child mothers and their parents. This led to forgiveness and then reconciliation between the victims and their parents was realized.

The process of counseling was also done to the child mothers through motivation and encouragement. This brings in hope to the child mothers which accelerated their need to be positive and productive.

Almost all the child mothers were vulnerable and lack sources of income to take care of them and their children. After meetings and consultations with them, the identification of their needs was done and some of them preferred to do train on jobs in tailoring and garment cutting, saloon and hair dressing and small business enterprises.

It is upon this situation that 9 child mothers got training in tailoring while 6 of them under took training in saloon and hair dressing, and the rest were taken in for small business and entrepreneurship projects like farming in poultry, maize growing.

Financial literacy training was also given to the child mothers with the intention of making them to invest positively.

In order to have a starting capital to meet the cost of the train on job activities, the child mothers planted maize in the 5 hectares of land that was given to them by a concerned parent. They raised some capital and that was what made them to afford the cost of training.

To enable the sustainability of their project/enterprises, the child mothers formed a cash round scheme. This is where 5,000= (Uganda shillings) are normally collected and given to a member on the rotational weekly basis.

In order to strengthen the group, the weekly meetings were being done to enable the members to come with the challenges they are facing in their enterprises and share with the entire team in order to get advice.

It should also be noted that the child mothers have formed a community-based organization (CBO) for the purpose of sustainability and networking with other organizations.

The organization is in the process of being registered with the sub country local government, and they aims to network with many organizations both within and outside the district as well.

### **3.2 key findings/impacts:**

Basing on the information gathered and method used in my SCI, I found that the majority of the victims (child mothers) had lost hope and confident in life. Many were facing rejection and were so miserable in their community and families. I also discovered that some parents were not conducting their role properly in good parenting.

I therefore managed to reconcile them through the method of mediation. In that way, peace and confident returned in their lives.

On the other hand, many of the victims were facing absolute poverty and lacked the basic needs, hence low standard of living.

But through counseling and training in the field of entrepreneurship, financial literacy, many of them developed confident and established farming, poultry keeping and other small businesses. Therefore, the income generating activities were created, and many became self-employed, therefore their life status improved.

The illiteracy level was also high among the child mothers. Many of them did not know that they could do something better in order to improves on their lives.

But through the vocational skills that was conducted via Training on job, they were able to acquire some vocational skills that enabled them become self employed

Many of the child mother lacked the starting capital to support their small enterprises.

To address such scenario, the formation of the weekly rotational cash round done. Many child mothers started their small-scale business and farming. Therefore, their life status improved.

Many of the victims were facing the challenge of rejection within the communities. The weekly meetings were established, where members used to share their strength and weakness and the mitigation measures as well. This improved the level of confident and socialization in the lives of the child mothers.

In summary, all the objectives of the social change initiative were met although the time frame was so short to measure the long-term impact. However, the sustainability plan was designed to handle this.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

Introduction: In this chapter, the general conclusion was done while deriving the recommendation for the policy makers and the sustainability plan.

### **4.1 General conclusion**

The social change initiatives have caused fundamental changes in the lives of many child mothers. They realized that they are still valuable after discovering their potentials through several levels of engagement with them. They also realized their values and agreed to contribute a lot to execute their potential fully.

However, the time frame was not fully enough to realize the long-term impact of the SCI though in that short period, their social status has changed positively and the standard of living improved. They are now able to afford the basic needs in life, and I do believe that the long-term impact of this SCI will be great in the long run in their lives.

The implementation of this social change initiative also shaped me a lot by building self-confident to create positive change in the lives of the vulnerable people.

### **4.2 Recommendations/implication for policy**

Given the nature of Corner Kamdini social life status, a wider approach to deal with the early teen age pregnancy should be derived by the Government and NGOs to reduce the rate of the teen age pregnancies. I have submitted my recommendations to the office of the assistant community development officer (ACDO) of Kamdini sub county in regards of supporting the child mothers and reducing the teen age pregnancies in the area. The office of the ACDO of Kamdini should be empowered to conduct good parenting roles to prevent early teen age pregnancies in the area. On the other hand, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and the community-based organizations (CBO's) be involve in this practice so that many parents are counseled from time to time on parenting strategies. The child mothers should also be supported with their children and be given opportunities to be productive in the field that are

developmental. More so, the religious and the local leaders in the area be encourage to be involves in the fight against the teen age pregnancies in the area of corner Kamdini township

The district of Oyam and the sub county of Kamdini should plan and budget for the programs that aims to reduce the teen age pregnancy

Above all, the by-laws should be put in place to deal with the immoral behaviors that destroy the lives of youth especially young girls in Corner Kamdini. The aims will be to reduce the practices that increase the rate of teen age pregnancies which is associated with many evils.

On the other hand, the sub county and the district of Oyam should come with the policy that reduce the level of school drop outs among youth, particularly the girls with the intention of limiting the early pregnancies.

The vocational institutions should be established in the area of Corner Kamdini with the intention of helping the child mothers acquire vocational skills, so that they are able to be self-employed.

The office of the assistant community development officer of Kamdini Sub County should compile a clear statistic of the numbers of all the child mothers in corner Kamdini, especially the vulnerable ones, so that many well-wishers can be given opportunity to come in and support them in many ways

#### **4.3 Sustainability plan**

The sustainability plan of the project include the followings:

The beneficiaries were set to own the project through continuous engagement. The social change initiative project had encouraged the beneficiaries to manage their own and be responsible to manage their enterprises.

During the phase of the implementation of this SCI, I was able integrate the local and religious leaders respectively and charge them with the responsibility to support this project so that its

sustainability is maintained. They will also help to handle the issues of discipline and the moral aspects that aims to maintain unity, hard work and networking.

The Patron of this project had already been chosen to spear head and oversee the sustainability of the project. The patron was charged with the responsibility of networking with other institutions such as the non-government and other CBO's to lobby for more support for the project.

The project beneficiaries also agreed to extend their weekly cash round to the VSLA after one year and then to SACCO. This shall help to sustain the project for many years if all goes well.

## APPENDICES:



Beneficiaries meeting on identification of the training needs



Beneficiaries having training on financial literacy



Beneficiaries selling their stocked maize



Beneficiaries during tailoring training





*After reconciliation meeting with child mothers and their parents*



*Beneficiaries learning hair dressing skills*





**Child mothers during the weekly cash round meeting**

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