



2024 Annual Report



2ND APRIL 2025

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Executive Summary

In 2024, Challenging Heights continued its mission as a leading child rights organization in Ghana, dedicated to combating child trafficking, modern slavery, and child labour while promoting children's welfare and rights. This annual report provides a comprehensive overview of the organisation's achievements, challenges, and interventions across key programmatic areas, including rescue, recovery, reintegration, education, women and youth empowerment, advocacy, and environmental protection.

Rescue, Recovery, and Reintegration Through five rescue operations conducted with the Ghana Police Service's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, Challenging Heights rescued 145 children from trafficking situations. Of these, 61% were male and 39% female, aged between 5 and 18 years. Two cases have been referred for prosecution. The Hovde House Recovery Centre provided comprehensive care, including psychosocial support, basic education, and medical assistance, to 257 rescued children (67% boys and 33% girls). From January to October 2024, 160 children (71% boys and 29% girls) were reintegrated into their communities with support from the Department of Social Welfare. All reintegrated children received school materials or vocational training kits based on their educational or apprenticeship placement. Post-reintegration monitoring was conducted for 277 children across homes, schools, and apprenticeship sites to assess their academic performance, health, and social adjustment.

Education and School Enrolment Challenging Heights supported vulnerable children through school enrolment and vocational training. A total of 277 children received school supplies, while 80 survivors were enrolled in school and vocational/apprenticeship training (75 enrolled in school and 5 enrolled on apprenticeship training). The Odobirba Academy continued providing quality subsidised education to 970 children (54% girls and 46% boys) from underserved communities, supported by 69 staff members. The high student demand has necessitated upgrading the school's ICT resources to enhance digital literacy.

Family Support and Economic Empowerment Needs assessments were conducted for 77 caregivers, leading to financial support for 350 families to enhance their economic stability and prevent child trafficking. Family visits and counselling sessions engaged 82 families, fostering reintegration and strengthening bonds between survivors and their caregivers. In partnership with the 100 Weeks Foundation, Challenging Heights provided cash transfers to 340 women alongside training in livelihood skills such as soap making, baking, and beadwork. Additional support was extended through financial aid and access to micro-credit for caregivers of reintegrated children. The Max Stenbeck Mother and Child Center empowered 80 beneficiaries, with 64 young girls receiving vocational training in fashion and beauty therapy.

Preventive Interventions and Community Engagement Sensitization and awareness campaigns reached 5,620 participants through advocacy programs focused on child labour and trafficking prevention. Sixteen Community Child Protection Committees and 10 Child Rights Clubs were established across three regions to enhance grassroots child protection efforts. Fifty radio discussions addressed key issues, engaging experts, survivors, and local leaders. The Sports for Change initiative reached an estimated 45,000 individuals, promoting education on drug abuse, child marriage, and gender-based violence through sports events involving 48 community-based teams and 175 matches.

Advocacy, Partnerships, and Environmental Protection Challenging Heights strengthened partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and international networks to enhance child protection efforts. Collaborations included observing the World Day against Child Labour and Blue Day and participation in advocacy platforms such as the Ghana National Education Coalition and the Global Freedom Network. Environmental protection efforts focused on the Blue-Green Project, a research initiative examining ocean pollution, deforestation, and their impact on livelihoods and child protection. Additionally, an environmental and marine dialogue convened key stakeholders in the fishing industry to address pressing challenges.

Challenges and Future Directions Key challenges included difficulties in reintegrating some rescued children due to reluctance from caregivers, inadequate infrastructure at the recovery center, and limited capacity at the Max Stenbeck Mother and Child Center. The postponement of a planned rescue operation due to the 2024 elections also impacted program implementation. Infrastructure upgrades and resource mobilization for educational facilities and economic empowerment programs remain critical priorities moving forward.

Conclusion In 2024, Challenging Heights made significant strides in rescuing children from exploitation, providing education, and economically empowering vulnerable families. By combining direct intervention with systemic change efforts, the organization continues to create sustainable alternatives to child trafficking, fostering resilience and long-term social transformation in Ghana.



