

AIMing to Care: Focus on Wise Youth Foundation

The founders of this year's AIM Charity Partner, [Wise Youth Foundation](#) (Wise Youth) recognized a serious problem in their communities and resolved to combat it. This is how leaders are born, and we're pleased to welcome Wise Youth on board the AIM fundraising platform, partly in reciprocity for its members' past affiliation as valued AIM volunteers.



The problem these young community leaders identified is the alarming incidence of teenage pregnancies that lead to young girls dropping out of school and stunting their economic and other potential as well as those of their children.

Pregnancy among adolescent girls—defined as ages 15 to 19—is a global problem, but as with many development challenges, Ghana's teen pregnancy rate is much higher than the global average of less than 6%. Statistics in Ghana for 2016 indicate that nearly 18%¹ of said adolescents were pregnant with their first child or had already given birth. In addition to diminished economic and social prospects, teen pregnancies pose numerous health risks for both mother and child and consequently place added burdens on extended families that may already be living under impoverished circumstances. Contributing to a cycle of poverty, offspring of adolescent mothers are at increased risk of developmental problems.

Through advocacy and effective delivery of practical sexual health information, Wise Youth seeks to educate youngsters, especially girls, about adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Wise Youth's community-based outreach programs aim to heighten awareness amongst adolescents themselves as well as the larger community of the dangers of unprotected sex, sexual violence against girls, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The programs also seek to reduce rates of infant

and maternal mortality and morbidity amongst low-income households by supporting vulnerable pregnant teens through a safe pregnancy and post-natal period.

In addition to raising awareness, Wise Youth employs intervention strategies designed to compete effectively against the unwholesome distractions such as early initiation of sexual activity, use of alcohol and illicit drugs and other risky behaviors that lead many adolescents to become chronically truant or to drop out of school altogether.

These interventions include supporting young girls and boys to stay in school by providing them with books and other supplies, tutoring them to improve their academic performance, and leading them in appealing recreational activities that nurture these kids emotionally and psychologically. At risk teens are encouraged to form or join clubs through which they can enjoy excursions while learning useful skills such as research, advocacy, writing and debate. They are also sensitized to the self-enriching value of community service and trained in volunteering.

The hard work of running Wise Youth is done by committed young volunteers, health and other professionals and business owners, who serve as positive role models to the kids they are striving to support. In addition, churches in the community provide temporary space in which the group can meet and hold some of their activities, and thoughtful individuals donate books and school supplies that are distributed at no charge to those that need them.

Living up to their organizational name, the leaders of Wise Youth are studying and learning from effective programs that have been used successfully elsewhere, notably the U.S organizations *The Birthing Project* and *Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America*, to tackle the challenges posed by teen pregnancy and its socioeconomic consequences.

How to help: The organization is in need of suitable space for meetings, teaching and tutoring sessions, presentations and recreational activities.

Also needed are mentors, guidance counselors and concerned Big Sisters, Big Brothers, Aunties and Grannies. If you live in or near Winneba (Simpa) in the Central Region, reach out a helping hand. Call or write founders Charles Ghunney (+233 54 289 8563, ghunneycharles@gmail.com) or Jean Addison-Appiah (+1 916-905-4474) for more info.

And, of course, [it needs money](#). We are pleased to support Wise Youth to raise funds to establish a safe and stable Community Resource Centre where the important work they are doing to literally save and improve lives can be sustained. The returns society gains on its investments to prevent or curtail the incidence of teenage pregnancy and attendant mortality, morbidity and wasted potential are immeasurable. We are *saving our own lives* and protecting our collective future when we join hands and work to save our children.

1 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.MTR.1519.ZS?locations=GH&view=chart>