

Challenging Heights

2016 Annual Report





In 2016, Challenging Heights rescued 53 children from forced labour on Lake Volta.



The Challenging Heights Hovde House rehabilitation shelter provides a place for children to regain their childhood.



The children who stay at the Challenging Heights Hovde House receive high quality care and therapy, including art therapy.



Challenging Heights reintegrated 62 children in 2016, bringing them home to their families.



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When the fish catches are low, women in the community are able to purchase fish locally at the CH Cold Store - a big change from an eight hour round trip to Tema.



The CH Cold Store stocks a variety of fish that the women prefer to smoke and sell.



The community smokehouse provides a safe place for women in the community to smoke fish and be near to their children.



More than 170 women use the improved, durable smoke ovens.

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President's Letter

Dear friends,

I hope this finds you well.

This is to brief you on what our journey for 2016 looked like. We made it, very exciting, but we also faced some challenges. All in all, it was a good year, one to be proud of.

Significant amongst our successes was the rescue of 77 children and rehabilitative care of 120. I am proud to report, that, through your support, our rehabilitation and re-integration programs have gotten better and are still ranked number one in Ghana. We believe we succeeded in putting the issue of child slavery in the fishing industry on the frontlines of the public's thinking.

We continued our support for women. This support reached more than 170 women in our economic empowerment programme. We revamped our women's livelihoods programme, and brought on board the fish preservation facility.

Challenging Heights had some of our first graduates of CH school students moving to their final years in senior high schools, and we were able to resurrect the discussions on ending corporal punishment in schools. In the meantime, we graduated our third class of students, and we still scored 100% for the third successive year.

The year 2016 saw us reviewing our strategic plan, to include an ambitious statement of ending child trafficking, in the fishing communi-

ties where we work, in the next five years. This plan brings a number of obvious challenges, but also very exciting opportunities.

I reduced my international travels, so as to concentrate on taking on a number of national issues. I believe that to truly end child trafficking, our country will have to see significant change, our institutions will have to be responsive and operate with utmost integrity. I had to respond to that call of standing up to speak up in a resounding way, and I did exactly that.

I would like to thank all of you who stood with me and who stood with us. Those who heard the threats of arrests, mobilised to challenge the authorities and brought resources to our course. I know that in all of these, our people, our staff, stood for excellence. They made everything happened.

So I thank you all for standing with us in 2016.

I look forward to working with you in the year 2017.

Thank you,



James Kofi Annan
President

Summary



In 2016 we conducted three rescue operations on Lake Volta.



The Challenging Heights Horde House provides a place for the children to have a childhood, where they can play games like ampe.

This year has been a turning point, both for Challenging Heights and Ghana as a country. It was a year of assessing our focus here at Challenging Heights, all while maintaining our core programmes and laying the foundation for a shift in the coming years.

We commissioned an impact assessment of the past 10 years of our work and used the findings from the report to strengthen our focus and create a new strategic plan. Throughout all of this, we've continued to rescue, rehabilitate and reintegrate survivors of modern slavery, create economic empowerment opportunities for women and youth, stand up for children's rights to education and conduct a number of campaigns to raise awareness of children's rights.

The picture painted for the state of anti-trafficking efforts in Ghana is one that demands action. For the second year in a row, Ghana was placed on the Tier 2 Watch List in the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons report. If the government fails to make significant efforts to curb trafficking, Ghana will automatically be downgraded to Tier 3 and lose significant aid funding. Walk Free also released an update to their Global Slavery Index this year, which estimates that 103,300 people in Ghana are living in modern slavery. With a change in leadership from the election at the end of the year, we have hope that now is the time for the government's actions to increase.

Between the national situation that Ghana finds itself in and the foundations we've laid this year, we have positioned ourselves for great things in the coming years.

Rescue and Recov

This year was quite a special one for our Recovery Team: the US State Department rated the Challenging Heights Hovde House as the number one rehabilitation shelter in Ghana. With that designation, we were able to forge partnerships with other anti-trafficking organizations in Ghana where we will provide rehabilitation services for the children they rescue from forced labour. We want to ensure that all children who are rescued from slavery have access to high quality care prior to their reintegration.



