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Newsletter 2015 | Ghana

Spotlight



Impacting Lives, Inspiring Change

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Editor's Note

Ghana's 40 Year Development Plan – What Civil Society is saying

It is a cliché well sold that prior, proper planning prevents poor performance. This is true for individuals and organisations, but it is perhaps most important for countries. Besides corruption, resource mismanagement and the disproportionate share of international trade, Africa's underdevelopment has been blamed on improper planning.

In most developing countries, especially where political instability and turbulent change of governments are rampant, there is often no clear and consistent development plan that is followed by political leaders in the management of the country. Political manifestos have often driven the development agenda, dictating a worrying trend where a change in government has meant a change or a definitive end to developments initiated by previous administrations. The result is that the poor people for whom these developments were meant are denied their right to progress and a dignified life.

With a checkered past of military political adventurism interspersed with elected democratic governments, Ghana has suffered the planning curse since independence. There have been various short term development strategies, including the current 'Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda' (GSGDA), which will end in 2017. These development frameworks and strategies are purposed at reducing poverty, bridging the inequality gap and improving the lives of vulnerable populations in Ghana.

In September this year, President John Dramani Mahama launched a process towards the preparation of a long-term and comprehensive national development plan that will last for 40 years (2018-2057). The plan, according to the President, should be guided by the successes and failures of previous development strategies to ensure that the new document is acceptable by all sections of the society and reflects the demands of the co constitution, the economy and the changing needs of Ghanaians. The President also stressed the crucial importance of consultations and collaborations from all relevant stakeholders to give the plan a non-partisan national character.

The need for a 40 year development plan, according to the Director-General of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), Dr. Nii Moi Thompson, is embedded in law and supported by the constitution of Ghana and also satisfies an urgent and popular request from the people of Ghana during the

constitutional review process. The legal justifications for the Plan are contained in Articles 85, 86 and 87 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the National Development Planning Commission Act, 1994 (Act 479) and the National Development Planning (System) Act, 1994 (Act 480).

Other relevant legal provisions supporting the 40 year plan include the Local Government Act, 1993, (Act 4620), Local Government Service Act, 1993 Act 2003, (Act 656), Civil service Act 1993, (PNDC Law 327) and the Ghana Infrastructural Investment Fund, 2014 (Act 877). The Plan would also take into account the provisions in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to make it responsive to the developments in international economic system.

Recommending a shift from a political to a developmental constitution, the NDPC underscores the overwhelming need for a Long-term Development Plan as follows:

- a. It will ensure that there is a blueprint for national progress and sustainable development.
- b. It will be the framework for accelerated growth and actual reduction in poverty levels among Ghanaians.
- c. It will ensure that national development is not centred on sectional political party manifestos; manifestos must rather be aligned to the Plan.
- d. It will reduce the party politicization of our development process.
- e. It will serve as a holistic basis for the assessment of the performance of successive governments.
- f. A development plan which is national in character stands a greater chance of being adhered to by successive governments than a sectional policy.

The consultative process for the development of the Plan has been expansive and elaborate, with the NDPC extending invitations to civil society organizations and non governmental organisations, policy institutes, democratic bodies, financial sector bodies and other public and private organisations. ActionAid Ghana is the only international non-governmental organisation to have been invited by the Commission to contribute and share its unique development strategies and well acclaimed human rights-based approach to sustainable development.

The invitation, which was widely publicised in national newspapers, had come a few weeks after the celebration of the Silver Jubilee celebration of Aid Ghana, which was attended by a representative of the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E. Paa Kwesi Amisshah-Arthur. Commending ActionAid Ghana's contribution to Ghana's development—in terms of basic education and women empowerment—and lauding public-private sector development partnerships, the Vice President said “there is so much we can do together.”

The National Development Planning Commission has been working towards a 40 year national development plan for Ghana.” He continued that “this is an ongoing consultative process that welcomes ideas and suggestions from political and democratic institutions, NGOs and civil society organisations.”

“There are no small roles or small parts in the development process. No one person or organization has answers to all the problems,” The contribution of civil society and the NGO community to Ghana's development has been exemplary. From education, health, media, environmental to democratic governance, NGOs have rendered valuable service to

complement government's infrastructural and service delivery programmes. Since 1990, ActionAid has worked with public development partners such as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs Ministry and the Ghana Education Service of the Ministry of Education to deliver beneficial development programmes to deprived and marginalized communities in Ghana.

In education, ActionAid Ghana has sponsored and supported the construction of schools in rural communities, dams and irrigation projects, youth and ICT centres, and economic livelihood empowerment centres to improve the lives of people in deprived and marginalised communities.

While sections of the Ghanaian population continue to express varying opinions on the practicability of the plan, there seem to be some consensus among the Ghanaian populace that a long term non-partisan development plan for Ghana is a bold step in a good direction. With their technical and development expertise in various areas of nation building, civil society bodies, local and international NGOs have an important role to play.

From the Country Director's Desk



Sumaila Abdul-Rahman

I welcome you to this edition of Spotlight, a brilliant initiative from the Communications and Public Relations Unit, which will inform and educate staff and other publics about our development programmes and interventions in our operational areas. To

encourage regular interaction and feedback between our internal and external publics, the new Country Strategy Paper (CSP V) pursues clear and proactive steps to expand our fundraising and development partnerships. Effective communication is key to this objective. The Spotlight is a useful tool in this process.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt compliments to the hardworking staff of ActionAid Ghana, our loyal partners, donors, sponsors, and collaborating public institutions whose partnership and support continue to promote our work with people living in poverty. These are challenging times in international development, as climate change, harmful tax incentives and financial volatility in some vulnerable markets continue to present difficulties for development and relief

work.

Global insecurity and inequality have been worsened by economic and refugee crises, natural disasters and other humanitarian catastrophes. These incidences have impacted negatively on people living in poverty, making disadvantaged populations more vulnerable. We recall with much regret, the migrant and refugee crises in Europe, natural disasters in Nepal and other regions, and terrorist activities in Kenya, Nigeria, France and other countries. In all these, the effect on the poor is very profound.

However, the world has showed great fortitude in the face of daunting difficulties and responded with proactive development strategies and advocacy initiatives, to inspire hope among vulnerable and marginalized populations. ActionAid's comprehensive relief programme in Nepal, our sustained advocacy programmes on tax justice and harmful investment incentives, and our very audible presence at the recent G20 Summit are fantastic efforts towards securing the human rights of disadvantaged people.

