



# CHALLENGING HEIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT 2014



Our Mission:

**To promote youth and family empowerment and children's rights to education and freedom from forced labour in Ghana.**



Our Vision:

**A world where every child is in school and lives in a loving and caring family**

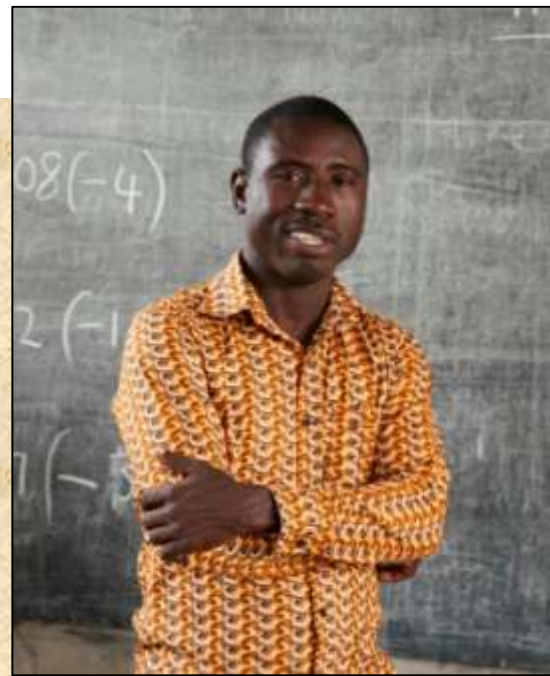
## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

My dear friends,

I'm happy to announce that our 2014 annual report is out, and once again, I'm proud to have been associated with the strong performance of our organization. I am so pleased that you supported us to achieve so much in the past year.

2014 saw a big improvement in the quality of delivery of our services to children and women.

For the first time, we had a resident psychologist who provided training for all of our staff and social workers at our rehabilitation shelter. This has greatly improved the quality of care and counselling to our rescued children.



In 2014, we rescued 53 children from slavery and supported over 700 vulnerable children to go to school. Our direct support to families reached 150 women and 207 young people while we continue to deliver wider support to poor fishing communities along the coast.

Our own staff team has strengthened with the addition of 25 new team members. Challenging Heights has not only increased our services to our beneficiaries, but also improved on the quality. We have more staff, and even more qualified staff than ever.

It was also in 2014 that we saw Challenging Heights' influence grow on national and international levels.

At the national level, we launched a number of online and offline anti trafficking campaigns including "Send No Child" and "Stop the Bus," which climaxed with a road block, where the Ghana Police checked cars and buses and saved 33 children.

It was also in 2014 that we had the opportunity to meet with important faith-based world leaders. The highlight of our advocacy was my meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, to discuss the Anglican Church's global initiative on modern day slavery. I also read an interfaith declaration for the Initiative of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery at the Vatican, to leaders from many faiths, including Pope Francis.

Challenging Heights is proud to have continued its important work of supporting children at risk of trafficking. We've supported hundreds of children to go to school, and provided resources for families who have the capacity to earn income to care for their children.

We are excited to be in our 10<sup>th</sup> year as an official NGO, which saw the board approve our five-year strategic plan that is set to guide us in the years ahead. We couldn't do what we do without you, and we hope that you will continue to offer us your much needed support. Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Kofi Annan", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. James Kofi Annan

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**2014 saw Challenging Heights continue our tenth year in pursuit of the promotion of youth and family empowerment and children’s rights to education and freedom from forced labour. In 2014, we directly supported 1,226 children and youth and across 42 fishing communities in 12 districts of Ghana.**

2014 has been a year of expansion and strengthening for Challenging Heights, with key appointments to the management team, an overall increase in our staffing, and increased and more stabilised income. In 2014 the board of Challenging Heights approved the organisation’s five-year strategic plan focusing on four main thematic areas: protection, education, livelihoods and advocacy.

We achieved our goal of building our own Office and Training Centre in Sankor, Winneba. As well as office space, this building has a modern 50-capacity conference room and break-out room. This offers us more capacity to undertake training and other staff development programmes.

Our President, James Kofi Annan received an honorary doctorate degree from Grand Valley State University, Michigan, USA. He was also appointed as the Board Chair of the global alliance, Family for Every Child, of which Challenging Heights has been one of the founding members since 2012, and honoured with a C10 award in Sweden.

We have strengthened our relationships with national and international partnerships through new agreements and collaborations. Our Partners in Development programme is at the heart of a desire to connect in a meaningful way with likeminded campaigners and child rights advocates across the world, while the reestablishment of Friends of Challenging Heights as a professional charity in the US has the potential to significantly strengthen our donor engagement.

Building on the successes of 2013, in 2014, we directly rescued 53 children from slavery on Lake Volta. We cared for 157 children at our rehabilitation shelter, 76 of whom were directly rescued from hazardous child labour on Lake Volta. We continued to monitor 89 survivors of child trafficking who had successfully been reintegrated and provided 62 care givers with seed capital to invest in their economic empowerment.