We conduct our rescue operations with the assistance of the Ghana Police and Ghana Navy. In 2016, we rescued 53 children from modern slavery.

77 children rescued

53 rescued by Challenging Heights

22 rescued by Mercy Project

1 rescued by Free the Slaves

1 rescued by Engage Now Africa

120 children cared for

94 boys

26 girls

62 children reintegrated

188 children monitored

After an average of six to nine months in the shelter, during which time our reintegration team prepares the family, the child are reintegrated in their community.

Eleven-year-old Kow* had spent four years working on Lake Volta. When his parents separated, he chose to live with his father, however his father could not care for him, and so Kow was sent to the lake. There, he cast and dragged nets, dove to untangle them from the submerged stumps and other fishing related work. In his time on the Lake, he experienced verbal and physical abuse and witnessed a child drown. When his mother found out about what Kow was doing, she requested that Challenging Heights rescue him. In the 10 months he spent at the shelter, Kow said he felt like he was a part of a family. He was able to reach a P3 academic level, confidently writing his name, along with reading and writing simple sentences. He said that his behaviour had changed, and that he now knows how to interact with his peers and adults without fighting. Since his reintegration, he's been enrolled in school and hopes to become a tailor one day.



Since his reintegration three years ago, Kofi has excelled academically, finishing the most recent school year near the top of his class.*

Kofi*, who was reintegrated three years ago, was 3rd in his Junior High School 1 class of 62 students this year. What makes this achievement even more remarkable is that when he was reintegrated, he started in Primary 3. He was immediately promoted a grade after his first exam scores came in, and when he switched schools, he was promoted another two grade levels. His love of learning is evident when he talks about his favourite subject, social studies, and the strategies he uses to address his struggles in his Fante class. Plus, the after-school activity he enjoys the most is doing his homework. When he first arrived home, he felt a bit limited, but after going to school he saw the number of opportunities open up. "My vision in life is to succeed," Kofi said. "I want to prove to the world that children who were on the Lake [Volta] can succeed if given an opportunity." He sees his future as especially bright as he plans to go to university and become a doctor.



Football is consistently cited by the children in their exit interviews as a highlight of their time in the shelter.

Livelihoods

With the opening of the CH Cold Store this year, much of our community livelihoods programme has taken on a life of its own. Women in the community are able to purchase fish locally when the catches are low, rather than spending entire days travelling to purchase stock. The community of women customers are able to support each other as they smoke the fish at the smokehouse, located right next to the cold store. Women who used these services and facilities reported that they are now able to ensure that their children are able to stay in school.

We've also spent the year training youths in business skills. By targeting young people, we are able to help the next generation of Ghanaians be economically empowered and avoid the financial situations that so often lead to child trafficking. The graduates of our Youth Empowerment Programme are well-positioned to pursue post-secondary education and employment.

We've expanded our livelihoods support for the families of reintegrated children. Prior to the children's reintegration, we work with the women in the families to decide on an appropriate business and what materials and supplies they would need to be successful. Upon reintegration, we supply the families with the goods they requested, in order to ensure the financial stability of the homes to which the children are returning.



Through providing a safe and durable place for women to smoke fish, we're able to economically empower women.

158 cold store customers

170+ oven users

62 families of reintegrated children supported

159 Youth Empowerment Programme graduates

4 livelihoods trainings

97 training participants

51 went to fish-smoking training

46 went to horticulture training



Fish smoking is a common profession for women in coastal communities.

Perpetual Bondzie was working as a seamstress out of her house at the beginning of the year. She struggled to gain new clientele and lacked the confidence that she needed to take her business to the next level. In May, she began taking classes with the Youth Empowerment Programme. She wanted to gain access to the internet and learn how she could use it to improve her business. She not only gained that, but learned about graphic design, Microsoft Excel, databases and Corel Draw. But one of the most important parts of the course was the Leadership Training. "The best thing that has happened has been getting established on my own, that I can be self-employed and not work for someone else," she said. After graduating from the programme in September, she spent the rest of the year saving up her money and was able to open up her own shop in the new year.



Perpetual was able to expand and grow her dress making business after learning new skills from the Youth Empowerment Programme.