At ActionAid Ghana, we continue to deliver on our development mandate amidst equally challenging circumstances. The Affiliate Programme has been transformed through effective programme-project

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Brother and Sister in **COMBAT**

To end domestic violence in Dokyikrom



Doris Owusu Prempeh and her brother Johnson Owusu Prempeh – hardworking members of Dokyikrom COMBAT

In 2011, Doris Owusu Prempeh was teaching in a public school in the Asutifi District in the Brong-Ahafo Region when the chief of her community announced that an organisation was looking for advocates of human rights and domestic violence.

That organisation was ActionAid Ghana.

“ActionAid wanted to train people about domestic violence and when I heard of it, I was very interested because in the community, there were lots of issues on domestic violence,” says Doris.

“My younger brother, who I am older than by two years, was also interested and so we both decided to go together. They took us into training and due to my confidence and keenness, I was part of the five people

who were chosen to promote the rights of people, especially women and children, in my community. I became a COMBAT member,” she adds.

Doris's brother, Johnson Owusu Prempeh, was also selected. The Community-Based Anti-Violence Team (COMBAT) refers to a group of men and women who have been trained and sensitised by the Domestic Violence and Victims Unit (DOWVSU) of the Ghana Police in domestic violence laws to promote and protect the rights of people and enforce order in their communities. Members of COMBAT consist of 7 people - made up of 4 men and 3 women.

According to Doris, the activities of COMBAT involves going from house-to-house, churches, mosques and



Doris Owusu Prempeh leads a discussion with ActionAid Ghana Country Leadership Team in a meeting with COMBAT members

community activities to educate and sensitise people about the need to stop domestic violence and other acts of violence against men and women: “We don’t go to farm on Tuesdays in our community and so we use that time to go around and talk to people to educate them.”

Doris says teenage pregnancy used to be very high in her community but due to their advocacy work, the issue is reducing: “We realised it was a big problem in the communities and so we the ladies in the community formed a group called, “Vision Ladies” to go to schools to educate teenagers about their sexual and reproductive health rights and also talk about why getting pregnant at a young age is not a good thing.”

She also adds that the problem of rampant domestic abuse has been reducing steadily since the setting up of COMBAT.

“When there is a fight in a home, people call or alert us and so we quickly rush there to restore peace. We also act as advisers and we intervene. We make the abuser sign a bond that states that he won’t repeat the act again. If he does, we refer the case to the police station.”

On Wednesday, 2 December, 2015, ActionAid held a COMBAT Day forum in Sunyani in the Brong Ahafo Region under the theme; “From Peace in the Home to

Peace in the World: Elimination of gender-based violence is possible and imperative”, to celebrate the work of the team members.

To Doris, getting recognised for her work was satisfying: “We spoke to people and invited a lot of them to the programme. It was very good to get recognised by the elders and the chiefs and also we had people who came to share their stories.”

Doris adds that the opportunity to protect people was a good one. However, the team faces a number of issues: “Sometimes, when a case is reported, and the distance is too far, by the time we get there we are too tired or the harm has already been done. It makes us look inefficient.”

She requested for the provision of bicycles to ease up transportation and ensure members of the team are able to respond to issues of domestic violence and abuse quickly and effectively.

Doris also called for an expansion of the project, to ensure effective patrolling and support for women and children suffering from abuse of their basic human rights.

COMBAT goes International on Speaker Tour

ActionAid UK (AAUK) came across the work of our Community-Based Anti-violence Teams (COMBAT) in some case studies collected from the Brong Ahafo Region Programme (BARP) in April 2015. COMBAT is a community structure ActionAid Ghana (AAG) is working with to eliminate domestic and gender-based violence within communities.

AAUK included the case studies in a report on violence against women and girls it launched as part of the 'Fearless campaign' in May 2015. AAUK also invited AAG, represented by the Regional Programme Manager of BARP and a COMBAT member, to share more details on the COMBAT experience at the launch. Unfortunately, the delegation was not able to attend the campaign launch due to challenges in obtaining travel documents.

team members speaking about the 'Fearless campaign' and other interventions of AAUK relating to international agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals. An activist from South Africa spoke about violence against lesbians and Christina spoke about COMBAT as an effective community response to reducing domestic and gender-based violence.

In all the meetings the discussions that ensued after the presentations were very engaging and participants were made aware of the forms of violence and the innovative strategies being adopted to eliminate it internationally. Questions were asked for clarifications and in some cases, such as in Doncaster, some participants were interested in finding ways of adopting COMBAT to curb gender-based violence in their situation.



Programme Manager for Brong-Ahafo Region with participants at the Doncaster meeting

However, the Regional Programme Manager of BARP was able to participate in a speaker tour as part of AAUK's 'Fearless campaign' upon receiving another invitation. The objectives for accepting the invitation was to contribute to the international campaign against gender-based violence and enable AAG to showcase its successes in reducing violence against women and girls using the COMBAT model. It was also to explore opportunities of meeting and briefing donors to fund COMBAT's expansion and other interventions.

The tour

The speaker tour in the UK lasted for two weeks, but AAG representative Christina Amarchey took part in the second week from 16th to 25th October 2015. The second week of the tour covered six cities (five in England and one in Wales) including Manchester, Bangor (in Wales), Portsmouth, Doncaster, Oxford and Islington. In all these cities, pre-arranged meetings were held in the evenings and a team of 3-4 speakers made presentations. Among the speakers were one or two AAUK campaign

Attendance at the various meetings ranged between 6 and 40, with the meeting at Portsmouth recording the highest attendance, while the Oxford meeting recorded the lowest. The Portsmouth meeting was unique as other NGOs like Oxfam and World Vision in the city joined to participate in the meeting and set up exhibition stands.

Follow-ups

In a debriefing session with the AAUK campaign team, it was discussed that Ghana did not make any commitments towards eliminating gender-based violence at the UN

Women event at the recent UN General Assembly.

There is a need to find out more about Ghana government's national action plan on violence against women and girls that all UN members have agreed to prepare. AAUK hints that there could be possible collaboration between AAUK and AAG in seeking funding for such advocacy work. AAUK is showing interest in the national advocacy work necessary for COMBAT to be adopted by the government.

An initial verbal briefing done with the Head of Programmes & Policy (HoPP) on the follow-ups to do after the trip was received well. Due to financial constraints, more actions regarding the national advocacy work on COMBAT will be taken next year.

Christina Amarchey,
Regional Programme Manager,
Brong Ahafo Regional Programme, ActionAid Ghana

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integration and effective organisational management practices. The launch of a new Country Strategy Paper has defined a new direction for our development work, emphasising more on impact and evaluation. Under the name 'Increasing possibilities, claiming Rights', the mission objectives of the strategy have been carefully mapped out to address the shortcomings in our previous development strategies and respond to new challenges in the fight against poverty.

