

# CHALLENGING HEIGHTS

2009 Annual Report



Strategic Theme: Keeping children in school is our business

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To ensure a secured, protected and dignified future and life for children and youth by promoting their rights, education and health.

## **CONTACT ADDRESS**

P. O. Box KN 1979

Kaneshie – Accra

Ghana

Email: [challheights@yahoo.com](mailto:challheights@yahoo.com)

Website: [www.challengingheights.org](http://www.challengingheights.org)

Office Location: Number 10/56, Dantu Avenue, Awudome Estates, Accra - Ghana.

Telephone: +233-21-256459, +233-21-256460

Mobile: +233-244-515761

Fax: +233-21-256460

## **Executive Summary**

All too soon another year has ended, and we have continued to serve our constituents children and their families well enough for us to say congratulations to ourselves. The year 2009 saw us running different well-structured projects.

A total of 47 children were rescued from trafficking in Volta Lake fishing. Both these children and their families were assisted to put their lives back on track; Challenging Heights supported the education of the children and provided start-up capital for the parents.

Another 27 children who were either at risk or were survivors of child trafficking received various forms of support in schools. Their families too have been assisted with funds to start or expand their businesses. A further 240 children who were found to be in various worst forms of child labor in cocoa were identified, withdrawn and supported.

A child labor preventive program known as Evening School, one of the first projects of Challenging Heights, also supported 80 children with various school supplies and supplementary evening teaching and learning.

The women's desk of Challenging Heights also delivered a landmark achievement by training 30 young women trainers between the ages of 18 and 25 in various income generating skills such as soap making, bead making, and pomade making. All these young women were also provided with start-ups each to train 10 others and to earn income for themselves.

A further 120 children were also identified under our Inclusive Education for Children Found in Worst Forms of Child Labor.

Challenging Heights' school which is collaboration between parents and Challenging Heights achieved an enrolment increase of 353 in 2009 from 281 in 2008.

2009 also saw Challenging Heights establishing and training 15 new schools based children's right clubs, bringing the total number of children's clubs to 26. These children serve as peer educators, and put various performances such as drama, poetry, choreography, cultural dances and many more.

And finally, our Football for Health and Peace program continue to be run with a total of 75 children membership, and with football events being held on weekly basis.

In all of these, we have created awareness about the problem through series of public events in communities, schools, and religious centers. We have also created awareness through the media in the form of news and feature publications. In all, an estimated 10,000 have attended our sensitization events, and over five hundred thousand people are believed to have heard our messages through the media.

We could not have achieved this without the support of our donors, and we have made sure that each donor is listed at the end of this report.

While giving credit to the hardworking team of Challenging Heights for the work we have done in 2009, it also goes to show the extent of the problem we are confronted with. Stopping the use of children in worst forms of child labor is achievable very soon, and we would need to sustain this effort in order not to lose the gains we have made. It is these modest achievements in a sustained and consistent manner, one child after the other, that will make us all happy that we supported in ending the crime of modern day slavery.

We have gained a lot of friends for being bold to pursue justice for some enslaved children. But we have also incurred the displeasure of a lot of others who believe that because we pursued justice for children, we deprived them of their businesses, and therefore had determined to eliminate us through any means.

The lessons we have learnt is that organizations need to be adequately resourced in order to pursue justice. In the face of threats of death on our lives, we had realized that we have a limited capacity to adequately protect ourselves. But we had already ignited action, and we could not leave midway. If we stopped, we risked the lives of several many more children who have not been rescued. But because we have not given up we continue to rescue more children, and we continue to risk our very lives. The challenge here is, how do we sustain this effort, in the face of all these threats of death, to ensure that the gains we have made are not lost?

This year 2010, we have strategically adopted the theme: *Keeping children in school is our business*. We adopted this approach in order to seek improved corporation and collaboration of parents, community members, children, government agencies, and donor friends for the purposes of rebuilding more lives through education in its various forms. We believe that the ultimate aim of all of our efforts (rescues, withdrawals, rehabilitation, child participation, and

sensitization) is child development through education in its various forms – classroom education, informal education, skills and vocational training.

This is the time we need your support the most. We are confident that with your support we are on course to achieving our target of eliminating child trafficking and worst forms of child labor, providing educational opportunities for vulnerable children, ensuring that children have bright future, and we will be able to seek justice for these children.

## **Organizational Structure**

### **Board of Advisors**

#### **Ms. Sheila Acquah-Asare – Chair**

She brings to the board sound educational background, with a number of University degrees and practical training in organizational and systems development. She has over 20 years of practical experience in business development and a number of years as a member of a number of boards.

#### **Nafisatu Naa-Larmiokor Chinery – Member**

She is a gender expert and is currently the capacity building manager of Africa Women's Development Fund. She is also an expert in alternative livelihood options.