Adjoa leads one of the women's co-operatives that uses the community smokehouse. Since using the smokehouse and cold store, she's become more comfortable financially.

Adjoa is a leader of one of the co-operatives of women that use the community smokehouse and purchases her fish from the new CH Cold Store. She's been a fishmonger for her whole life, smoking fish and selling them in various markets in the area. Before the smokehouse and cold store were built, Adjoa would smoke fish using clay ovens at her house. They were not protected from the elements, and after the rainy season she would often have to spend some time repairing them, costing her time and money. Once the smokehouse was finished, she started smoking her fish there. "Because this place is covered, we can smoke any time," she said. Since the cold store opened, her business has improved even further. When the local catches were small, Adjoa would travel to Tema, an eight hour round-trip journey, to purchase frozen fish to smoke and sell. She would lose days and money to this travel that could be used to smoke fish. Now, she's a regular customer at the CH Cold Store, purchasing fish two or three times a week. All of Adjoa's children are all enrolled in school and she's confident she can provide for their needs.

Education

Children's right to education remain an important aspect of our work, and this year saw the beginnings of a new direction for how that work is embodied. As a part of our commitment to all children, we've broadened our scope of support and reach beyond the school that we founded nine years ago to all schoolchildren in Winneba.

Challenging Heights School is now Friends International Academy. The success of the school, not only academically but also with the shift in attitude toward education in the Sankor community where it is located, has given it the ability to stand on its own. Friends International Academy's anti-corporal punishment policy is an example for the Ghana Education Service and all other schools.

Some of the ways in which we have widened our scope of educational support include the support we provide for reintegrated children by providing school materials, trainings for teachers on how to implement an anti-corporal punishment policy and the distribution of TOMS shoes to tens of thousands of children across Central Region. The shoes lower the barriers to access to education and make their walks to school safer.



Challenging Heights School became Friends International Academy this year. Through the continued success of the students, it's able to stand on its own.

452 children attended FLA school

100% of JHS3 students graduated

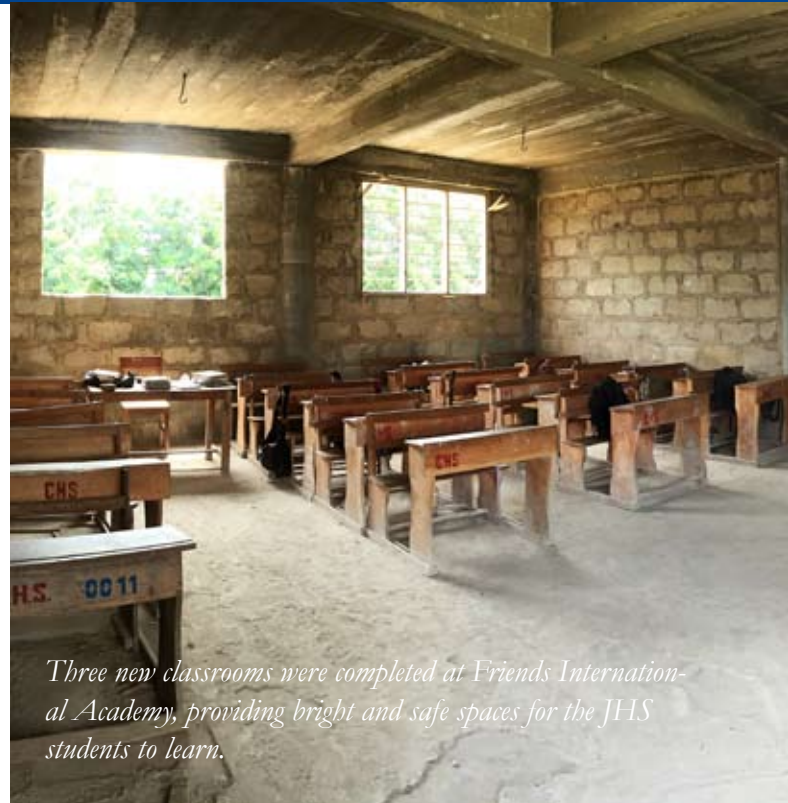
80,000 pairs of TOMS shoes distributed

142 reintegrated children enrolled in school



Reintegrated children's education was supported through the provision of school supplies and uniforms.

