Teen foundation

**(Fostering, Training & Integration)**

**Mission Statement**

**Teen Foundation offers a supportive residential environment enabling homeless teens, pregnant & parenting teens and their babies to reach their full potential.**

**Core Values**

**1. Safe and Healthy Environment**

* **Healthy and safe living conditions**
* **Healthy lifestyle**
* **Access to health resources**
* **Free of violence**

**2. Self-sufficiency**

* **Self-esteem**
* **Belief in self and others**
* **Full potential**
* **Self-worth**
* **Independence**

**3. Community and Partnerships**

* **Values community**
* **Seeks and utilizes appropriate supports**
* **Resources**
* **Volunteers**

**4. Empowerment/Knowledge**

* **Access to information/resources**
* **Education**
* **Knowledge**
* **Learning opportunities**
* **Informed decision making**

**5. Social Justice/Acceptance**

* **Advocacy**
* **Non judgmental**
* **Rights**
* **Self-determination**

**6. Family and Supports**

* **Recognize importance of parenting**
* **Values parenting**
* **Values family and other supports**

**it is important to remember that for those teens who are pregnant and/or parenting, a comprehensive program of supports is crucial to postpone subsequent pregnancies and to maximize their own healthy development and that of their children. Continuing education [completing high school at a minimum] and procuring quality infant daycare are huge challenges for these young women. It is even more daunting for homeless teens in this situation. The Teen Foundation Program will made a huge difference in our community, providing shelter, support and hope for this homeless population and their young families..**

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**1. PURPOSE FOR THIS PROPOSAL**

**Teen Foundation in Mamfe is the only facility of its kind in Manyu Division whose focus is to provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment for homeless teens, pregnant and parenting young women and their children. The goal is to provide foster care, training and integration of homeless adolescent parents toward a life of independent living and effective parenting. It is a transition home, not in the manner of other transition homes in where length of stay is relatively short and where the target groups are not necessarily homeless. Instead, it is an establishment where homeless pregnant and parenting teens live for a period of time while receiving life-skills training, parenting experience and formal education until they are confident to live with their child(ren) on their own. The home offers elements that are otherwise missing in the lives of these homeless, adolescent mothers: socialization in a healthy environment, nurturing and support, and structure and discipline. As shown in the data presented later in this document, Teen Foundation deals with the reality of young mothers, fathers and children lives. Most of the teens who come to its doors have been poorly nurtured and subjected to violence in the family homes, in trusting relationships and on the streets. Teen Foundation provides a safe haven for these unprotected young men, women and children.**

**The financial sustainability of Teen Foundation is a concern for those involved in providing for**

**this vulnerable population, and it is particularly a concern for children born to homeless**

**mothers who, through birth circumstances, are potentially at risk to fail in life. With**

**these concerns in mind and based on empirical evidence, the Board of Teen Foundation is**

**requesting that the Government of Cameroon incorporate Teen Foundation under the**

**umbrella of Social Affairs with the designation that Teen Foundation is a specialized transition home serving two highly vulnerable populations in Cameroon homeless teens and homeless teens children.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Teen Pregnancy**

**Teenage pregnancy has many attendant risks and consequences. The risks cross two**

**generations simultaneously: that of the young mother and that of her child. For the**

**mother, pregnancy at an early age may mean leaving home, dropping out of school,**

**social isolation, poor health and little or no access to prenatal care. For the child, it may**

**mean low birth weight or premature birth with its associated impact on subsequent**

**development, and other congenital conditions brought on by the mother’s poor socio**

**economic condition and exposure, in some cases, to risky behaviors’ such as alcohol and drug abuse during pregnancy. Children in these circumstances may be poorly nurtured due to the mother’s inexperience to make appropriate decisions and high expectations of the child, and many will be scripted to repeat the lives of their parents. Research shows that teen pregnancy may set the mother and her child on a trajectory that leads to a future life of poverty and long-term dependency. Young single mothers and their children make up the single largest group of persons living in poverty. And, in fact, just over 60% of lone-parent Poverty rather than maternal age at birth has been shown to be one of three major**