Introduction

In 2024, Challenging Heights continued its impactful work as a leading child rights organization in Ghana, dedicated to combating child trafficking and modern slavery and promoting the rights and welfare of children. This report provides a summary of the organization's activities for 2024. The report highlights our efforts in the key program areas of rescue, recovery, reintegration, women and youth empowerment, advocacy, and the provision of education to vulnerable children.

Rescue

At the end of 2024, we were able to conduct 5 rescue activities with the support of the Ghana Police Service's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit. A total of 145 children were rescued from January to December 2024. This consists of both lake-based and community-based rescues/referrals. The 145 rescued children consist of 89 (61%) males and 56 (39%) females aged between 5 and 18 years. Two (2) cases have been reported and are being prosecuted by the relevant state agencies.



Recovery

Challenging Heights Recovery Center for Children continued to provide comprehensive care for children rescued from trafficking and the worst forms of child labour. The center plays a vital role in helping children rebuild their lives, offering psychosocial support, complementary basic education, medical assistance, and other basic needs. In 2024, a total of 257 children received recovery and rehabilitation support at our recovery center, comprising 172 (67%) boys and 85 (33%) girls.



Reintegration

We completed five (5) reintegration and reunification sessions from January to December 2024. This was done with the collaboration and support of the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). A total of 160 children were reintegrated from the Challenging Heights recovery center into communities. This comprised 113 (71%) males and 47(29%) females. All reintegrated children were supplied with school materials or skills training kits, depending on whether the children were reintegrated into the formal education system or vocational/apprenticeship skills training.



Post-Reintegration Monitoring

Our post-reintegration monitoring of reintegrated children was conducted across homes, Schools and apprenticeship sites. This enabled the assessment of the children's academic performance, health, how they are coping with the new environment and risk assessment. In total, 277 Children were visited in schools, homes and apprenticeship centres. This comprised 204 (74%) boys and 73 (26%) girls.



Figure 1: Summary of Rescue, Recovery and Reintegration Activities for Jan to Oct 2024