Emmanuel is a 14-year-old JHS1 student in Achiase, a small town in southern Ghana where the roads are made from rocky, red dirt. The road that Emmanuel walks to school is very rocky and sometimes covered in broken glass. He had a pair of used shoes that he had purchased from the market in a nearby city, but the soles had nearly worn through so he had to walk slowly and carefully to get to school. Emmanuel received one of the 80,000 pairs of TOMS shoes, which he was very excited about. "I am excited to wear them to school and play football in them," he said. His teacher remarked that with the new shoes Emmanuel and his classmates will be able to walk to school safely and quickly, ensuring that they are able to access education.



Three new classrooms were completed at Friends International Academy, providing bright and safe spaces for the JHS students to learn.



Through the distribution of 80,000 pairs of TOMS shoes, thousands of children are able to attend school safely.

This year featured a number of improvements and upgrades at Friends International Academy. Clean, tiled, indoor toilets were completed, providing the students and staff with a safe place to do their business. Ghana has one of the lowest toilet to people ratios in the world, and by providing clean and safe toilets to the students, we're able to address girls' school attendance and a variety of potential health issues. We were also able to complete the construction of three new classrooms at the school. The new classrooms are home to some of the Junior High School classes, allowing them to prepare for their exams in a spacious, bright environment. Finally, we were able to install a new poly tank at the school. When the water went out in Winneba for two months, the children were often missing school in order to fetch water from the local borehole. Now, with the poly tank, they'll have easy access to water at school.

Advocacy

Promoting children's rights was front and centre in our advocacy work this year. We started the year with a Child Rights Conference in Senya, where children learned about their rights and then were given the chance to tell the adult community members how they wanted them to protect children's rights. After completing research on the effects of corporal punishment in schools, we began training teachers on how to implement an anti-corporal punishment policy in their schools. The media can be a major ally in promoting children's rights and social protection, so we conducted a workshop for journalists on how they can incorporate themes of child rights and social protection into other stories and work.

One of the main focuses of our advocacy work was with the Guidelines for Children's Reintegration. A handbook researched and compiled by Family for Every Child, we provided data, endorsed the guidelines and have conducted trainings on the guidelines for policymakers and practitioners. These guidelines will help improve the lives of children who are returning to their family after separation and, often, trauma.



Teachers from Friends International Academy worked through whether corporal punishment makes a school safe and alternative discipline methods.

520 participants at child rights conference

1,000 trafficking awareness stickers distributed

60 participants in Guidelines for Children's Reintegration workshop

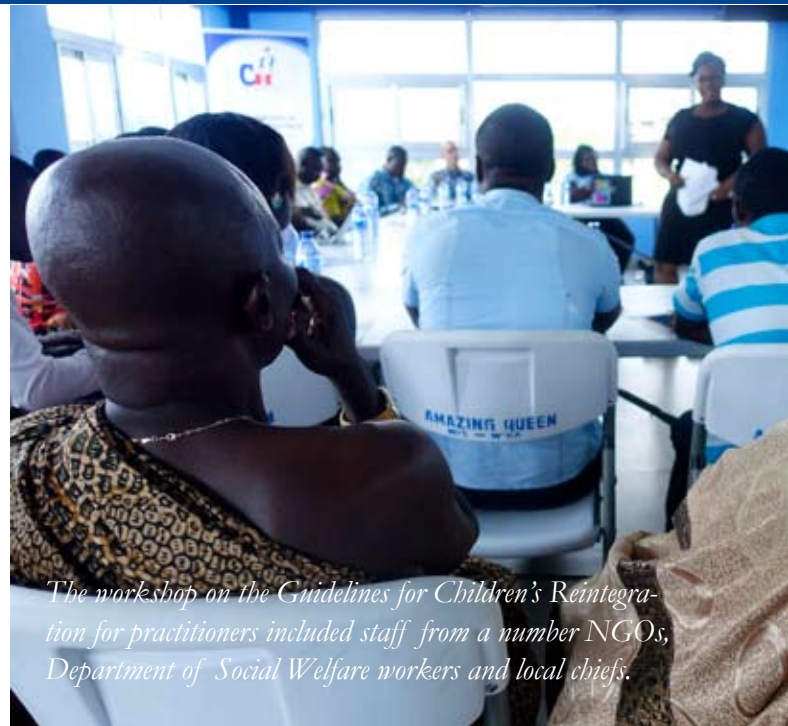
15 media professionals trained about social protection

26 teachers trained in anti-corporal punishment policies



Stickering of taxis and vans raises awareness of trafficking where it is likely to happen.