Last year, a performance management system was introduced to encourage maximum performance output from staff. The system includes setting realistic and measurable targets based on the broader development objectives in the country strategy. While we are still working hard towards our targets, we have shown a lot of

commitment and zeal to exceed normal expectations. There are brighter prospects ahead to do much more.

With clear direction and support from our Board of Trustees and partners, we would enhance the quality and delivery of our programmes, explore beneficial development partnerships to improve our financial sustainability and motivate our staff to work harder to meet the development needs of underprivileged communities. We have taken sides with people living in poverty and we are not resting until we have eradicated poverty and injustice from the world. This is our vision, and together we will succeed.

Sumaila Abdul-Rahman
Country Director, ActionAid Ghana

WALK NO MORE

School girls in rural communities get free bicycles

In 2013, Fatima Sumani was kidnapped by men from Tanviel, a community in the Upper West Region. Fatima's mother passed away when she was 15 years old. She lived with her father in the Kasanpuri community when she was abducted. She was rescued by ActionAid Ghana and sent back to school,

causing her to fall behind in class due to the abduction. According to her, the experience made her scared of walking the 6km distance to her school every day: "I was not often going to school because of fear of being abducted for marriage coupled with household chores. As a result, my performance in 2014 was not good so I



Fatima Sumani stands by her bicycle that has ensured she gets a chance to access education



A cross section of beneficiaries from Kasana basic school in Sissala East District

could not be promoted to Junior High school” Her case is no different from thousands of other girls in schools across the region.

Although statistics from the Ministry of Education shows that girls’ enrolment at the primary school level is high in some districts in the Upper West Region of Ghana, there is however, at the junior high school level, a sharp decline in the numbers.

This drop is due to a number of factors such as early marriage, preference for male education and the challenge of combining household duties and responsibilities with commuting long distances to access education.

In the Sissala East, Jirapa and Lambussie-Karni Districts of the Region, it is common to see students trekking to school from remote communities to school.

The practice is detrimental to the growth of girls in education since they do not have enough time to study, resulting in low academic scores. Many of them are forced to eventually drop out of school.

For poor rural people, a valuable economic and social means of transportation is the use of bicycles. To address the transportation problems and promote the education of girls in the affected communities, ActionAid Sweden provided funds for the purchase of bicycles under the Bicycles for Education Project, which started from February and ended in October 2015. The MoU between ActionAid Sweden and Ghana had been signed in February 2013.

The Bicycles for Education project is a temporary measure intended to help girls stay in school while

government improves access to education.

Fatima is one of the beneficiaries of the project and she says it has helped to improve her access to education, “I am so happy to have this bicycle because it is going to help me go to school early every day and reduce the fatigue I go through walking 6km to school each day. Since I was given this bicycle, my performance has improved so I have now been promoted to JHS form one in the 2015/16 academic year”

So far, 40 girls from three communities in the Sissala East, Jirapa and Lambussie districts have been given bicycles to enable them commute easily to school.

The main objective of the project is to ease the transportation problems of pupils, especially girls, and improve their access to education as a basic right. Following this, all girls from the upper primary and junior high school 1 and 2 from two communities, Kasana Piina and Mwankuri, numbering a total of 730, were sensitised on the importance of education, the effect of early marriages, and also underwent confidence-building training to empower them.

Additionally, through the Bicycle for Education project, 470 Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members’ capacities were enhanced on school governance. The PTA members, who are parents and teachers from the Kasanpuri, Tanviele, Somboro, Hakyagane and Gberkuo communities in the region, through the sensitisation workshop, pledged to stop all forms of early childhood marriages and promote the rights of girls. The parents were also entreated to take full responsibility of the bicycles and ensure that they are used for their intended purpose.

According to the 2013 Education Sector Performance Report of the Ministry of Education, girls in schools face a number of challenges, leading to a sharp decline in the rate of girls' completion at the secondary school level, with the completion rate for boys at the senior high school level almost 6% higher than females.

Although there was a 45.9% increase in the number of female SHS students, the gender parity index remains low at 0.86. At the junior high school level, boys perform better than girls in all core subjects, except English.

Review meetings within the 3 districts between ActionAid Action for Sustainable Development

(Asudev), Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD) and the Ghana Education Service have been positive. Teachers in the Kasanpuri, Mwamankuri, Piina and Somboro communities have reported that girls who benefitted from the project are more regular and punctual in school.

There has been a 100% increase in class attendance following the implementation of the project as against 60% (3 days out of 5 in a week) previously.

Lateness to school as a result of walking long distances has also been reduced, with beneficiaries reporting at 7:00AM as compared to the previous time of 8:00 and 8:30AM.

KATURA'S PRIDE

The Success Story of a Young Urban Woman from the North

In 2014, four young women joined ActionAid Ghana's Young Urban Women Project (YUWP) in Tamale in the Northern Region. One of these ladies was Katura Dramani, a 20-year old student.

Aside being a student, Katura is the oldest of five siblings and the breadwinner of her family. She makes ends meet by selling bread, "I'll buy bread around 12 midnight or 1 AM during the Ramadan festival to sell. When it is not Ramadan season, I will wake up at 3 in the morning to sell bread till 6:30am when I have to go to school"

Coming from a poor home, Katura was unable to continue her education after completing junior high school.

According to Katura, dealing with the huge responsibility of taking care of her family and at the same time supporting her own education, put her under immense stress and she found herself feeling sad and lonely, until she joined the YUWP. She explains, "when I joined the project, the number of friends and the sad situation of other young women gave me a little relief, not because I was better than them, but because I was no longer alone and no longer feeling that the world was against me."



A young, empowered Katura carries her certificates away at the Vlisco Tailor Academy Graduation Ceremony

Under the guidance of AAG's partner, Northern Sector of Action on Awareness Center (NORSAAC), Katura, and three other members of the YUW Project, Fatima Nayi Abubakari, 25, Huseiba Abdul-Rahman, 24, and Grace Yakubu, 25, were encouraged to apply for an integrated educational programme scholarship offered by international textile company, Vlisco.

Katura admits that she was nervous at the thought of applying. Coming from a poor and marginalised

community, she believed the possibility of being picked against other girls from the Northern and Greater Accra Region was very slim. Battling insecurities, she sought help from one of the advisers of the project, "Sister Kawusada talked to me a lot and coached me in writing the application and also in preparing for the interview."

"I remember the joy exclaimed by one of the interviewers at the outfit I wore for the interview made by my hands. That moment was the light of my life. I was excited to make it through the three-day intensive interview to be selected among the 20 out of 60 applicants" she added.