#### **Emmanuel Kwame Mensah – Member**

Emmanuel is a Programs Officer at International Labour Organisation (ILO), an expert in child labour and child trafficking programs.

#### **Mrs. Joyce Odame – Member**

Joyce is currently the Child Rights Programs Manager at Plan International office in Ghana. She is an expert in children's rights issues, with over 8 years of experience in that capacity.

#### **Emmanuel Otoo - Member**

Emmanuel has several years experience in children's rights, child labour, organisational development, working in various capacities in Plan International, ILO, UNDP and Free the Slaves.

## **James Kofi Annan – Executive Director**

James worked in Barclays Bank of Ghana for 5 years in different capacities and ending up a manager. He has years of experience in community development.

## **Staff**

### **Administrative Staff**

James Kofi Annan – Executive Director

Cynthia Adjoa Annan – Programs Administrator

Derrick Idan Frowne – Accounts Officer

### **Programs Staff**

David Kofi Awusi – Programs Officer

Victor Debi Mensah - Educational Programs Manager

Stephen Addo – Field Officer

William Komla Mensah – Rescue Coordinator

John Eduafo Jnr. – Field Officer

Gloria Haywood-Dadzie – Shelter Manager

Peter Sam – Shelter Teacher

Akosua – Shelter Cook

Kobena Amakye – Field staff

Freeborn – Field staff

Volunteers for 2009

Alexis Weiss

Anjala Kulasangra

Danielle Zielinski

Ben Hayzlett

Elise Shockley

Sarah Mughal

Laura

Taiye

Group volunteers from Grand Valley State University

Annie Hakim

Amanda Clark

Zoe Smith

Ben Garlets

Andrew Gordon

Casey Key

Janaan Decker

Challenging Heights school teachers

Rosemary Afedzie

Rosemond Aikins

Ajara Salifu

Constance Afrifa-Brobbe

Veronica Alanyo

Alfred Mensah

Stephen Obeng

Newlove Acquah

Irene Sulemana

## Programs

### Anti-child Trafficking Project



This project rescues children from trafficking and worst forms of child labor and from slavery in fishing, provides rehabilitation program and assist them either learn a vocation or to benefit from education. In 2009, the project worked collaboratively with the Department of Social Welfare and the police to rescue and rehabilitate in our rehabilitation shelter a total of 45 children between the ages of 6 and 17. Of this number, a total of 31 children were enrolled in schools and

supported, while the rest still received psychosocial counseling. A total of 40 children were registered with the National Health Insurance Scheme under this project. Each of the 31 re-integrated child was provided with study desks in the schools where they were enrolled.

A one day training and sensitization workshop was done for 35 stake holders in the Effutu Municipality. In attendance were the Municipal Chief Executive, the police, the traditional leaders, the transport unions, heads of schools, community leaders and social welfare officers.

A total of 31 families were trained on small business management skills and supported with seed funds to start or improve upon their businesses to enable them support their children.

There was a bi-weekly monitoring of all children re-integrated and assisted parents, and two project review meetings were held to assess the progress of the project.

Various awareness and advocacy activities were undertaken to ensure a systematic process of ending the problem. Community outreach programs were carried out in 10 communities through 34 focused group discussions with farmers, fishermen, women, traditional leaders, market



women, families, and community leaders. Also, a total of 10 community-wide sensitization programs were carried out through evening video shows.

## Child Labour in Cocoa Project



This project collaborated with the National Program for the Elimination of the Child Labour in Cocoa (NPECLC), and was carried out in two districts – Agona West Municipality and the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The project aims at withdrawing children from the worst forms of child labour in cocoa, and placing them either in schools

or in skills training centres. Two District Child Protection Committees (DCPCs) involving a total of 41 members were sensitized and trained as trainers on the project objectives, concepts, and various child protection laws.

A total of 20 Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) were trained in 20 different communities on the project concepts, their roles, occupational health and hazards, children's rights, community needs identification and assessment processes, community action-planning and implementation strategies, and community mobilization strategies. A total of 141 CCPC members, including at least one promising child from each community and a fair representation of women, benefitted from these training programs.

A total of 15 Child Development Clubs (CDC) were formed and patrons provided with orientation to facilitate monitoring and guidance. The average membership of each of these 15 clubs formed is 20. Each club elected their own leaders, and were guided to write their own drama, poetry, and choreography.

A total of 6 cocoa farm inspections were done in 6 different communities during school hours. This was done to assess the level of involvement of children in cocoa activities and to assess the impact of the different levels of sensitization activities on school attendance.

A total of 240 vulnerable children were identified and were either withdrawn or prevented from engaging in worst forms of child labor. Needs assessment were done for all the children, and are going through the processes of being supported.