We started out the year with a conference for schoolchildren on the topic of children's rights. The day began with a large group presentation about children's rights before breaking out into four small groups. In these small groups, the boys and girls discussed the roles of the government, community leaders, the education system and parents when it came to protecting their rights. Before this conference, many children were unaware of what it meant for something to be their right, and they were able to gain a deeper understanding through the conference. The children recognised that with rights come responsibilities and called upon community leaders, teachers and parents to fulfill their responsibility in protecting children's rights. At the end of the conference, they presented a communique of what they took away from the conference and what they expected from the adults. In the communique, they expressed how important it was for them to know their rights and encouraged the leaders to continue such events in the future.



The workshop on the Guidelines for Children's Reintegration for practitioners included staff from a number NGOs, Department of Social Welfare workers and local chiefs.

In 2016, Family for Every Child released their "Guidelines for Children's Reintegration" handbook. We contributed to the creation of these guidelines, which are intended to be used to support children who have been separated from their families who are making what is expected to be a permanent transition back to their family and community. The guidelines were endorsed by more than 30 different agencies and organisations, including UNICEF, Save the Children and World Vision. We received a grant from Family for Every Child to conduct trainings on the guidelines for both policymakers and practitioners. The fact that the document is meant to be built upon and adapted to each country's culture, as well as how to best support each stakeholder to implement the guidelines, were lively topics of discussion. All involved agreed that children's well-being should be a priority. We've begun to review our own reintegration processes to determine what parts of the guidelines will be most helpful for us in the coming years.



More than 500 children and adults came together in Senya to discuss children's rights and how to protect them.

Volunteers

Through our Partners in Development programme, we were able to host a number of guests throughout the year. From the Ambassadors group that learned about the issues of child trafficking and our impact to a group of high school students that helped apply a fresh coat of paint to the Challenging Heights Hovde House, we are proud to show our supporters our work up close.



A donation of school and art supplies was brought by students from Grand Valley State University in the U.S.



Students from Castle View High School in the U.S. helped paint the Challenging Heights Hovde House, read to students in the library and bonded through games and play.



Friends International Academy got a facelift thanks to volunteers from Northwestern Michigan College in the U.S.



Participants in our Advocates programme helped tutor JHS students to prepare for their BECE.

50 volunteers

2,554 volunteer hours

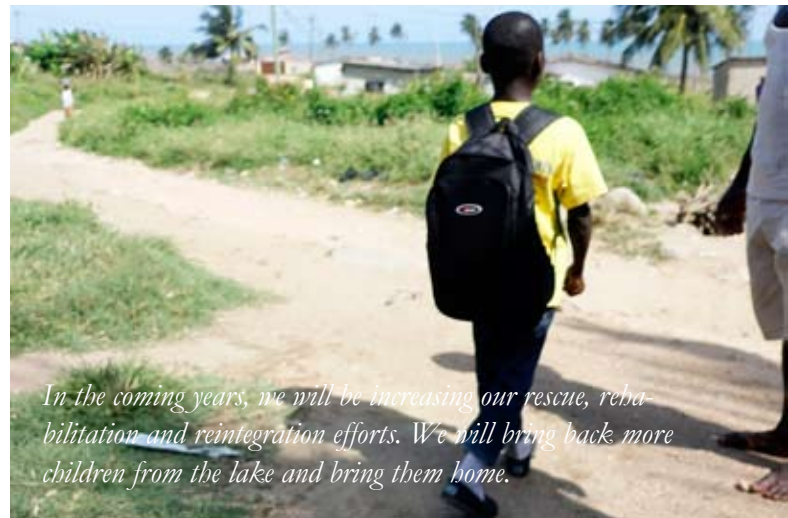
A Look Ahead

We spent much of this year doing some introspection on what it is that we want to achieve as an organisation, what our community needs and how those two can match up. We ended up with a bold, new five-year strategy, with the goal of ending child trafficking in Ghana's fishing industry in five years and slavery in 10.