Katura, who has always dreamed of working alongside her role model, Joyce Ababio, says she took her classes seriously, and wanted to make a positive impact on her life.

Her efforts paid off.

On Friday, 5 September 2015, she received the award for Best Student. Katura says although she had been working hard, she was still shocked by the award.

"I almost collapsed when I was announced the best student from 35 hardworking and talented students in my batch on 5th September during our graduation. But I smiled and I knew I can do more and could have



Katura, Huseiba, Grace and Fatima at the Vlisco Tailor Academy graduation ceremony

Eventually, the four talented members of the YUW Project, along with 10 other ladies from the Greater Accra and Northern Region, won the one-year scholarship to be part of the Vlisco Tailor Academy, which offered them a full scholarship to study in one of Ghana's premier fashion school, the Joyce Ababio College of Design (JACD)

The girls, some of whom had no experience in the fashion and design industry, were also provided with accommodation by the textile giant and underwent intense training at the JACD in Accra.

According to Vlisco, the objective of the yearlong training is to provide talented but underprivileged females with the needed skills to achieve financial freedom.

Katura also said, "Aside having no worries for my tuition fee, as this was fully sponsored, the training process was an eye opener and I pledged to be the best student and one of the best designers in Ghana"

probably lost that hope if the Young Urban Women Project had not touched my life. I will continue to fly."

With a youth resource centre located in Tuutingli, the YUW Project targets young women, aged between 15-25 years from poor and marginalised homes and communities. The project is aimed at empowering 2,000 young ladies from Greater Accra and the Northern Region to have greater dignity through economic independence and control over their bodies. The project also provides training on sexual reproductive health rights and women's unpaid care work.

On 30th October, 2015, Vlisco held a graduation ceremony to celebrate the success of the ladies, and once more Katura, Fatima, Grace and Huseiba of the YUWP were honoured and their accomplishments, applauded. For Katura, the purpose of YUWP has rung true.

FEMALE EXTENSION VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME: How are women farmers benefiting?



Since the implementation of a Female Extension Volunteer (FEV) pilot programme in the Sissala East District in 2012 by ActionAid and its local partner, Tumu Deanery Rural Integrated Development Programme (TUDRIDEP), the programme is proving to be the solution to problems women farmers face in accessing agricultural extension services.

Women farmers in Nabugubelle commended Mariamah Seidu, a 38-year old FEV in their community for facilitating their group's formation and helping them with vital agriculture extension information to make them better farmers. They are not only receiving extension information but also benefiting from support services from government and other organizations, including the ADVANCE - USAID Project. The women farmers attributed this to Mariamah's pro-activeness.

The 56 female smallholder farmers in Nabugubelle community also explained how they are implementing some Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) practices, including rotating cereals and leguminous

crops on their farms to improve soil fertility, mixed cropping, and planting in rows for easy weed control etc.

Haluri Piedua, a 40-year old female beneficiary farmer, attested that the intervention is working well for her: "I was lucky to be among the women farmers to have benefited from Rafatu Lukiwie, the female extension volunteer in my community (Sakai). She visited my farm and also got an agricultural officer to teach a group of us women farmers in the community. I did not know how to sow my crops in straight lines or even the importance of that. It was Rafatu and the agricultural officer who took me through the process for the first time. After applying her teachings this year on my farm, I got to realise that weeding and fertilizer application have become relatively easy. I was able to take very good care of my one-acre maize farm without much difficulty. The most important thing about the intervention was that I harvested 10bags of maize from that one acre. This has never happened to me in my over 15 years of farming. The best I ever got was six



Sentu women farmers being taken through the tits-bits of compost preparation.

bags. I know last year the rains were fairly good but the new knowledge I got also contributed to this good yield.”

A total of about 6,000 women farmers in the 19 beneficiary communities have received basic agriculture extension support from the activities of female extension volunteers since the programme started in 2012.

The intervention came about as a result of persistent calls by women farmers for government and other stakeholders to explore ways for ensuring they had access to agriculture extension information. Farmers have observed a drastic decline in the numbers in agricultural extension agents in recent years.

Consequently, ActionAid and its local partner TUDRIDEP started the pilot FEV programme, following community engagements to discuss the importance of agriculture extension services and to explore community innovations to bridge the yawning gap in access to agriculture extension services, particularly for women smallholder farmers.

The programme was designed to respond to this need, with 19 communities selected for the pilot. Each community also selected one young, active female

farmer, with the exception of Walembelle, which selected two due to their large size, to serve as the FEVs in their respective communities.

With the collaboration of officers from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) district office, ActionAid Ghana, and TUDRIDEP organized a training that equipped the FEVs with basic knowledge and skills in agriculture extension information delivery, crop agronomic practices, CRSA practices, group dynamics and mobilization skills. The FEVs were also provided with some basic logistics, including bicycles and wellington boots to facilitate their work.

TUDRIDEP, being the local partner, continues to provide the FEVs with technical support through regular field monitoring of their activities. Regular annual review and learning and sharing sessions of the FEVs are also organized and financed by ActionAid. In those meetings the FEVs share experiences from their respective communities and also discuss lessons and strategies to improve their work.

By **Tontie Binado**, Programme Officer– Upper West Regional Programme, ActionAid Ghana

ActionAid Girls' Camp 2015: Celebrating Girl Empowerment for Leadership

This year, the Greater Accra and Volta Regional Programme of ActionAid Ghana organised the regional annual Girl's Camp, hosting a total of 120 girls aged between 11-16 years from the two respective regions, at the Rev. John Teye Memorial Institute in Ofankor under the theme; "Celebrating Girl Empowerment for Leadership."

Now in its 13th year, the Girls' Camp engages young girls from ActionAid sponsored communities to learn, play and share in educational activities, participate in ICT classes and lessons on personal and career development. . The aim of the camp is to motivate young girls to stay in school to complete their education and aspire for greater heights in life. It is also meant to provide participants, who are mostly from rural and deprived communities, with information on

their sexual and reproductive health rights and how to take control over their bodies. Furthermore, the camp facilitates effective discussions on the importance of good education and engages the girls in interactions with female role models. The camps train the girls to build their self-confidence and self-esteem, inform them of their rights and responsibilities and provide skills training on crocheting, cooking and weaving to enable them to gain financial independence.