The joy of reintegrated children being welcomed back home

We trained over 100 community leaders through our Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) across 13 committees in Ghana, including 3 communities on Lake Volta. We conducted a joint operation with the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) of Ghana Police who placed 33 children they considered at risk of trafficking or exploitation on Lake Volta in our protective custody.



Moreover, we achieved 5 prosecutions, one of which resulted in conviction and a 5-year jail sentence for attempted re-trafficking. Rigorous prosecution is still in progress for the rest of the cases as of December 2014.

At Challenging Heights School we provided primary education for 705 students following the admission of 73 new children into the school. In April we opened the Hand in Hand for Literacy Community Library, stocked with nearly 8,000 books. Over 1,000 school pupils and community members have registered at the library.

In June our first batch of students graduated from the Junior High School at Challenging Heights School. All 15 students gained admission to top Senior High Schools in Ghana and they have all received full scholarships to pursue secondary education.



We launched our TOMs Shoe distribution in September and gave out 34,178 pairs of shoes to children in public or state-owned schools in the Central Region of Ghana.

In 2014 we continued to expand our vocational skills training for women and care givers of vulnerable children and began construction for

our Women's Livelihoods Project fish-preservation facilities. This new phase of our livelihoods programme will include cooperative microloans, a smoke house, fish preservation "cold store" and a community clinic. Currently, over 150 families have subscribed to the programme, with 25 families so far having received microloans to boost their businesses.

The new office and training centre in Sankor, Winneba



We provided 207 young people with computer training (software and hardware), entrepreneurship and leadership development through our Youth Empowerment Programme.

In 2014 Challenging Heights was chosen by Walk Free as their campaign partner in Ghana, following which we launched a number of successful online and offline campaigns and petitions. In addition to targeting faith leaders to speak

out against child labour we are building on our relationship with Ghana Police to improve public awareness and state action in detecting and preventing child trafficking. In November we commenced our first regular Community Radio Advocacy Programme reaching thousands of listeners across 17 districts in Ghana.

We completed a flagship Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Social Protection research project in partnership with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Family for Every Child, and worked with UNICEF to have the findings approved by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

James Kofi Annan participated in several congressional meetings in the USA. He also travelled to Rome to speak with faith leaders in the Global Freedom Network, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. In November he read the global declaration against modern slavery signed by the Pope and other faith leaders.



Break time at Challenging Heights School

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# CHALLENGING HEIGHTS

## THE PASSION BEHIND CHALLENGING HEIGHTS

Challenging Heights (CH) was founded in 2003 and officially registered as an NGO in 2005 by Dr. James Kofi Annan. Dr Annan was trafficked at the age of six and forced to work in numerous fishing communities along Ghana's Volta Lake for over seven years. He escaped at the age of 13 and enrolled himself into school: at that time he could neither read nor write, but supported himself through school and university, going on to a successful career at Barclays Bank of Ghana for over 5 years. Dr Annan's experience of the horrendous abuse of child slavery has given him a sense of responsibility to serve as a voice and advocate for children who are trapped in similar situations. This has been his personal passion and the driving force behind Challenging Heights since 2003.

## THE PROBLEM

Child slavery is happening every day throughout Ghana. Though there are several laws that criminalise child trafficking and forced labour, including the Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 594) and Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560), these practices continue in Ghana. Through research and over 10-years of experiential learning, we understand that child trafficking and forced labour in Ghana is caused by poverty and economic hardship, lack of parental care and support for children and ignorance of the issues. The majority of Ghanaian citizens are ignorant of the consequences of child trafficking and the laws that criminalise it, as well as how to access available support and services, exacerbated by weak enforcement of laws and implementation of policies.



Rescued children being brought to the safety of the Challenging Heights boat by our field team

According to the 2014 Ghana Living Standard Survey 6 (GLSS 6), Ghana has a child population of 8.69 million (between the ages of 5 and 17 years). Of this number, 1.89 million (21.8%) are victims of child labour while over 1.23 million (14.2%) are victims of hazardous child labour including child trafficking and domestic slavery. The International Labour Organization/Ghana Statistical Services 2003 Child Labour Survey estimated that over a million children in Ghana are denied education because of the need to work instead of attending school.

The International Labour Organization/International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC) Analytical Study on Child Labour In Lake Volta Fishing in Ghana (August 2013) estimates that there 49,000 Children working in the fishing industry on Lake Volta, with 21,000 forced to undertake hazardous child labour. An estimated 193,000 Ghanaians live in conditions of modern slavery (including trafficked children and those in child marriage), as calculated in the 2014 Global Slavery Index, which evaluates countries according to prevalence of modern slavery by population.

## OUR STRATEGIC POSITION

Challenging Heights seeks to protect and improve the lives of young people and their communities affected by child trafficking and the worst forms of child labour. Challenging Heights believes education and the economic empowerment of women are the most important things for eliminating child trafficking and the worst forms of child



labour. We believe that that if children are educated, then they will know their rights, decreasing the chances of being forced into child labour and trafficking.