**causes of the negative consequences of teen pregnancy. Most young mothers are single**

**parents and thus, do not have the economic support found in a two-parent family**

**structure. Without support from community organizations or from the family, pregnant**

**adolescents face barriers in accessing affordable housing due to lack of enough money**

**for the damage deposit and the first month’s rent. Even when employed, young women**

**are apt to be working at minimum wage that is insufficient to support an independent.**

**Sadly, in addition to poverty, a disproportionately high number of pregnant and parenting**

**homeless youth have grown up in dysfunctional family home environments. Adolescents**

**who become pregnant cross all social and economic strata in society. But girls growing**

**up in homes where they have witnessed family violence and conflict and have**

**experienced emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse are at greater risk for future dire**

**consequences. The pre-pregnancy life situation and family status lead to negative**

**consequences for pregnant teens and for their children. When compared with teen**

**mothers who have supportive families and come from stable home environments,**

**studies show that teenage moms children have, in turn, relatively higher reported**

**incidences of abuse and neglect, higher rates of foster care placement, and are more**

**apt to run away from home.**

**The pathway to homelessness for youth are multiple and complex. It is difficult to provide a typical profile of homeless youth, although some attributes seemed to be prevalent: the average age is 16 years, the majority have not completed secondary school, many have been forced out of the parents home and most have experienced emotional, sexual and /or physical abuse. In addition, many have come in contact with provincial child welfare systems either by being placed in temporary care, or as longer-term foster children or as a client of child protection programs.**

**According to the United Nations definitions, there is an ABSOLUTE and a RELATIVE**

**definition of homelessness. The basic standards of physical adequacy, security of tenure, personal safety and accessibility to employment, and health care are not met.**

**3.1 History**

**On 5th April, 2012, Teen Foundation opened its doors to homeless teens, pregnant and parenting teens and children. The Foundation efforts to open a residence for this target group really started when Evangelist Joan Bakia noticed the prevalence of pregnant teens with no place to live safely, coupled with a lack of support facilities for homeless young mothers and their babies. With the passion and her shared vision with the board members the following programs were initiated:**

* **Teen Orphans Home – TOH**
* **Center for Pregnant & Parenting Teens –CEPP**
* **Teen Literacy Center - TLC**

**A coordinator is hired by the Board and is accountable to the Board for the**

**overall management of the residence, staff and program. At present, there are five full-**

**time and four part- time staff. The home operates 24/7, 365 days a year. Staff is trained**

**in first aid, non-violent crisis intervention, addictions counseling, child care, birth control and parenting techniques and are trained to recognize and counsel residents who have experienced family violence and abuse. They also deliver education on recognizing boundaries, and they reinforce teaching associated with proper nutrition, food management and budgeting.**

**3.2 Target Group**

**Teen Foundation serves both pregnant teens and parenting teens with young children. The**

**majority of residents who came are teen mothers parenting a young child with no place to live for either the mother or the child.**

**All homeless teens that have come to the residence are living in poverty, some have**

**problems with drugs and alcohol, are ill and most are fleeing abuse. A profile of the**

**residents is presented in more detail in a later section.**

**3.3 Mandate and Goal**

**Teen Foundation provides a safe, supportive, transitional home for homeless teens, pregnant and/or parenting youths and children. Teen Foundation ensures that the teen will have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. Access to prenatal care is guaranteed, as is the provision of proper nutrition throughout the pregnancy.**

**Education on child care and child development is provided for all residents whether they**

**are expectant or parenting teens. Because Teen Foundation is dedicated to supporting the**

**transition to independent living, young mothers are strongly encouraged to continue their**

**education, to further their personal development by acquiring the skills necessary to**

**improve themselves as individuals and to become effective parents. Teen Foundation opened a business plan for an on-site education. This program will assist teenagers in receiving their academic high school and diploma, which will lead to a brighter future for them and their child.**

**In meeting the long-term goal of Teen Foundation to help homeless teen parents make the**

**transition to a stable and sustainable life for themselves and for their children, important**

**partnerships with Social Affairs services have been established. Housing alternatives that enable the mother and child to move into independent living while at the same time Teen Foundation staff continue to provide on-going encouragement, mentoring and instruction in matters of budgeting, daily living activities and childcare.**