"It was a new place for me, I saw new faces and new buildings. Went to the ICT lab and we learned a lot", 16 year old Suraiya Zakari, a sponsored child reiterated a bold and confident young woman with no hesitation in speaking up, it was no surprise that she was voted the Prefect for the 2015 Girls' Camp. Suraiya is no stranger to leadership, having been selected the class prefect



Suraiya Zakari, prefect for Greater Accra Volta Region Girls' Camp

and health prefect in her school located in the Ga West District of Greater Accra. Girls' Camp participants are drawn from AAG's sponsorship communities as well as girls from other poor communities in the six regions we work in. Suraiya believes that the camp gives young girls confidence: "I like Girls' Camp because they teach me a lot. The girls have the strength to educate

themselves because through AAG, you can stand in front of people to talk and communicate"

"I like to walk with people, I like to stand for positions. I believe that so far as all of us are schooling, we can all compete whether it is a male or female", Suraiya further added.



A section of girls engaged in the skill of crocheting

Ghana's Constitution is explicitly clear on gender-based discrimination. Article 17 clauses 1 and 2, forbids social exclusion and discrimination. However, young girls and women face violence and discrimination on a local, national and global scale.

Due to socially ascribed roles, girls and women have less access to education, paid work and health services, as well as less control of their own sexual reproductive rights and bodies. Social and cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) have adverse emotional effects on the wellbeing of

young girls and women. These violent practices, coupled with the immense burden society places on women like the responsibility of being sole caretakers of the home, domestic activities and raising of children, have significantly reduced the opportunities available to women.

By educating and encouraging participants of Girls' Camp, AAG makes an impact on the girls who go back empowered, assertive and poised to contribute to the development of their communities.

Mary and Paul Bradbury of the UK Ambassador Network commission the Bolni Early Childhood Development Centre with the chief of the community



ActionAid UK Ambassador Network Visits Ghana

The Ambassador Network, a group of international philanthropists and development agents, visited ActionAid Ghana from 9th November – 13th November 2015, to learn about the different communities AAG works in and to see the projects and development interventions their donations are funding. The Ambassador Network consists of individuals who have pledged to annually support ActionAid.

The Ambassadors make our work possible through their unwavering support, financial contributions and dedication. They uphold our mission to work with poor and excluded people to end poverty and injustice. In recognition of their invaluable role, ActionAid UK organised a weeklong visit of the Ambassadors to ActionAid Ghana's Northern Regional Programme located in Tamale.

Starting with a briefing with senior management staff in Accra, the 10 Ambassadors travelled to Tamale on Monday, 9th November 2015, to begin an exciting tour of projects, communities and programmes.

At ActionAid's Northern Regional Programme office, they interacted with the Regional Manager, Esther Boateng, and other project staff, where they were given some insight into AAG's interventions in the region.

After meeting the Deputy Northern Regional Minister, Alhaji ABA Fuseini at the Regional Coordinating Council

(RCC), the Ambassadors also visited the Bolni community where ActionAid had built an Early Childhood Development Centre.

Ambassadors, Mary and Paul Bradbury, who have supported ActionAid since 1986, commissioned the centre along with the chief of the community.

The Ambassadors also visited the Kukuo Witch Camp where they interacted with alleged witches and other stakeholders at the camp. This was followed by a trip to ActionAid's Rice Processing Centre in Madina, where smallholder women rice producers talked about how ActionAid's provision of a new processing machine has improved their livelihoods, the UK team also engaged in an intimate discussions with 79-year old re-integrated alleged witch, Aishetu Amadu, and her family in her home.

They also had a discussion with participants of the Young Urban Women Resource Centre in Tuuntingli. In an interaction with elders in the Kpanvo community, Harriett Maunder-Taylor, an Ambassador, acknowledged the hard work involved in making change happen in communities, "I think it is absolutely fantastic. I really do. It's definitely made it very realistic. I mean you could only read so much. I respect the hard work. I mean its not really just about throwing money around. It is about diplomacy, you cannot go into

someone's home and tell them, "You need this! You need that!"

ActionAid Ghana's interventions in the various communities involve building community relationships and deepening partnerships with community leaders

I've heard of people having great poverty, I haven't ever been to a place where there is great poverty. I will probably say I have seen areas of it – while we've been here – but I think, also, quite a lot of good change too. Quite a lot of positivity. Although people might be living as we would say, "in very poor conditions" they actually

Melody Azinim, Project Officer for the Young Urban Women leads a discussion between the Ambassadors and beneficiaries at their resource centre in Tuuntingli, Tamale



and traditional authorities. Other places visited included the Girls Club at Kulnyevilla and a shea butter processing factory.

According to Rebecca McMurray, ActionAid UK's Manager of Philanthropy and Partnerships, the trip was to give donors a chance to see what their money was being used for. "Phillip and Hilary, for example, have been Ambassadors for over 12 years, so in terms of how that'll influence their support, I hope that it will ensure that they continue to support ActionAid and that they are able to talk to other people about ActionAid in a more knowledgeable way. In terms of new people, I hope it will inspire them to want to support ActionAid in a great way and maybe some of the projects in the Northern Region and kind of be a bit more educated about how they view development as well because I think with that education, comes a greater appreciation and value of the work."

Mary Bradbury and her husband, Paul, have supported ActionAid for almost 30 years, having started their funding in the 1980's. "I will probably say amazing, fascinating really. And eye-opening. It's so different to the kind of life that I live on a daily basis. And although

always seem very happy and really enthusiastic" observed Mary.

According to Mary, seeing the projects they fund has really "brought home" to them where their money goes and the project that ActionAid spends the money on has become much more realistic, reassuring them of where their money goes.

Paul Bradbury also stressed the transparency and accountability the trip offered them: "Yea I think Mary summed it up I suppose, we wanted to just come and see what goes on because there's a big difference between reading about it and actually coming and seeing it and I suppose I've seen some sights that have surprised me."

In a public school situated in the Gushegu District, teachers complained about the large number of students they had to teach. Each class had at least a 100 students. "I'm surprised for instance, the sheer number of children, came as a surprise to me. That's something that I suppose in England we don't really see, at least not to that scale, and the children all seemed very happy, basically everywhere we went



Ambassadors interact with alleged witches at a witch camp.

they are, the young children we saw today in the school in spite of being 117 in a classroom, they all looked very nice and very happy.” Paul Bradbury stated.

ActionAid Ghana's Fundraising and Supporter Care Manager, Prince Osei-Agyekum, also added that the decision to show ActionAid Ghana's interventions to the Ambassadors was worthwhile: “The visit of the UK Ambassadors to Ghana was a huge advertisement of ActionAid's work and provided us an opportunity to demonstrate our accountability and impact to donors.

The visit was also a friend-raising opportunity, which will lead to fundraising tomorrow.