As a grassroots organisation, Challenging Heights is committed to stakeholder participation and engagement to ensure the solutions we provide are those identified and requested by the community, including facilitating access to education, advocacy, women's and children's empowerment and the promotion of child rights.

## **OUR THEORY OF CHANGE**

We believe that child trafficking and slavery will only be eliminated by a holistic approach, which focuses on change at multiple levels: the individual and family level, the community level (changing attitudes and practices) and the systemic level (changing laws and policies). Our anti-child slavery model encompasses protection, education, livelihoods and advocacy. Our protection work involves rescuing children in forced labour and slavery in the fishing industry on Lake Volta, and providing rehabilitation and reintegration with their families. Education focuses on pushing for the realisation of every child's right to learning, irrespective of their gender, race, religion or background, and providing education and vocational training for young people who have missed out on opportunities. Our Livelihoods programme involves supporting parents and care givers of survivors and families of children at risk of child trafficking to find sustainable livelihoods through economic empowerment. Our advocacy work consists of guiding and influencing national and international policy on child rights and the rights to education and freedom from slavery for all children, boys and girls alike, as well as cultivating attitudinal changes at a community level.



Our school seamstress is a former livelihoods programme beneficiary

## **ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY**

Challenging Heights continued to improve its capacity and reputation throughout 2014. Our President, James Kofi Annan received an Honorary Doctorate of Humanitarian Letters from Grand Valley State University, Michigan, USA. Dr. Annan was also appointed as the Board Chair of Family for Every Child, a global alliance of child centred NGOs of which Challenging Heights was a founding member in 2012. Dr Annan was also acknowledged as a global leader in the fight against the trafficking of children with a C10 Award in Stockholm. We achieved our goal of building our own Office and Training Centre in Sankor, Winneba. As well as office space, this building has a modern 50-capacity conference room and break-out room, offering us more capacity to undertake training and other staff development programmes.

Our staff team increased from 69 in January 2014 to 94 in December 2014. We appointed Dr David Schley (Vice President for Campaigns, Research and Strategic Direction) and Dr Kate Danvers (Vice President for Psychosocial Programming and Survivor Support) to the senior management team for a period of two years to support our President and carry out strategic and capacity building activities for the team. We also welcomed Eric Asamani to the management team as Headmaster of Challenging Heights School. Our established managers Linda Ataa Osabutey (Rehabilitation Manager) and Stephen Addo (Field Operations Manager) remained in post and both saw their teams grow. David Kofi Awusi, a longstanding member of the management team who has served in many different roles within the organisation, took on the new role of Advocacy Manager for Challenging Heights.

We have successfully recruited to roles at all levels of the organisation, including finance staff, field officers, teachers, security guards, domestic staff and care staff. It is encouraging that for each role we have had a strong field of candidates to choose from, showing Challenging Heights is an attractive employer locally and nationally.

Additionally we have enabled some of our most loyal and talented staff to change roles within the organisation, promoting their personal development and allowing us to benefit from their skills. Growing our staff team enables us to provide a higher quality service to children, especially in the areas of rehabilitation and reintegration. We are more responsive to donors and more efficient in our work, and can grow new projects such as expanding our livelihoods initiatives, which is a key development area as we look ahead to 2015.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Challenging Heights is proud of its long standing partnerships around the globe, and grateful to all whose support continues to make our work possible. Our capacity to engage friends, supporters and campaigners through social media was significantly increased this year by the appointment of a full-time Communications Officer. In 2014 we sought to improve our relationships with funding partners by providing them with a better understanding of our needs, operational capabilities, statutory obligations and ethical standards. We are particularly conscious of setting an international standard in child protection and survivor privacy, which we acknowledge places limits on the type of fundraising activities that can be undertaken by partners. This has, for example, resulted in the transitioning of our child sponsorship programme to a Sponsors' Club that does not place any obligations on beneficiaries.

### ***PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT***

Our new Partners in Development Programme seeks to provide even more meaningful opportunities for learning and exchange to volunteers and visitors wishing to join us in Ghana. At the heart of our programme is an invitation for individuals to join us as citizen activists in the drive to eradicate child slavery – we know that as a grassroots organisation in Ghana we cannot end this practice alone. We need the power of international voices raised in defence of vulnerable children and so are keen to support those wishing to find out more about our work and help spread our message.



Some of our Partners in Development visited the Cape Coast "slave castle" as part of our Advocates programme

Through our Ambassadors' Programme, Advocates' Programme and Intern Opportunities we offer a variety of ways for visitors and supporters to engage with us. Our guiding principles are: children's wellbeing is always our top priority, and will not be compromised for visitor activities; creating genuinely meaningful experiences for international visitors to Challenging Heights, in the hope of providing a life-changing experience of global learning exchange; needs-led programmes, with all opportunities within the organisation created by staff who best understand the real needs and gaps in our current capacity; pride in our local staff and quality in our programmes, and close supervision of all contributions to maintain quality and ensure they are culturally appropriate.