A partners conference was organized jointly for the two districts – Agona West and Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. A total of 63 participants, including the two district directors of education both of whom addressed the conference, attended. Also in attendance were the traditional chief in each of the 20 communities, and the chairman for each of the CCPCs. The conference passed resolutions which gained the commitment of the participants to implement community bye-law which will prevent children from engaging in worst forms of child labour in cocoa.

### **Child Trafficking Survivors Support Network**



This project was carried out in 5 communities in the Effutu Municipality – namely Kokobimu, Sankor, Essuekyir, Gyahadze, and Woarababa. The project involves supporting children either at risk of trafficking or are survivors of trafficking to have access to education, provide support for their families and train community networks to monitor the progress of the children.

A total of 27 children were enrolled in schools, assisted with school supplies such as books, footwear, uniforms, and other stationery. Also, each child was provided with study desks in his/her own home to enable children learn after school. In all, a total of 27 of such desks (made up of 27 study chairs and study tables) were provided in each beneficiary home. Again, each community was provided with a black board to foster community child learning. A total of 25 mothers of the children were assessed, trained and provided with seed money to either start or improve their small businesses in order to build their capacity to look after their own children.

Three child right clubs were formed in three schools, and were trained to write their own drama, poetry, choreographies and enacted same during the community-wide sensitization which was carried out. Six teacher patrons and 5 community opinion leaders were brought together and trained on the basic concepts of the project, child labour/trafficking, and child protection skills, and in leadership.

All 5 communities were brought together at one of the communities, Essuekyir, for a community-wide sensitization and presentation program. In attendance were the Municipal Chief Executive, the

Municipal Director of Education, the Municipal Education Circuit Supervisor, and chiefs from the various communities. An estimate total of 1,200 participants made up of children and community members attended the program. Three poems were recited, 2 choreographies and one drama were performed by the children.

## Evening School



This project involves supplementary education for children after school. In 2009, the project supported 80 children to benefit from after school classes. Three teachers were employed in 2009 to facilitate learning. All children were provided with school supplies such as bags and books. Special tests were administered within one month intervals to assess progress of the children. Extra curriculum programs were created for

the children to facilitate interaction, social healing and to develop leadership.

## Challenging Heights school



Challenging Heights school was established in September 2007 to provide access to children excluded classroom education. This school was established as a collaboration between Challenging Heights and the parents. The

parents paid a token of 20% - 25% of the cost of the children's education, while Challenging Heights provided the remaining cost of between 75% - 80%. Challenging Heights continued with the collaboration with parents to provide children with access to the school. The school grew from 251 in 2008 to 328 children in 2009.

## Women's Human Rights

### Project



This project trained 30 young women between the ages of 18 and 25 as trainers in several human right issues such as reproductive rights, reproductive health, child rights, property rights, and child labour/trafficking. Also, the women were trained in various alternative livelihoods such as marketing and selling skills, bead making, soap and pomade making, and were provided

with some start up tools and logistics to improve their businesses.



## Health

Challenging Heights organized 3 health programs on malaria, productive health, infant mortality, and HIV/AIDS. A total of 150 mosquito nets were distributed to pregnant women and nursing mothers. A total of 61 children were registered under the National Health Insurance Scheme, and 2 participatory personal

hygiene programs were organized for two children's right clubs in two communities. Two workshops and sensitization/education programs were organized for women, including nursing mothers and pregnant women on health related to child survival and primary health care.

## Children's Rights Clubs



In 2009, Challenging Heights formed 17 new children's rights clubs in 17 communities/schools, bringing the total number of children rights clubs formed to 26. The average membership for each of these clubs is 20 children. Leadership of all the clubs were strengthened through training offered by our team of facilitators and club coordinators. Weekly meetings were

held by all the various clubs, and some of the topics treated ranged from education, health, leadership, conflict resolution, and climate change. The clubs wrote and performed drama, poetry, and choreography. The clubs also undertook clean up exercises, floats, and outreach programs in the communities.

## Sports

Challenging Heights used sports as a tool to mobilize the communities, redirecting the energies of children through sports and fitness, and used sports as part of the healing process for survivors of trafficking. While the sports program helped in promoting peace and sound health, it also helped in the processes of re-integrating victims of child trafficking and child labor, as well as serving as a medium of mobilizing the communities to reject child trafficking. Challenging Heights organized several soccer competitions with other football clubs in the under 12, 14 and 17 divisions in and around Winneba.

Funding Partners

## Organizations

- Free the Slaves
- American World Jewish Service
- African Women's Development Fund
- Global Fund for Children
- Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare

## Individual donors

Ben Hayzlett  
Mr. and Mrs. P.  
A. Mensah  
Cathie Baker  
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