**3.4 Criteria for Acceptance**

**Teens come to Teen Foundation through Department of Social Affairs and several avenues that include: referrals from**

**social workers (primary referral agent), family members, churches, public health nurses and self-referral. The selection of residents is done on the basis of individual interviews and the completion of a risk assessment.**

**Homeless teens, pregnant young mothers who are between the ages of 16 and 29**

**who meet the eligibility criteria can be admitted.**

**Guidelines used for admittance:**

**#• Must be a pregnant or a parenting teen with one child who is one year old**

**or younger; (will accept those with children up to 2 years old under special**

**circumstances)**

**• Must be homeless teen boy or girl or have no safe place to live;**

**• Must be a youth between the ages of 15 to 29;**

**• Must be mentally and physically capable of caring for themselves and their child;**

**• Must be willing to stay in school or return to school or a schooling alternative;**

**• Must not pose a threat to themselves or others;**

**• Must be willing to attend all programs or services offered; and**

**• Must be willing to follow all house guidelines**

**• Homeless and/or no safe place to live;**

**• Preference given to teens of rural areas**

**• Interpersonal difficulties, e.g., no family support, abandoned by father of baby;**

**• Health risk, e.g., poor nutrition, use of nicotine, alcohol, and or drug use;**

**• Presently being abused by partner or someone they are living with;**

**• History of emotional, physical or sexual abuse;**

**• Lack of prenatal care;**

**• Previous involvement with child protection;**

**• School drop out; and**

**• Other individual circumstance(s).**

**3.5 What the Project Offers**

**In order to provide support and guidance for the mothers and their children, a number of**

**programs and services are provided either directly by Teen Foundation or through**

**partnerships with community and government organizations. Examples of these are the**

**child care and birth control. Healthy Baby & Me. Project which offers both prenatal and**

**postnatal information and education, counseling and youth empowerment**

**programs.**

**The following list describes the services and programs offered by Teen Foundation either**

**alone or through partnerships**

**• a clean and friendly home with nutritious meals and shared cooking and chore**

**responsibilities;**

**• 24 hr-a-day staff experienced in working with teens and children in crisis;**

**• immediate support and links to counseling services;**

**• a safe place away from physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse;**

**• drug and alcohol information;**

**• access to programs and services in the community to promote a healthy**

**pregnancy and baby;**

**• a place where friends and family are welcome to visit and share in prenatal and**

**parenting classes;**

**• social networks and support from other pregnant and parenting teens;**

**• assistance with continued education and career aspirations; and**

**• computers and Internet for career and educational resources.**

**3.6 Recognition**

**Teen Foundation is recognized as a homelessness initiative which demonstrates strong sustainable partnerships.**

**3.7 Governance and Accountability**

**Teen Foundation is establish under the law No. 90/053 of 19/12/99 governing the Associations of the Republic of Cameroon, administered by a volunteer Board of Directors The Board operates under a Constitution and By-Laws. Prospective member names are brought forward by the Nominating Committee and voted upon by the Board at the Annual Meeting. Members may be voted in throughout the year if a vacancy occurs. The Board meets**

**monthly and Minutes are taken and approved at the following meeting. All decisions are**

**made by motions and passed by a majority vote.**

**Accountability to funding organizations occurs through submission of statistics and**

**reports as required by the respective organizations. Staff identified early signs of parenting concerns and the need for support and early intervention from the Department of Social Affairs before these children could have become abuse victims.**

**4.0 PROFILE OF RESIDENTS**

**The following information describes the teens served by Teen Foundation from the beginning of operation up to and including September 30th 2012. These data have been extracted by**

**Teen Foundation staff from the Intake Forms.**

**4.1 Age**

**A range from 16 to 28 years 43 teens, emergency intakes was 8, with a range from 18 to**

**26 years. An emergency intake refers to those who come for a short term stay (escaping**

**violence or unexpected homelessness, for example) or those who come after hours and**

**have not gone through the intake process. Some emergency intakes end up staying on,**

**but many are in need of just a 72-hour respite.**

**4.2 Locality**

**To date, the majority of resident teens have come from poor background from rural areas. The 43 residents are all from Manyu Division, we intend to extend to other divisions as soon as we have funding**