” Rebecca McMurray, revealed that the visit was the first of its kind, adding that out of 35 ambassadors, 10 were able to make the trip to Ghana.

In her evaluation remarks, Rebecca added that the trip brought positive feedback, helping to fulfil expectations and offer Ambassadors the chance to see a broad variety of our work.



ActionAid staff in a group picture with the UK Ambassador Network members

ActionAid Ghana @ 25

Launch of 25th Anniversary Celebrations and Country Strategy Paper V



The cutting of ActionAid Ghana's 25th anniversary cake

It was a humbling moment of reflection and evaluation when staff, partners, collaborators and development associates gathered at the Adaekese Hall of the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel on 21st July, 2015, to launch ActionAid Ghana's 25th Anniversary Celebration and the unveiling of its fifth Country Strategy Paper (CSP V). Since 1990, AAG has been working with marginalised and deprived communities in Ghana to promote human rights, fight discrimination and defeat poverty, to enable people to live with dignity.

Staff members from across the country were in attendance as well. The occasion also brought together board members, former country directors, ActionAid international staff, renowned development advocates, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), NGO partner organisations and the media.

In an address read on his behalf by Hon. Akwasi Opong Fosu, Minister of State at the Presidency, the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Kwesi Bekoe Ammisah-Arthur, lauded ActionAid for sustaining development interventions to bring meaningful change to the lives of people living in poverty in the country.

Alluding to the role of partnerships in development, the Vice President, underscored "our common humanity in

which one person's poverty can threaten our global prosperity," stressing that "the dignity of any of us here can enjoy is inextricably tied to what we are ready to create for the poorest of our communities. Partnership is addressing poverty and injustice for the vulnerable is therefore not a choice."

The Guest of Honour extolled the development virtues of ActionAid, assuring that "We celebrate ActionAid Ghana for staying with the people in the trenches for 25 years, impacting lives, inspiring change and delivering viable services to meet the needs of rural communities. On your 25th Anniversary, we wish to congratulate you for your good works."

Paying glowing tribute to the development partnership between the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and ActionAid Ghana, the sector Minister, Hon. Nana Oye Lithur said "ActionAid Ghana has proven that partnership is one of the most important strategies in fighting poverty, and has supported the Ministry in the passage of the Domestic Violence Law, and it is still on board as we work towards the approval of the Domestic Violence Regulations by Parliament, which will support the full and effective implementation of the Act." The Gender Minister also expressed the hope that ActionAid Ghana will be able to deliver on the stated objectives in the newly launched Country Strategy Paper.



Dora Sunkwa, smallholder farmer from the Asutifi District, Bong Ahafo, lauding AAG's many interventions in her community

In her address, the Board Chair of ActionAid Ghana, Marilyn Aniwa, recounted the beginnings of ActionAid Ghana in 1990 working in a few communities in the Upper East Region to the award winning Not-for-Profit organisation in Ghana. She said, "With the launch of the new development strategy, we hope to expand our operations and extend into other regions."

Declaring a new direction for the CIMG Not-for-Profit Organisation of the Year, the Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, Sumaila Abdul-Rahman, said the organisation will be working towards four mission objectives in the next five years, as itemised in the new Country Strategy Paper, and would rely on the support and collaboration of partners and stakeholders to achieve the objectives. He attributed ActionAid Ghana's successes to the contributions of former directors who laid a strong foundation for the organisation.

Frema Opare, a former Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, chaired the event, under whose tenure the organisation undertook many development programmes, including the development of Country Strategy Paper II. Messages of support and solidarity were delivered by Abantu for Development, IBIS Ghana, the Young Female Parliament and Dora Sunkwa, a smallholder farmer from the Asutifi District of the Brong Ahafo Regional programme.

The occasion also saw some hardworking personalities receive awards and citations for their outstanding contributions to ActionAid Ghana. Some of the awardees included Frema Opare, Taaka Awori and Adwoa Kwateng Kluitse, former Country Directors of ActionAid Ghana, and Dr. Sulemana Abdulai, one of the pioneers who laid the foundations for the establishment of ActionAid in Ghana.



Another CIMG Best NGO Award for ActionAid Ghana

At the plush Banquet Hall of the State House in Accra, where award winners and the business community had gathered for the 26th National Performance Awards by the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana (CIMG), ActionAid Ghana stood out as one of the organisations that had won the prestigious award for the second time in a row.

“To win the CIMG Not-for-Profit Organisation of the year for the second time, ActionAid Ghana must have been doing something right”, the announcement breezed through the impressive sound system at the Hall, as Professor Agyemang Attafuah, Board member of ActionAid Ghana, led the winning AAG team to receive the award.

The team included the Country Director, the Head of Policy and Programmes, Head of Human Resource and Organisational Development, Communications and PR manager other members of the board, and other project and functional staff.

For the past 20 years, ActionAid has implemented many development interventions in some of the poorest and marginalised communities in six regions in Ghana. Championing the human rights of disadvantaged and excluded people, ActionAid Ghana has promoted quality education in many deprived communities, supported the construction of

classroom blocks, kindergartens and provided other educational facilities. From closing down a witch camp and waging strong advocacy campaigns against widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and other forms of traditional and cultural violence, ActionAid continues to work to promote women’s rights.

Access to food is a basic human right; no one should be made to suffer the indignity of going to bed hungry. Food security has been a big part of ActionAid’s work, working towards securing lands for women smallholder farmers and promoting the services of female agricultural extension services.

Commenting on the second award, the Fundraising and Supporter Care Manager, Prince Osei-Agyekum said, “The award is a motivation to stand toe to toe with the poor and to continue our work of

contributing to community development.” The Communications and Public Relations Manager also said that the award is a palpable endorsement of the effectiveness and popularity of our Human Rights-Based Approach to development, which enables us to deploy the power within people to work towards their own development.

To all our partners, supporters, and communities, we wish to say a big thank you for making us number one, once again!



Prof Ken Attafuah, Vice Chair of ActionAid Ghana Board, receives the CIMG Award

ActionAid Ghana sponsors **Journalism Award for Best Report on Poverty and Human Rights**

In July 2015, ActionAid Ghana entered into a partnership with The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), with a commitment to sponsor a category in the annual GJA Awards for the next two years. The purpose of the sponsorship is to motivate and encourage journalists in Ghana to cover issues pertaining to poverty, injustice and discrimination. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the International Press Centre by Saani Mohammed Yakubu, the Deputy Country Director and Head of Programmes and Policy (HOPP), of ActionAid Ghana,

Alleviation award, which went to Joseph Opoku Gakpo of JoyFM for his piece entitled "Millennium."