### ***FRIENDS OF CHALLENGING HEIGHTS***

Friends of Challenging Heights (FCH) was re-launched in the US as a separate charity with 501c status. Friends of CH is leading on developing our Sponsors' Club, engaging potential new funding partners and supporting Dr Annan in the US with his fundraising and campaign activities. We believe this is a very exciting opportunity to expand our engagement with international donors and supporters.

## **5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

In 2014 the Board of Challenging Heights formally approved the organisation's 5 year strategic plan, which will guide our development from now until 2018.

# Protection



## PROTECTION

At the heart of our work is a focus on protecting children from trafficking and hazardous child labour in Ghana, especially slavery in the fishing industry on Lake Volta. In 2014, as part of our preventative approach to end child labour and child trafficking in Ghana, we continued our community-level sensitization and awareness raising activities. In total 103 sensitization events of various intensity were organized; 81 school-based, 6 faith-based, 6 market-based and 10 community-based. These sensitization events took the form of film shows, open dialogue, focus-group discussions and community forums, and engaging children in learning their rights through participation in this year's World Children's Prize voting. We educated an estimated 30,000 boys, girls, men, women and community leaders about child trafficking and the rights of children.

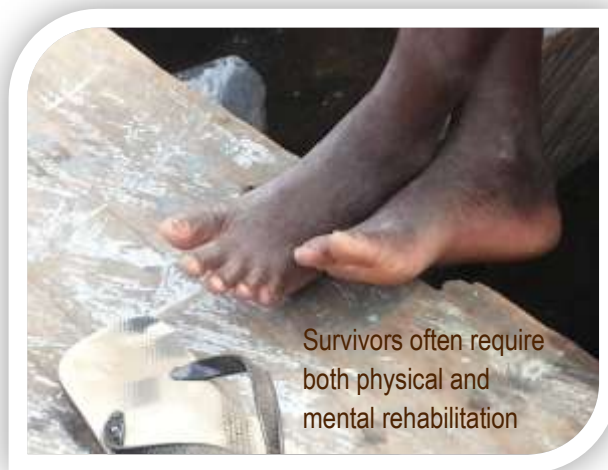
Through our sensitisation events, we aimed to empower participants to identify trafficking cases, and give information about where and how to report it for redress, immediate response or intervention. This year we received reports of over 70 cases of child trafficking during the various sensitization events, resulting in the rescue of 53 children, evidencing the success of our community sensitisation approach.

## RESCUE

In 2014 we carried out two rescue trips to Lake Volta to rescue 37 children, and facilitated 16 community rescues, meaning that out of over 70 children identified or reported as trafficked to Challenging Heights, 53 were successfully rescued by Challenging Heights.

Challenging Heights' rescue operations are varied, and not limited to travelling to Lake Volta to rescue children who have been reported as being held in slavery. We also follow up on children who we could not find on the lake, or those cases reported at times when a rescue trip is not due, and in this way can add "community rescues" to our planned rescue trips to the lake. Often in cases of community rescues, it is possible to persuade traffickers and fishermen to bring the children back to Winneba in order to avoid prosecution. In addition, we provide care for "voluntarily returned" children who manage to escape from slavery, or whose masters release them from slavery unprompted.

Through a Challenging Heights and Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of Ghana Police Service collaboration, 33 children were intercepted in one night in August 2014 on public transport between our source communities and the lake. Four of these children were identified to have been trafficked while the remaining 29 were children who were deemed by the police to be vulnerable to exploitation after arrival on Lake Volta. All the children intercepted were given temporary care in our rehabilitation shelter whilst police investigations were on-going and family members were traced.



## REHABILITATION

We continued to operate our 65-bed capacity rehabilitation shelter - Challenging Heights Hovde House. In 2014 we provided care for 157 children: 37 had been rescued in 2013, 53 were newly rescued by us this year; 23 children were rescued in 2014 by one of our partners, the Mercy Project; 42 were provided with temporary care pending investigation from the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit and Immigration services; with others referred to us for care by the District Department of Social Welfare.



For children rescued from slavery, we provide a holistic package of rehabilitation, comprising interventions in education, physical health, behaviour management, social skills and psychological and emotional wellbeing. Rehabilitation usually takes between 3 and 9 months, with the average length of stay in the shelter being 6½ months. We incorporate a variety of group activities including football, drama, choreography, music, art, and group conversations to help children learn how to socialise, relate and live in peace with one another. Some of these

activities, particularly the drama, art and group conversations also enable those children who need it to process some of the traumatic experiences they went through while in slavery. Successful rehabilitation involves preparing each child to reunite with their family and reintegrate into school and their home communities.