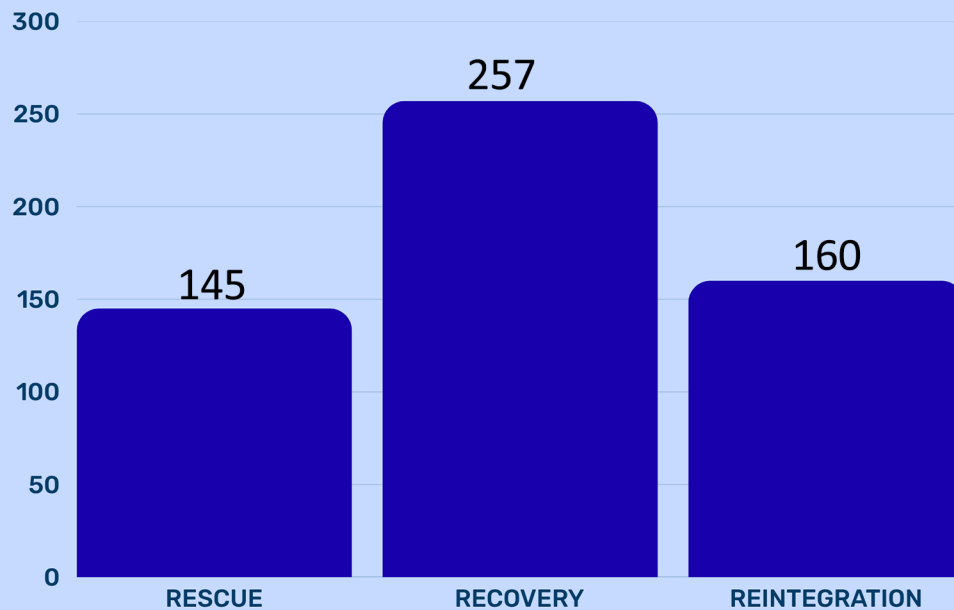
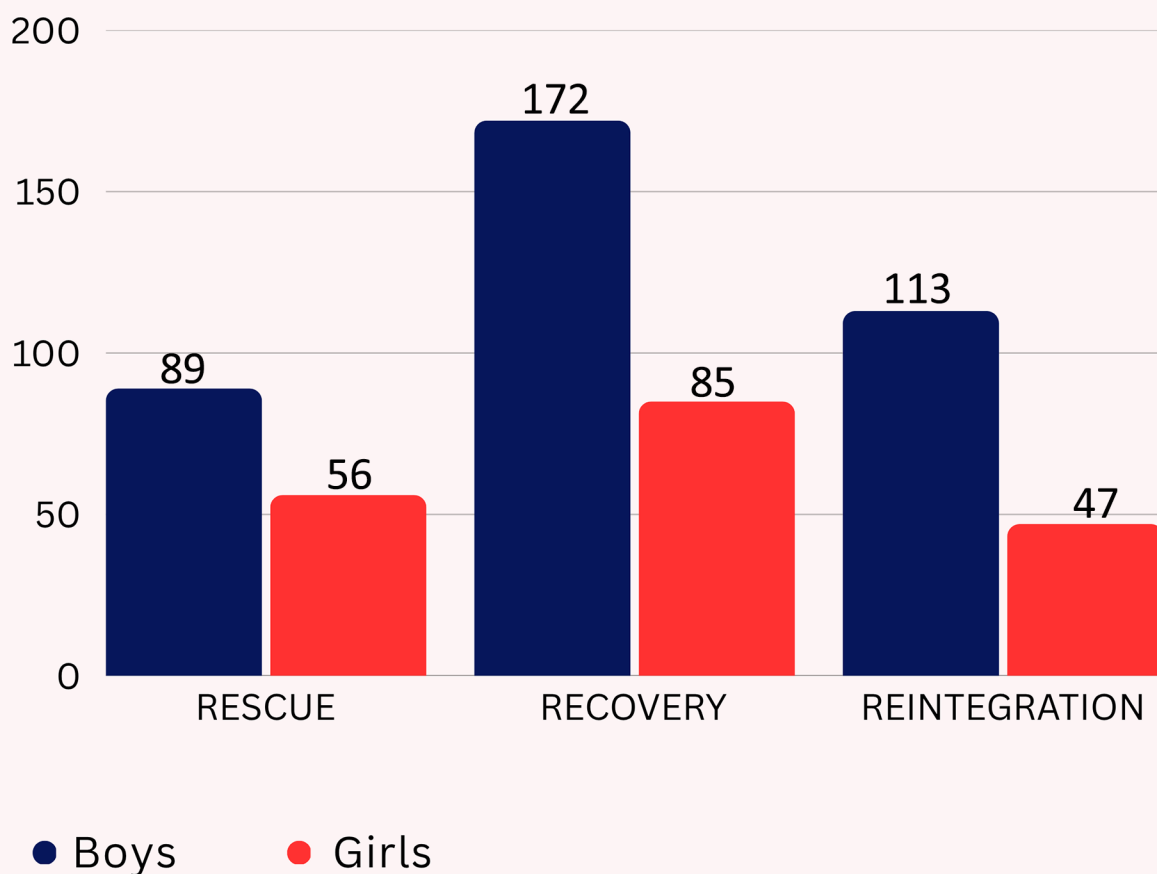


Figure 2: Sex disaggregated data of rescue, recovery and reintegration Activities for Jan to Oct 2024



SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES



85

85 survivors were enrolled into school and vocational/apprenticeship training

80 children enrolled into school

80



05

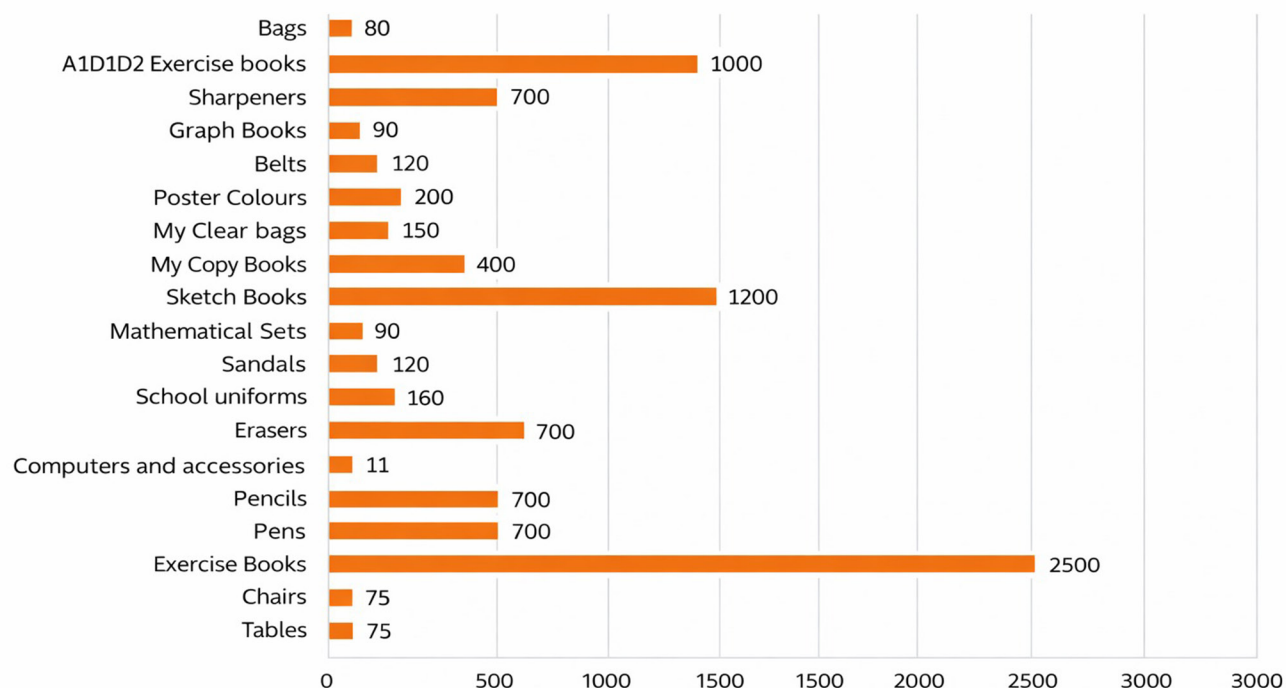
5 enrolled into apprenticeship and skills training

277 children received school supplies

277



Figure 3: School supplies provided in 2024



Family Tracing and Needs Assessment

Needs assessments were conducted for 77 caregivers, 52 females and 25 males. Based on these needs assessments, the families were recommended for financial support. Financial support was given to 350 families (338 women and 12 men) to boost their economic standards so that they are able to protect their children

Family Visits

Four (4) family visits and counselling sessions were conducted in 2024. A total of 82 families participated in these events, including 56 females and 26 males. The family visit is a way of building a bond between the survivors and their potential families. It is also part of the recovery process. Both the field team and recovery staff were also given the opportunity to educate the participants. Government officials were allowed to educate all the families who visited on child trafficking and child labour issues of family planning, effective parenting, and child rights and protection.



Livelihood: Youth and Women Empowerment

Through our partnership with the 100 Weeks Foundation, we successfully supported 340 with cash transfers. The beneficiary women also received empowerment training in livelihood and soft skills such as soap making, baking and bead making. In addition, we provided knowledge and capacity-building training for the women on sexual and reproductive health rights. The organization also provided financial support to 350 women caregivers of survivors and other vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, to undertake profitable businesses in addition to creating access to low-cost credit facilities from the Cooperative Credit Union. The provision of micro-credit facilities and financial support for caregivers of reintegrated children has contributed to strengthening the economic resilience of women within vulnerable households. These interventions ensured that caregivers were equipped with the resources needed to provide for their children, protecting them from exploitative situations.

The organization provided skills training for women and young girls in 2024. Nineteen (19) out of the first batch of 20 young girls admitted to the Halsted Women's Vocational Center completed and graduated in June 2024. A new set of 20 students has been admitted to the center and are undergoing skills training in fashion. All 19 students of the first cohort sat for the NVTI proficiency certification examinations and are awaiting results.