**4.4 Social Profile**

**4.4.1 Level of education at time of intake**

**Research has shown that one of the devastating consequences facing homeless teens**

**is that their education is compromised. Living in poverty and on the street and/or moving**

**from the home of friends each night does not bode well for those trying to stay in school.**

**None of these teens had completed secondary school graduation at the time of intake.**

**4.4.2 Contact with the Social Welfare System**

**A review of the information gathered at the time of intake shows that almost one-half of**

**all the young women at Teen Foundation had visited Social Welfare System at**

**some point in their childhood.**

**4.4.3 Experienced abuse**

**As cited earlier, abuse - physical, sexual and/or emotional - is one of the main reasons**

**why young women leave the parental home. 80% of the teens who have come to Teen Foundation reported being victimized by an abuser. Of those fleeing current abuse, are those who are being abused by a boyfriend.**

**In relation to all abuse - both past abuse and those on intake presently fleeing abuse 87%**

**of the residents were abused by a boyfriend, 37% had been abused either by a**

**mother or a father, 13% had been abused by an uncle and 10% were abused by a**

**stepfather. To a lesser degree (under 7%) the abuser had been a brother, mother’s**

**boyfriend, stranger, a friend or other family member.**

**It is important to note that some teens do not always realize and understand what**

**constitutes abuse. They may not be aware that behaviors directed to them by**

**others are abusive. Consequently, many residents on intake have indicated no abuse**

**only to realize later that they were, in fact, abused. This realization arises once they**

**have counseling or are in discussions with staff and/or other residents. As a result, the**

**number fleeing abuse is probably underestimated, i.e., it is much higher than indicated**

**by the teen at the time of intake and collection of these data.**

**4.4 Young mothers with children**

**About 45% of the resident young women came to Teen Foundation with a child(ren). The**

**children.s ages ranged from 5 days to 22 months, with a mean age of 5.7 months and a**

**median age of one year. In other words, one-half of the children who arrived with their**

**young mothers were below the age of one year, while the other half were above the age**

**of one year**

**4.5 Other data on social variables at time of intake.**

**Data concerning a number of other variables are collected at the time of assessment**

**and intake. As illustrated, about one-third of residents came to Teen foundation with a history of alcohol (34%) and drug use (30%); and, over one-half (58%) of these teens presented with some type of psychological issue. As well, over one-half (55%) of the women were pregnant.**

**4.5 Births While Living in Residence**

**As of September 30th, 2012, 3 moms have delivered while living in residence.**

**The majority of babies born to residents were between 7 and 9 lbs. None has been premature or of low birth weight. It is reasonable to assume that the prenatal care and access to good nutrition contributed to the positive birth outcomes. According to literature, babies born to homeless mothers without supports often are premature or many do not survive the pregnancy.**

**4.6 Length of Stay in Residence**

**Sorted by those who did deliver while in residence and those who did not deliver while in**

**residence, the data shows as follows: The median for residents who delivered while in residence was 225 days, with ranging from 51 to 334 days. In addition to these 13 teens, there is an additional 9 residents who delivered while in**

**residence and is still living at Teen Foundation.**

**The median for residents who did not deliver a baby while in residence, i.e., they came to the residence already with a child, ranged from 2 to 563 days.**

**Altogether, 2 have left Teen Foundation since its beginning a year ago. There are 41**

**teens presently in residence.**

**4.7 Reasons for Leaving residence .**

**Reasons for leaving the residence**

**Back to boy friend/boy friend’s family**

**Resident asked to leave**

**Living on own**

**Could not handle structure/rules**

**Apartment program/housing**

**Unknown**

**Drug use/Addiction issues**

**Home sick**

**Returned to family**

**5.0 EXAMPLES OF LIFE HISTORY**

**The following serve to illustrate the types of childhood that most teens experienced in Teen Foundation. In a word, these stories are typical and describe the complex situations that young women at Teen Foundation faced in their formative years and**