AAG recognises the crucial role that the media plays in informing the public about important social, economic development and human rights issues. The recently launched Country Strategy Paper V of AAG, 'Increasing Possibilities, Claiming Rights,' emphasises deepening our partnerships with credible institutions to widen the alliance against poverty and injustice. The media is a big part of that alliance.



Saani Yakubu, Deputy Country Director of AAG, presents the Human Rights Award to Abdul Hayi Moomen of GTV

and Dr. Roland Affail Monney, President of GJA, on behalf of the Journalism body.

The 20th GJA Awards ceremony was held on August 15th, 2015 at the Banquet Hall, State House, with award winners and representatives from a broad range of organisations and media houses present to celebrate and honour the careers of astounding journalists and highlight the award-winning stories that made the news in the year.

AAG sponsored the Human Rights prize, which was awarded to Abdul Hayi Moomen of GTV, for his piece entitled "Killing the Spirit of Children," and the Poverty

Reporting on issues such as injustice, discrimination and inequality is an important contribution to the development agenda and the journalists who take risks to highlight injustices and other social imbalances should be commended for their efforts to bring about social change. The media is an essential catalyst for positive development, and we hope that by recognizing their hard work they will continue to dedicate their work to marginalised communities whose voices have been muted or ignored.

Rebranded Development & Advocacy Centre (RECDA) Explores University Links

The Resource Centre for Development Advocacy (RECDA) is ActionAid Ghana's in-house reference library that has served students, development enthusiasts, gender advocates and the research community in Ghana for more than a decade. The centre has also been used as a training and learning

influence to other universities in the Legon area. The newly refurbished RECDA has an impressive and expansive collection of books on poverty, development, gender, education, food security, cultural and traditional practices and general information on exciting and useful learning themes. The



Resource Centre for Development Advocacy

platform for students from public and private universities in Ghana and other countries.

Now strategically located close to the educational and business enclave of Legon, where the prestigious University of Ghana is situated, along with the University of Professional Studies, the Radford University and other private and public academic institutions, RECDA has undergone some rebranding and reorganisation to serve the student community in the new location.

ActionAid Ghana, where RECDA is housed, recently moved offices from East Cantonments to 3rd Asoyi Lane at East Legon, Accra. The move has provided opportunity for RECDA to partner with academic and professional institutions in the area for research development and other library and exchange purposes.

With preliminary discussions already underway with the African University College of Communications, RECDA hopes to extend its research and development

centre also stocks research reports from national and international organisations including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UN etc. There is also a good archives of international magazines, annual reports, old and new Ghanaian newspapers, and development photo albums. Other sections in RECDA include a digital library where videos, CDs, DVDs and other digital resources are available.

With a resident communications officer and an intern specially trained to offer library book borrowing and lending services, the centre has records of newspaper cuttings on relevant development subjects to aid research and academic investigations.

RECDA has rendered valuable service to many students and development researchers over the years. With the launch of a new Country Strategy Paper, which encourages credible partnerships with progressive institutions, there are more prospects for RECDA to establish a powerful presence on the library and information scene.

AAG Donates GH¢500,000

worth of Relief Items to June 3rd Flood Victims



mattresses, pillows, blankets, plastic buckets, sanitary materials and children's sandals.

In all, over 5,100 beneficiaries from 1,028 households in seven districts received various items that provided them with temporary relief and emergency assistance. The beneficiary communities are La Nkwatanang, Ablekuma South, Ayawaso East, Okaikoi South, Ga South, Ga East and Ga West, all in the Greater Accra region.

Flood and fire are two words synonymous with the June 3rd disaster. On that night, severe rains resulted in heavy flooding in parts of Accra, forcing cars and people to come to a standstill as the rushing water engulfed roads and homes, leading to power outages in various communities and driving thousands of people to seek shelter from the downpour. At a Goli filling station located at Kwame Nkrumah Circle, people huddled together to keep warm from the chill and awaited for the devastating flood to ease up. However, a leakage from one of the underground tanks at the station resulted in an explosion that left hundreds of people dead. The deluge and fire also resulted in some drowning cases with over 150 deaths recorded in the aftermath of the twin disasters. The tragedy left thousands of people displaced and millions of properties damaged.

In solidarity with people in distress, the vulnerable and disadvantaged, ActionAid Ghana responded to the needs of survivors and victims of the disaster with £75,000 (GH¢ 500,000) worth of relief and emergency items provided by the Start Fund in the United Kingdom.

The items, which were distributed to the beneficiaries with the assistance and collaboration of the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) included bags of rice, gallons of cooking oil, shito (pepper sauce), bags of water,

Presenting some of the items to residents of Nima in the Ayawaso East District, the Board Chair of ActionAid Ghana, Marilyn Aniwa, assured the disaster victims of ActionAid's commitment to bring relief to affected populations in line with the organisation's policy on emergencies and disasters, "ActionAid works with communities that are living in poverty and we adopt the human rights-based approach, and in so doing assess basic needs such as access to water, shelter and food and other human rights-based needs, and it is on this note that the donations are made"

The Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, Sumaila Abdul-Rahman, said while "the support will not meet all their needs in these difficult of disaster, it would at least



A woman affected by the June 3rd floods collects a new mattress, pillow and other essential goods donated by ActionAid Ghana.



Mother and daughter carrying home their donated items.

assorted items to affected people in the community. Reiterating the vision of ActionAid, he said the donations were part of emergency response programmes, which are anchored on AAG's core values of solidarity with the poor, equity and justice.

Some of the excited beneficiaries expressed their appreciation at the gesture: "It is a pleasure that we are having this today. Today we are going to sleep comfortably," said Agnes, a middle aged woman with three children in Opetekwei

provide some initial relief to help victims cope with the situation"

At La Nkwatanang, the Head of Human Resource and Organisational Development, Vivian Acheampong, entreated residents of the community to keep their environments clean and avoid unhealthy practices such as throwing rubbish into gutters and littering, as this results in choked gutters, which causes floods. She also expressed the collective hope and determination of the people, assuring them that never again will such a disaster befall on Ghana.

The coordinator of the donation exercise, Henrietta Lamptey, Project Manager of the Young Urban Women project, lauded the effective collaboration between ActionAid and NADMO when she presented items to residents of Mallam Kokroko in the Ablekuma South District. The coordinator thanked the community for receiving ActionAid and showing great cooperation and fortitude in the face of a terrible disaster. She assured the community of ActionAid's continued support while entreating them to contribute towards efforts to prevent disasters from occurring in the future.