The Max Stenbeck Mother and Child Center supported 80 beneficiaries during the year. This comprised 64 young girls and 16 children of the beneficiaries. The girls are pursuing skills training in fashion (43) and beauty therapy (20), with one (1) student pursuing continuous education (remedial tuition). Sixteen (16) of the first cohort of beneficiaries sat for the CTVET certification examinations and are awaiting their results.

Forty-seven (47) young people who received vocational skills training in tiling, phone repairs, barbering, and digital satellite installation successfully graduated. This included women in non-traditional skills training aimed at removing social barriers to young girls pursuing such trades. Four hundred and thirty (430) youth benefited from the organization's educational support through remedial classes, while 348 JHS graduates (201 females and 147 males) received pre-SHS classes to prepare them ahead of their enrollment into senior high schools.



Odobirba Academy

Our school, the Odobirba Academy, continued to provide quality, subsidized low-cost private education to children in underserved areas with children at risk of trafficking and exploitation. Overall, we supported 970 children in 2024, consisting of 520 (54%) girls and 450 (46%) boys. Total staff strength stood at 69, including 56 teaching and 13 non-teaching staff. The school continues to make great strides in academic and co-curricular activities, including quizzes, sports, music, culture and cadets. The high enrollment of students in the school has resulted in the need to re-equip the computer center with adequate computers and accessories to boost the learning of ICT among children at the school.



Enhanced Reintegration and Mentorship

Under the enhanced reintegration and mentorship program for survivors of trafficking, we supported 172 beneficiaries across basic, secondary and tertiary levels. We supported 102 beneficiaries at the basic level, consisting of 80 males and 22 females. At the secondary level, 42 beneficiaries were supported, while the 30 tertiary-level beneficiaries also received support under the program. It is worth noting that 8 beneficiaries, consisting of 5 males and 3 females, transitioned successfully from basic to secondary level, while thirteen have completed secondary education, awaiting enrolment into tertiary level. In addition, four (4) beneficiaries, consisting of 2 males and 2 females, successfully transitioned from secondary to tertiary. Four (4) (all males) beneficiaries completed tertiary education and are currently undergoing their mandatory national service. All students benefited from mentorship sessions, career guidance training, health screening, etc.



Preventive Activities (Sensitization and awareness creation)

We conducted five (5) major sensitization and awareness creation drives, reaching an estimated 5620 participants (3928 males and 1692 females). The ongoing implementation of advocacy-based intervention on child labour and trafficking prevention in Northern Ghana resulted in the formation and capacity building of community and district-based structures to champion child protection issues in Northern Ghana. We formed, trained and operationalized 16 Community Child Protection Committees with 114 members (78 males and 36 females) across three regions, i.e. Central-1, Volta-1 and Savannah-14. In addition, 10 new Child Rights Clubs were formed with a total membership of 300 children. With the support of the DSW, we formed and trained the District Child Protection Committee in the Central Gonja District with 50 members. We held 50 radio discussions on issues of child trafficking, child labour, environment and climate change across Northern and Southern Ghana. These discussions gave opportunities to survivors, field staff, DSW, DOVVSU, NCCE, religious and traditional leaders to be involved as panel members to discuss various issues affecting children. We also had radio jingles played on air consistently throughout the year in the Central Gonja District aimed at educating and sensitising people against child labour and its prevention.



Sports for Change

Our Sports for Change sensitization reached an estimated 45000 supporters and participants cumulatively. Through this, we have successfully collaborated with the National Commission for Civic Education to use our Sports for Change program to educate people on key issues of social concern, including drug abuse, child marriage, sexual and gender-based violence, prevention of electoral violence, etc. In all, 48 community-based teams participated in the games, playing 175 matches in total.