**early youth. To protect the personal identity, names have been changed and other**

**identifying information deleted. The stories, however, are accurate and were provided**

**for this Proposal from the records of Teen Foundation.**

**Jane was 20 years old, four months pregnant and fleeing an abusive relationship when**

**she came to Teen Foundation. She had been abused by her parents as a child and was then**

**abused by relatives in her adoptive family. When she was 18, she was prostituting and**

**addicted to alcohol. She became pregnant and due to her lifestyle was unable to care for**

**the child, the baby died. Living in an abusive relationship with her boyfriend and pregnant a second time, she was refer to Teen Foundation by a church. The first few months were very difficult as she was depressed and lacked self-esteem. Jane was finding it hard to trust anyone and was scared of losing her second child. Eventually, after a few months, she was able to trust staff and co-residents and started receiving psychological counseling and attending courses in building healthy relationships, self-esteem and other helpful programs. Jane lived at Teen Foundation until she deliver of her baby boy. She is thankful for the support and guidance she received. She is aware that she is still vulnerable and at risk of being involved in unhealthy relationships again, but feels she has more courage and strength.**

**6.0 WHAT RESIDENTS- PRESENT AND PAST- SAY ABOUT TEEN FOUNDATION**

**Question #1: What brought you to Teen Foundation in the first place?**

**I had no place to live and I was pregnant.**

**I was sleeping on a friend.s floor and pregnant.**

**I had no choice but to come here. My older child died for lack of care and I was at risk of losing my second child as well.**

**I was fighting with my boyfriend and living in my uncle’s house. It was not a good environment so the Delegate of Social Affairs Mamfe referred me to Teen Foundation.**

**I had no place to live, as a young boy I was almost joining street gangs, when a pastor took me to Teen Foundation.**

**Question #2: If Teen Foundation had not been there, what would you have done?**

**Without Teen Foundation my baby would have died. I had no place to live and had no medical care. I didn’t know what I would have done. Killed myself I guess.**

**I was living in a renting house and paying 20.000 FRS in rent, no money to look after myself let alone have a baby, too. I couldn’t go home. Dad is abusive and a drunk.**

**My child would probably have been dead in 6 months. I had no food and no place to live.**

**I would have join street gangs, doing drugs or looting shops**

**Question #3: How exactly has Teen Foundation helped you?**

**I.m on my own now and have better bonding with my child. I had attachment issues and they**

**worked with me to overcome my problems.**

**They helped me build my self-confidence. They brought out my inner self by being helpful and kind. They know you can do it.**

**You had to follow rules and learn how to adjust. It was really stressful at first but I did it and now it is helping me to live on my own. You have got to have discipline and rules. I think I am more responsible now. Teen Foundation kind of grounded me. It prepared me for life.**

**All of us have to do some kind of education. You.ve got to be in an education program or**

**completed a program or be in school. They help you get to school and stay in school. I am in**

**vocational training and it’s helping.**

**They took time to listen to me and prayerfully guide me.**

**They helped me set goals. Now I know education is a priority and with their sponsorship I am determine to succeed.**

**Even now I call them regularly. They are like a second mother. They give me a sense of what a**

**normal home is like.**

**This is the first time I have been on my own. I have made it 10 months so far.**

**Question #4: How exactly has Teen Foundation helped your child?**

**They told me about resources and programs that would help me with parenting.**

**My child is more sociable and happy due to the stimulating situation provided by living in Teen Foundation**

**I tried breastfeeding and my baby wouldn’t latch. They provided me with great support.**

**My child is placed under their foster care. They helped me build trust with him.**

**I was scared when I moved out of Teen Foundation. But you can call them anytime. I call them when I am having a problem.**

**Question #5: If you were to approach an organization or a person for support of Teen Foundation, what would you say to that person in order to convince them to support this**

**project?**

**I would say that until you.ve been there, you don’t know what it’s like to have no home and no help.**

**They haven’t been there so they don’t know what it’s like, come and see what Teen Foundation can do.**

**I’d tell them that people don’t recognize the number of teenagers in trouble in Teen Foundation.**

**It’s not just the teenager that’s being helped. It’s the child too. If Teen Foundation stops there will be lots more kids homeless. A lot more kids will be born with problems. Getting the right food and seeing a doctor helped me have a healthy baby.**