In 2014, we strengthened our processes for assessing children’s progress in rehabilitation, enabling us to tailor our standard package of care to the needs of the individual child. We also strengthened our ability to provide counselling and expressive art activities through in-house training and on-going supervision for care team staff. In October 2014, two members of our rehabilitation care team travelled to Mexico with other Family for Every Child members to share experiences and learn about international best practices in managing children and developing child-sensitive programmes in rehabilitation.

In 2014, our children went on an excursion to the popular and exciting tourist sites of Kakum National Park and Elmina Castle, in our quest to expose them to new experiences and help shape their perspective of life as opposed to a confined life in slavery. In December we organized a Christmas party for all the children in the shelter. During this event, children performed drama and choreography as well as participating in dancing and singing competitions for the invited audience, assembled shelter staff and each other. It was a particularly joyful experience to see the children rescued in our December trip, who had only days before arrived at the shelter, joining in with the dancing and merriment. On 24<sup>th</sup> December, the shelter children were treated to an excursion to Accra, where they enjoyed dancing and singing, and received a festive meal and presents from Father Christmas.

## **REINTEGRATION**

41 rescued children were reunited with their families and reintegrated into their home communities, with 39 enrolled in schools and the remaining 2 enrolled in vocational skills training. Varied reintegration support was given to the children and families on a needs led basis. The children received educational materials such as school uniforms, school bags, footwear, books and writing materials. Challenging Heights had to provide desks for 15 children whose schools lack such furniture and otherwise would not have capacity to admit our children.

The families of reintegrated children receive business and financial management training. Each family member was supported to open a bank account and encouraged to save. Challenging Heights provides non-refundable seed capital to all key care givers, to enable them to trade with it or use it to boost their micro-businesses. By improving their income levels and reducing their economic vulnerability, the motivation to re-traffic children due to income poverty is significantly reduced or eliminated. Economic strengthening is a key part of our approach to helping children return to normal stable lives within their community.

Challenging Heights paid for and registered all reintegrated children under the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) for a period of five years. The NHIS is a Government of Ghana health insurance policy for the poor and needy to access free medical care, relieving families of these costs, which are usually a source of income drain and financial burden.

We view sports as a valuable social integration tool for rescued children, so our reintegration support includes linking children to our community sports programme. Participation helps children learn to socialise, work in teams, and tolerate conflict, as well as developing their talents and gifts.

### **MONITORING**

In 2014 Challenging Heights recorded only one case of re-trafficking which was quickly resolved and the trafficker prosecuted and sentenced. This success reflects our strong and vigilant monitoring and follow-up system.

This year 89 children were monitored by our Field Operations Team as part of their on-going care and support. Monitoring ensures that each child is integrated well into society, coping with family relationships and catching up with their studies. Field staff visit schools, homes, communities and vocational training centres to carry out assessments that enable them to quickly identify risk factors and intervene to prevent re-trafficking. Additional physical resources, medical care or psychosocial support can be provided as necessary. Monitoring enables the Field Operations Team to identify family-child conflict (which is very common) at an early stage and work with families to resolve issues before they escalate.

### **COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEES**

One of our strategies is to build strong community resistance against child slavery. To achieve this, we have adopted a community-led approach, developing active and resilient Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs). The CCPCs serve as a surveillance and monitoring team checking the inflows and outflows of children in their respective communities. They participate in children's reintegration, by informally monitoring the children in their communities in addition to the formal visits conducted by Challenging Heights. They are our key support in the identification and reporting of risk factors for re-trafficking, abuse or other social integration difficulties affecting reintegrated children.

Currently, we have 37 CCPCs, of which 24 are self-sustaining. The remaining 13 CCPCs continue to receive support such as training and refresher training. In 2014, 4 training and 5 refresher training sessions were organized for 13 CCPCs, reaching over 100 community volunteers. In 2014, a total of 25 children were freed from slavery and debt bondage through community rescue by the CCPCs. CCPC members were active in stopping buses carrying children to Lake Volta to be used for forced and exploitative labour.

### **PROSECUTION**

Through our work we secured the arrest of 5 alleged child traffickers in 2014. All are being prosecuted in court and we have so far secured one conviction. We are particularly interested in pursuing prosecutions in cases of re-trafficking, as these families have already been given education about trafficking, economic support to improve their livelihoods and have contracted with us to care for their children and prevent re-trafficking.

Thirteen year old Kojo (not his real name) from Senya is currently staying in our rehabilitation shelter having been re-trafficked to Lake Volta. This boy was rescued and rehabilitated some years ago, and returned to live with his mother, but in March 2014, his grandmother and father sold him to a trafficker, who took him to the lake to work with a fisherman. Luckily our Senya CCPC members found out about this as soon as it happened and we were able to rescue the boy from the lake within only a few days. We provided information and led the local Senya police to the family, who arrested the grandmother.