This year laid a solid foundation for us to start gradually increasing our efforts to achieve this goal over the next five years. We have the procedures and personnel for rescues, an exemplary system of care at our recovery shelter and a reintegration team that is very much a part of the communities where they work. We plan to increase the number of children rescued next year by 50 percent, and with the increase of intake we will expand the Challenging Heights Hovde House.

We are working to increase the impact of our community engagement work and to strengthen and increase our Community Child Protection Committee network. Addressing the root causes of trafficking will be a major task that we are taking on next year as a key component for preventing child trafficking.

Next year stands to be an exciting year in Challenging Heights' story and we hope that you will join us.



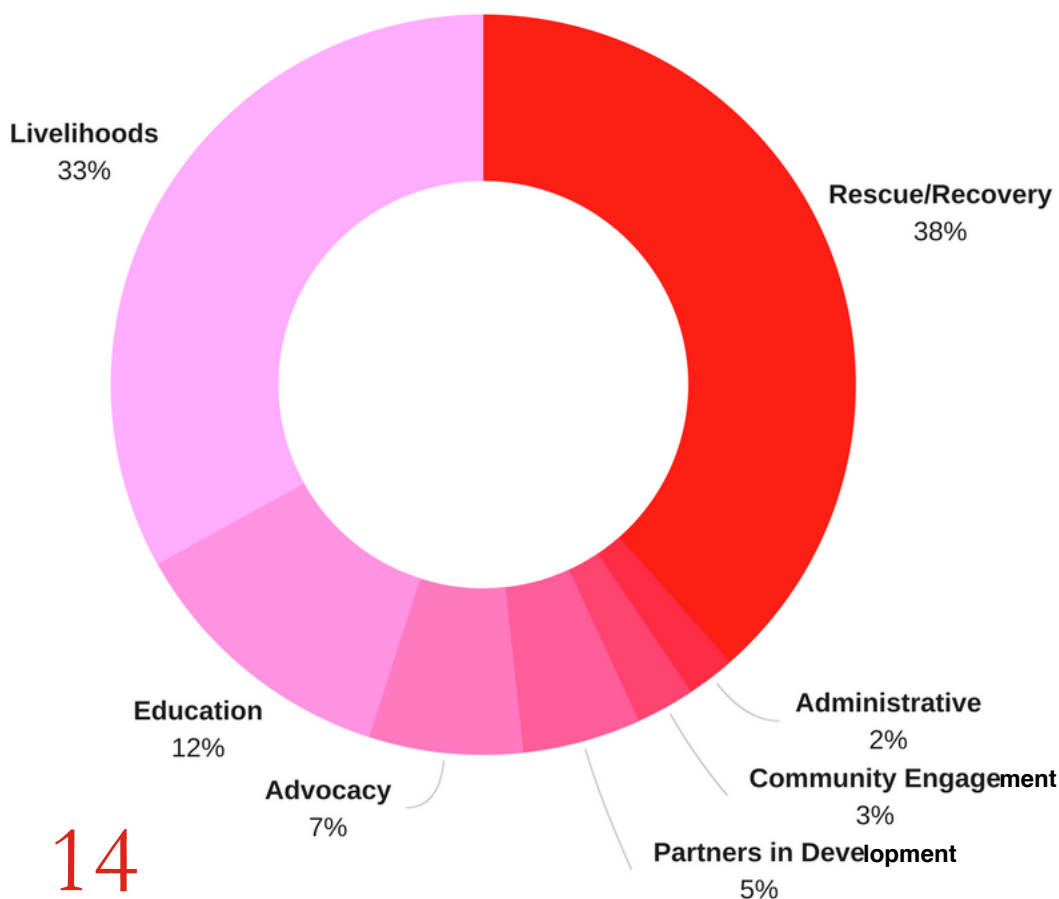
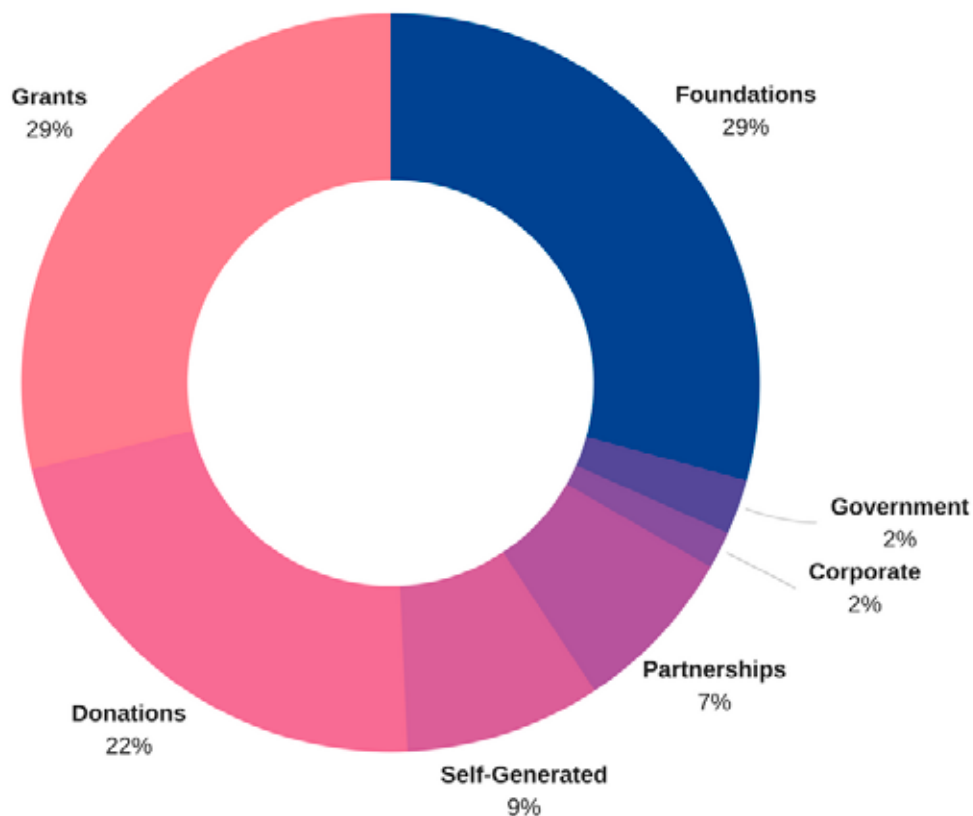
In the coming years, we will be increasing our rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. We will bring back more children from the lake and bring them home.