Advocacy and Partnerships

Challenging Heights continued with its key advocacy and partnership-building activities at the national and international levels. In 2024, we collaborated with the Child Labour Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Employment Relations to observe the World Day against Child Labour in Accra and Tamale. We also collaborated with the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service to observe Blue Day in two districts in the Central (Ekumpoano) and Eastern (Asesewa) regions of Ghana. The organisation remains an active member of key national and global advocacy groups such as the Ghana National Education Coalition (GNEC), the Coalition of NGOs against Child Trafficking (CNACT), the Global Peer Learning Platform on Child Domestic Work, the Global Freedom Network, Family for Every Child, the Commonwealth 8.7 Network, etc. We strengthened our partnership with key stakeholders in the child protection space, including the Department of Social Welfare, the Child Labour Department, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP), the Human Trafficking Secretariat, NGOs/CSOs, international platforms, etc. We became a founding member of the newly established CSO Coalition on Migration, Ghana (CCMG)



Climate Change and Environmental Protection

The organization continued with its advocacy and research-based activities on climate change and environmental protection. We commissioned research dubbed the #BlueGreen Project, which seeks to explore the ongoing pollution of the ocean and other water bodies, especially in the coastal areas, as well as deforestation and environmental degradation. The purpose is to understand their impact on livelihoods, child protection and overall environmental and resource governance and justice. At the end of 2024, the data collection process had been completed, and report writing initiated. We expect to have a first draft of this project by the end of the first quarter of 2025, based on which we will proceed to organise a stakeholder validation exercise. We organized the maiden environmental and marine dialogue, which brought together key stakeholders in the fishing industry to discuss key issues affecting the sector. Our climate change and environmental work addresses responsible mining (forest, water bodies, and cocoa), ocean health, Ramsar sites, mangroves and agriculture



Conclusion

In 2024, Challenging Heights made profound progress in rescuing children, providing education to children, empowering women, and working towards systemic change to prevent child trafficking and exploitation in Ghana. Challenging Heights' multifaceted approach, involving rescue missions, school interventions, economic empowerment, and community mobilization, continues to provide sustainable alternatives for vulnerable citizens. Through all of these programs, Challenging Heights is not only protecting individuals from exploitation but also opening the door to avenues of resilience, empowerment, and sustained social change in Ghana.



Key Challenges

1

We encountered challenges with the reintegration of some survivors. Some caregivers of survivors declined to accept them, causing delays in the reintegration and reunification of some children in the recovery.

2

The recovery center (Hovde House) needs additional infrastructure and rehabilitation of existing ones, especially the classrooms.

3

There is a considerable demand for enrollment at the Max Stenbeck Mother and Child Center. However, the facility can accommodate only 70-80 beneficiaries. More infrastructure, i.e., accommodation for beneficiaries and facilitators, classrooms and practical centers, are needed to enhance teaching and learning.

4

Due to the 2024 elections, we could not embark on our final rescue because our partners, the AHTU, were assigned to provide security for the elections.

5. There is a need to restock the computer laboratory at the Odobirba Academy to facilitate the teaching and learning of ICT among students

Summary of Financial Report

Income and Expenditure for 2024

Table 1: Income for 2024

Income Sources	Actual Income (GHS)
Hovde	99,990
Freedom For All(Bindon foundation)	9,990
Mercy Project	19,730
Many Hopes	835,980
ICCO/Kirk in Actie	63,000
100 Weeks	4,278
Global Giving Foundation	574
Beauty For Freedom (BFF)	990
Max Stenbeck Foundation	200,000
SOS Ghana(Heimstaden Foundation)	43,362
Family For Every Child	4,512
LISA HALSTED	25,000
Friends of Challenges Heights	15,000
Star Ghana	4,480
Other Income	200,114
Anti-Slavery International / NORAD	12,849
TOTAL	1,539,848

Summary of Financial Report

Income and Expenditure for for 2024

Table 2: Expenditure for 2024

Expenditure	Actual Expenditure (\$)
Rescue	245,229.39
Recovery & Rehabilitation	582,454.26
Root Causes(Vocational / livelihoods)	56,192.43
Research & Communication	15,038.65
Central Services & Administration	278,614.26
Central Services & Administration	116,805.34
Reintegration & monitoring	122,788.85
Enhanced Reintegration	53,659.39
Awareness	25,814.26
Unrestricted / Others	45,388.04
TOTAL	1,541,985

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