Joining police to prevent trafficking in an overnight operation"



# Education



# EDUCATION

## CHALLENGING HEIGHTS SCHOOL

Challenging Heights School has benefitted from new leadership in 2014, and has expanded its student numbers and improved on its educational and behavioural standards.

Challenging Heights continues to grow in popularity, thanks in part of its excellent academic performance



In 2014, we admitted 73 new students to our school bringing the total population to 705 boys and girls from Nursery to JHS 3. The school now has 23 teachers: 6 new teachers were recruited in 2014 and 2 teachers moved to new roles within our office. We initiated a behaviour management programme, including provision of in-house training for all teachers, development of a students' code of conduct and development of a reward system for positive behaviour.

In June, our first batch of students, 9 boys and 6 girls, graduated from our school after writing the national Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). We achieved a 100% pass rate and full admission to top Senior High Schools and Technical Vocational Schools in Ghana. This was especially exciting set against the national pass rate, which this year was around 60%. We were pleased to be able to provide tuition fee support for all 15 of our graduating JHS students to continue their education. We are expecting 12 students to graduate in June 2015, and have already started organising mock exams to ensure they perform just as well in their BECEs.

We continue to provide extra-curricular activities to help students discover their non-academic talents, including sports, our cultural troupe, drama group, air force cadet corps and choir. Successes in 2014 included our school securing 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the district sports, our choir performing at a fundraiser in Accra, and our cultural troupe performing for the US Ambassador.

In our quest to train students as child rights advocates and responsible citizens, we provided training for 24 children in September educating them about how to defend the rights of the child from violation. We expanded our Children's Bank programme and now have 168 children registered (90 boys and 78 girls). The concept is a co-operative bank run by and for children, allowing them to save small amounts of money and withdraw it when they need, helping develop life skills and positive habits in handling money.

Ten year old Sabina is student at Challenging Heights School. Safowaa, our Librarian said: "When Sabina first visited the library, she couldn't read the early user books. But now, after using the library and loaning books, she can read those books. She has developed a vocabulary book where she keeps track of difficult to pronounce words and later finds their meaning, which has helped improve her vocabulary and ability to speak the English language".





**CHALLENGING HEIGHTS HAND IN HAND FOR LITERACY COMMUNITY LIBRARY**

In April 2014, we formally opened the Challenging Heights Hand in Hand for Literacy Community Library in our School premises at Sankor, Winneba. The library was opened by Gene A. Cretz, The United States of America Ambassador to Ghana in the presence of other honoured guests, community members, parents and children, and is free to both students in our school and the general public of Winneba (a town with a population of over 60,000). Currently, we have nearly 8,000 books in stock and 1,725 registered users, 980 of whom have borrowed books. The library receives an average of 200 visitors (150 students and 50 community members) per month, who are supported by our two full-time library staff in their reading and research for school assignments. All Challenging Heights pupils now have time-tabled library classes, while community members are served by a Library Club.

**TOMS SHOES DISTRIBUTION**

In September 2014, Mrs. Hilda Eghan, the Municipal Director of Education for the Effutu Municipal Assembly, helped us launch the distribution of TOMs Shoes to public schools in our districts. To date, we have distributed 34,178 pairs of free shoes in 71 public schools in the Central Region of Ghana. Beneficiary schools tell us that where previously a lack of shoes was a barrier to children going to school, there is now increased enrolment and improved attendance. Hundreds of children were newly registered in school because their parents wanted them to benefit from the shoe distribution.



# Livelihoods

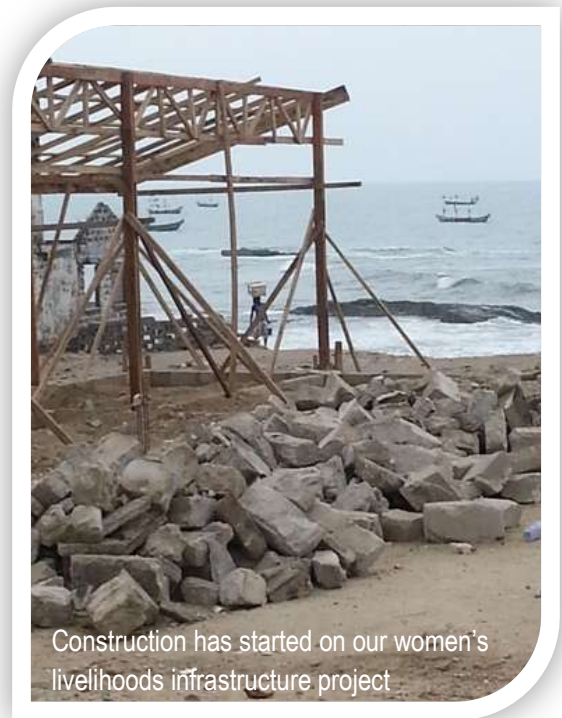


## LIVELIHOODS

Challenging Heights recognises that a key driver of children being kept out of school, or sent away to work, is economic deprivation. While we continue to rescue children from slavery and abuse, we also need to address the underlying causes and vulnerabilities in order to prevent trafficking and other child rights violations in the first place. Through our livelihoods programme, we work with the parents and care givers of survivors and the families of children at risk to find sustainable livelihoods through economic empowerment.

### WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS PROJECT

In September 2014, the construction of our Women's Livelihoods Project fish-preservation facilities began. This new face of our livelihoods programme will include refundable seed capital, a smoke house, a fish preservation "cold store" and a community clinic. To date we have established outbuildings to house smoking kilns, but are seeking to significantly expand infrastructure in the years ahead.



Francis is a 20-year-old student who enrolled into our Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) in June 2014. He left his job as a typist after an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate a more flexible work schedule that would allow him time for his personal and family life. Whilst unemployed, Francis learned about YEP, enrolled, and now views the course as life changing.

In the ICT computer class, Francis took his computer skills to the next level. Francis had limited knowledge of word processing programs, but now claims his newly gained ICT skills – from understanding software and repairing computers, to designing documents – will make him more employable in the future. He adds that skills he learned in conflict resolution will help him solve future workplace issues more professionally and effectively.

One of Francis' favourite subjects in class is business development strategy.

"I've learned how to select a business name and location, how to treat customers, and how to locally register a business," he explains." Francis has ambitious plans for his future; he wants to open his own printing shop with scan, copy and design services. Once this business provides stable income, Francis hopes to continue his education at IMPC, a local ICT school in Winneba, to become a software developer.

Francis hopes to become a sponsor of YEP once he establishes his business and finishes his education.

He explains, "The skills that I have acquired here will allow me to get a job and financially support my family and my children's future. So if Challenging Heights is taking care of 20-30 people in this class, they should know that they are really helping 5000 people or more."

Francis desires to give back to his community in whatever job he pursues: "I want to give other people a better life and future."

We continued to expand our technical and vocational skills training for women and care givers of vulnerable children. This has included developing production programmes to complement the business and finance training that we already offer. Currently, over 150 families have subscribed to the programme, with 25 families so far having received microloans to boost their businesses.

### **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME**

In 2014 we continued to develop our Remedial School to Restore Hope programme to better meet the needs of disadvantaged youth in accessing employment and business opportunities. We produced a comprehensive curriculum providing ICT software and hardware training, leadership and social activism training, and business and entrepreneurship training. We also plan to include administrative and clerical training in a programme that has been guaranteed for at least a further two years. 207 young people completed our programme, with a significant majority achieving employment or improved income as a result.

We see the youth programme as an important part of our work in not only in supporting young people of the area who may have missed out on or underachieved in conventional education to access meaningful opportunities, but also inspiring hope and an appreciation of education in the families of children currently in school.



Hardware training is a key part of our vocation ICT youth programme

# Advocacy



## ADVOCACY

Our advocacy programme seeks to guide and influence national and international policy on child rights in general, and the rights to education and freedom from slavery in particular, as well as bringing about changes in attitudes to children at a local level. Challenging Heights has a proven track record at a local, national and international level in shaping policy documents and influencing attitudes. We continue to build on the personal reputation of our President and our recognised expertise in child slavery to push a broader agenda of child rights both in Ghana and internationally.

Our President, Dr. James Kofi Annan participated in several congressional and senate briefings in the USA, giving him the opportunity to share his wealth of grassroots experience and help shape international policy and protocols. He travelled to Rome, Italy twice to meet with the Archbishop of Canterbury and other faith leaders who form the Global Freedom Network. In November 2014, Dr Annan was honoured to be invited to read the global declaration to end modern slavery before its signing by world faith leaders including the Pope.

## MODERN SLAVERY CAMPAIGNS

In 2014 Challenging Heights became the chosen Ghanaian partner of Walk Free, an international movement dedicated to eliminating all forms of modern slavery worldwide, allowing us to engage with their eight million international supporters and benefit from their considerable campaigning experience. With their support, we have been able to carry out systematic campaigns reaching a far wider audience than before.

On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014, we launched our *Send No Child Campaign* at the International Press Centre, Accra, during which our Advocacy Manager addressed a wide range of media representatives. This campaign asks faith-leaders to spend three minutes during their sermons raising awareness about child trafficking, forbidding their congregants to engage in child trafficking and encouraging them to report cases of trafficking to the Department of Social Welfare, Ghana Police Service or an appropriate institution. By the end of 2014 we had received

commitments from the Christian Council of Ghana to write pastoral letters to its over 200 member churches and engaged the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Anglican Conference to do the same.

Our *Stop the Bus* campaign built on our successful collaboration with the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service in August, and highlighted the fact that most internally trafficked children in Ghana are moved on public highways in vehicles that pass through numerous police checkpoints without being properly screened. Our online petition stimulated further collaboration with Chief Superintendent Patience Quaye, the Director of the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of Ghana Police Service, resulting in the development of a national police-led *TURN BACK Human Trafficking* strategy, supported by Challenging Heights. This new strategy will contribute to the national



agenda of ending all types of the worst forms of child labour in Ghana by 2016 by raising public awareness through a national press conference, building public engagement through a widespread sticker campaign, and seeking public commitment through an online pledge programme. The campaign will continue into 2015, and will target security services, police officers, transport unions, drivers and ordinary citizens.