We will be stepping up our efforts to address the root causes of trafficking, which we have identified as poverty, naivety and family separation.

Financials

As a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, we rely on the generosity of others to continue our work. Our financial support came from a variety of sources, including grants and foundations. A significant part of our funding came from the support of donations, both large and small. A growing source of income for us is self-generated. As our sister companies, Run Off Restaurant, CH Cold Store and Nyce Media, grow and prosper, we expect that proportion will grow.



We're proud of the fact that more than 90 percent of our spending is on programmes that benefit and take place in the community. The bulk of our spending directly addresses child trafficking and prevention through our Rescue and Recovery and Livelihoods programmes. As we increase our efforts at prevention in the coming years, we expect that our community engagement spending will increase as well.

A full breakdown of our finances is available in our annual financial report.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support we received from all of our partners and supporters. With their passion and commitment, all of them helped us to achieve so much in 2016.

27 Million Voices	Learn 4 Work
Abolish Slavery Now	M. Night Shyamalan Foundation
Butterflies/Child Development Khazana	Maria Mattsson Mähl
Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives	Mercy Project
Castle View High School	Micah 6:8
the Clerie Family	Operation Blessing International
Empower	the Sidden Family
Engage Africa Now	Strive Fund
Family for Every Child	TOMS Shoes
Freedom for All Foundation	UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery
the Haverdink Family	Vincent Lyn Rescue + Recovery Project
Hovde Foundation + Sunwest Bank Charitable Foundation	Women in Social Enterprise
Inter Church Organisation for Development Corporation	