**They are good, they are passionate, they show us love, now we have a family.**

**7.0 WHY TEEN FOUNDATION IS IMPORTANT**

**The information presented in this Proposal shows that:**

**Homeless pregnant and parenting young women affects two generations : the**

**teen mother and the child. Poverty and poor life circumstances for the mother,**

**which most often includes abuse in the parental home in the early years and**

**throughout adolescence, leads to serious consequences for the young mother**

**and for her child(ren);**

**Supportive, safe environments where life skills can be taught and where self-**

**esteem and confidence can be nurtured can have positive outcomes both for the**

**young parent and for the child;**

**Teen Foundation is the only home in the Manyu that focuses on providing**

**shelter and training for homeless teens and at-risk pregnant and parenting teens;**

**Teen Foundation provides a transition to independent living whereby through**

**mentoring, training and assistance in accessing affordable public housing, young**

**mothers can achieve a more stable and sustainable positive lifestyle;**

**Teen Foundation reaches and serves the at-risk population of youths;**

**Teen Foundation increasingly is drawing youth from other parts of the region as well;**

**as from other parts of the country where such facilities do not presently exist; and**

**importantly,**

**for those teens who will be graduating from Teen Foundation, their**

**assessment of the Project is that without this facility, its programs, its focus on**

**education and the on-going support they would not have any chance to succeed**

**in life;**

**Teen Foundation works with young mothers to prevent their children coming to the**

**door of the Welfare System.**

**8.0 THE COST OF DOING NOTHING**

**What are the implications of doing nothing in regard to the impact on children born to**

**homeless mothers? In short, what are the costs to society? The specter of homeless teens**

**engendered by poverty limits access for single mothers and their children to safe and**

**affordable housing and this in turn, can affect a parent’s ability to care for their children.**

**poverty clearly plays a role in the number of children placed into care. Parents who cannot provide the financial, social and health care support for their children may be forced to place their child into the care of the Social welfare. Yet it is much more financially and socially viable for the child to remain in the family and receive home and community-based supports.**

**The issue of fear of losing their children because of no place to live was a recurring**

**But the answer is not just financial. Importantly, there is a human cost to the child, and**

**the emotional health difficulties, the lack of self-esteem, loneliness and alienation from peers that are associated with children and youth living in poor homes.**

**Finally, it is important to emphasis that Teen Foundation encourages independent living and**

**preparation for entry into the working life of the community through supporting formal**

**education, teaching of life skills, insistence on self-discipline and adherence to house**

**rules. The Project works toward a long term goal of developing independence in place**

**of life-long assistance. Why is this important? For one thing, social assistance, guarantee that teen parents and their children won’t live in poverty.**

**Pulling children and their young parents out of poverty is a daunting goal, but one that**

**Teen Foundation is committed to helping address.**

**9. 0 IN CONCLUSION: WHAT IS NEEDED**

**The Board of the Teen Foundation strongly believes that based on sound information and documented results, it is imperative to secure the financial sustainability of this facility and where possible, to increase its outreach to the community. It believes that the intention to develop strategies to address at-risk 15-25 years link with fostering wellness in these teens as per the Social Welfare whereby primary health care issues such as stress management, healthy eating and addictions cessation can be achieved. The teens of Teen Foundation also have a need to set up quality day care such as that provided by the Early Child.**

**Development Initiatives under Department of Social Affairs Services. Achieving the assurance of protected, multi-year support either all or in part would provide the financial resources needed to continue this service, and where resources permit, expand the services to assist others in this age group across the Province.**

**One possibility to consider is, beginning in the next fiscal year, to position Teen Foundation**

**under the existing funding program on provision that the home be recognized as a specialized transition house where the length of stay is dependent on the teen’s readiness to move to independent living.**

**This would be in contrast to the existing policy for conventional transitions homes of 30**

**days maximum stay.**

**The Board is prepared and would be pleased to enter into discussions with appropriate**

**Government officials to discuss the merits of this request, and strategize either on this or**

**other possibilities.**