Publication of the Global Slavery Index 2014 in November 2014 gave our Advocacy Manager and Sonia Kwami (Senior Campaigner at Walk Free) the opportunity to appear on Joy News, a popular national television station, to share field evidence of child trafficking in Ghana.

“The government has a role to play. It is not enough to pass laws. It is not enough to create institutions. These initiatives ought to be followed with concrete actions. Government must demonstrate sincerity and political will to resource the institutions it has created, so that those institutions can do their work well.” *Dr. James Kofi Annan*

### **COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RADIO PROGRAMME**

In November 2014, we commenced our first regular Community Advocacy Radio Programme titled “*Mbofra Banbo*” (translated as *Child Protection*), in which our Advocacy Manager joins with local experts and our beneficiaries to deliver an educational talk or discussion on a topic related to trafficking, child rights and child protection, followed by questions from the presenter and a phone-in from listeners. The weekly hour-long programme has audience of thousands across 17 districts in Ghana and has also become an important platform for people to report cases of child trafficking, child neglect and various forms of abuse for redress. We see this as a pilot programme with the hope of scaling it up nationally.

### **RESEARCH**

In 2014 Challenging Heights completed our contribution to a multi-centre research study investigating the links between social protection and children’s care, which in Ghana focussed on the effects of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme on child well-being, care and family cohesion. The research was led by the Institute of Development Studies, UK, with support from Family for Every Child and the Centre for Social Protection, and was part of a wider project encompassing research carried out in Rwanda and South Africa.

We were supported by Family for Every Child and UNICEF to develop the key findings and recommendations emerging from this research into an advocacy campaign targeting the Ghanaian government. The advocacy team organised workshops for stakeholders to validate the findings and recommendations that were then presented to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection for approval. Early 2015 will see the publication and official launch of the key findings and recommendations from the research by the Government of Ghana. This project also gave our Advocacy Manager the opportunity to attend an International Policy Forum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, organized by the African Child Policy Forum and focused on advocating for child-sensitive social protection schemes in African countries.



Communities being taught about trafficking and the realities of life on Lake Volta for children through sensitization events

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank all our partners in 2014:

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- Family For EveryChild & Every Child
- Free the Slaves
- Freedom For All
- Friends of Challenging Heights
- Global Giving
- Grand Valley State University
- Hand in Hand for Literacy
- Hovde Foundation & Sunwest Bank Foundation
- Learn 4 Work
- M. Night Shyamalan Foundation
- Made in a Free World
- Mercy Project
- Reach for Change
- TOMS Shoes
- United Nations
- Walk Free (Hope for Children)

As well as all our Ambassadors and Advocates, with a special thank you to all those involved in

- Friends of Challenging Heights

especially Mark Hamilton, Lisa Halsted and Steve Afdahl.

## **CHALLENGING HEIGHTS BOARD**

We are privileged to have in place a seven-member board of trustees that support the President in making strategic and policy level decisions.

- Dr. Margaret Sackey - *Chair*
- Dr. James Kofi Annan - *Secretary*
- George Nicholas Essel – *Treasurer*
- Jeffrey Boyd – *Member*
- Joyce Odame - *Member*
- Nafisatu Naa-Larmioko Chinery - *Member*
- Esther Sankah – *Member*

## **CHALLENGING HEIGHTS MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The following are the members constituting the executive management of Challenging Heights

- Dr. James Kofi Annan - *President*
- Dr. David Schley - *Vice-President for Campaigns, Research and Strategic Development*
- Dr. Kate Danvers – *Vice-President for Psychosocial Programmes and Survivor Support*
- David Kofi Awusi - *Advocacy Manager*
- Linda Ataa Osabutey - *Rehabilitation Manager*
- Stephen Addo - *Field Operations Manager*
- Eric Asamani - *Head of School*





**CONTACT INFORMATION**

*CHALLENGING HEIGHTS*

*FRIENDS OF CHALLENGING HEIGHTS (US)*

General Enquiries: [infoCHghana@gmail.com](mailto:infoCHghana@gmail.com)  
Partners in Development: [PIDghana@gmail.com](mailto:PIDghana@gmail.com)

Sponsorship: [challengingheights.us@gmail.com](mailto:challengingheights.us@gmail.com)

**Mailing Address:**  
Challenging Heights  
P.O. Box KN 1979  
Kaneshie, Accra, Ghana

**Mailing Address:**  
Challenging Heights  
PO Box 68213 Grand Rapids MI 49516

**Office Location:**  
Sankor, Winneba, Central Region, Ghana

**Mobile:** +233 244 515761

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