The people of Dome and other hard-hit areas in the adjoining communities were full of praise for ActionAid Ghana when the Communications and Public Relations Manager of ActionAid Ghana, Benjamin Kwasi Tawiah, handed over

Agnes, a middle aged woman with three children in Opetekwei

Tony Banful, a mason in the La Nkwatanang district explained to ActionAid, "We lost almost everything and even currently we are drying our mattresses. We don't have even anything to sleep on." He recounted the aftermath of his experience on the cold Wednesday evening when the floods displaced his family.

Jennifer, a seamstress at Mallam Kokroko thanked ActionAid profusely for the donations, urging other NGOs to emulate ActionAid's example: "I am lost for words when I look at the items I have received today from ActionAid. I am going home with mattresses, pillows, a whole bag of rice and shito. I even received sanitary paper. I cannot thank ActionAid enough for all they have done for me and my family."



A victim of the June 3rd flood disaster carries away her items

Workshop on Tax Justice and Illicit Financial Flows Held in Accra

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that developing countries lose about US \$200 billion every year to harmful tax incentives and illegal financial flows. Research from Tax Justice Network-Africa also reveals that Africa gives away US \$50 billion a year in wrongful tax policies and 15 ECOWAS countries, including Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana throw away a collective US \$9.6 billion, with Ghana accounting for US \$2.27 billion every year to needless tax incentives to multinationals and other big companies.

While poverty levels continue to increase in many developing countries, leaving more poor people unemployable and vulnerable due to lack of infrastructure and development opportunities, ActionAid finds it regrettable that poor countries continue to grant tax exemptions to multinational companies to invest in their countries. Our research has uncovered that it is not tax incentives that entice big companies to do business in Africa; it is rather the availability of business-enhancing resources such as energy, security and other enabling factors that attract investors. More importantly, the worth of the tax incentives we grant them is more than the value of the employment opportunities they promise and the corporate social responsibility they provide.

ActionAid's Tax Justice Campaign seeks to advocate for progressive taxation in countries and calls for an end to tax incentives in poor countries. The money given away could be used to finance development infrastructure such as schools, roads, hospitals and dams.

In June 2015, ActionAid Ghana in collaboration with IBIS, Christian Aid, Tax Justice Coalition and Trade Union Congress organised a workshop on tax incentives and Illicit Financial Flows (IFF) in Ghana. The workshop brought participants from government, media and civil societies together to collectively discuss the negative impact that tax incentives for multinational companies are having on Ghana's growth.

The theme of the workshop was: Financing Ghana's Socio-economic Development: The Case of Tax Incentives and Illicit Financial Flows.

The aim of the workshop was to draw more attention to the issue and educate the public about current tax incentive laws in Ghana while also highlighting the negative impact of the activities of some multinational



Vitus Azeem of Ghana Integrity Initiative shares expert knowledge on the effects on corruption and capital flight with workshop participants

corporations in Ghana. Present at the workshop was Vitus Azeem of the Ghana Integrity Initiative who gave a masterful account of the effect of corruption on national development. Azeem contended that the cocoa sector is the most affected by illicit financial flows and that oil, gas and our new found natural resources must be protected to enable Ghana to accrue the needed revenue for development. Recommending that global policies on accounting and tax enforcement favour Africa, he called for the enactment and implementation of strong legislations to curb corruption in Ghana and Africa.

The Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, Sumaila Abdul Rahman, said while the world loses several hundred billions to illicit financial flows, Africa is the worst loser, citing the example of sim-box fraud in Ghana as some of the ways the country loses money intended for development. He called on the government and other stakeholders to help in plugging tax holes to enable Ghana to mobilise resources for national development.

Participants agreed that there are loopholes where funds are slipping through to illegal sources, and are demanding more transparency in the tax incentive process. They also advocated for country specific reports to be published to determine how tax incentives impact each country. It should be the responsibility of the government to make these reports available to the media and the public.

The workshop was organised after the publication of a Thabo Mbeki report on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, which highlighted that more than US \$50 Billion are lost every year to IFF. This collective loss has resulted in a lack of investment in development and infrastructure, and as a result, the region as a whole has suffered greatly.

The organisers of the workshop expressed the hope that by drawing attention to the issue of harmful tax incentives, the public is in a better position to demand transparency and accountability from government regarding the tax and incentive regime in Ghana and the amount of money we lose to multinational companies through such schemes.



Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, Sumaila Abdul-Rahman with other discussants at the workshop

Training on the **Positive Discipline Approach** for Media Houses

On July 31, 2015, the Greater Accra Regional Programme of ActionAid Ghana organised a media training on the Positive Discipline Approach to educate media houses on the negative effects of corporal punishment in schools. Over 25 media houses attended the training with more than 40 participants in total. The objective of the workshop was to deepen the media's understanding of the dangers of corporal punishment and to promote the Positive Discipline Model as a practical alternative that helps in both the academic and social development of school

children.

The purpose of ending corporal punishment in schools is to encourage both boys and girls to stay in school. Any form of physical violence can create a hostile environment; preventing children from engaging and participating in school activities, sometimes even to a point where they will stop attending school. Corporal punishment marginalises young boys and girls, and instils fear and intimidation in them, stifling their development and delaying their progress.



Awo Aidam Amenea of J Initiative facilitating the training of media personnel

The training participants argued that a form of punishment was still required to set boundaries and distinguish between right and wrong while students are at school. Awo Ameyia Aidam, the Executive Director of J Institute, a facilitator of the training, explained that, "Punishment is just for a moment, but discipline is for a lifetime. In the long term, positive discipline is easier for both parents and teachers, and most importantly, more effective for young people". The overall objective is to promote long-term solutions that develop the learners' own self-discipline. She continued, "It is essential that both parents and teachers use clear and consistent communication to instil in young people a continuous message of what is appropriate behaviour in and out of the classroom."

The Greater Accra and Volta Regional Programme Manager of ActionAid Ghana, Henrietta Lamptey, expressed hope that the role of the media would be to inform parents about the psychological dangers of corporal punishment, and increase publicity and awareness of the Positive Discipline Model among parents and teachers. She also explained that it is not enough for the media to just report on situations that happen in schools. Using the example of teacher defilement, she asserted that it is not enough to report that it happened; the journalist must also suggest ways the problem may be solved to inform the larger population of the alternatives available.

Promoting Rights in School (PRS) Skill Share and Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop

In ActionAid's fight against poverty, education is one of the most effective instruments used in the global pursuit to eradicate poverty and injustice. Over the past 25 years, ActionAid Ghana has supported the construction of more than 200 modern classroom blocks, kindergarten structures and provided

marginalised communities.

One of ActionAid's many education-focused advocacy programmes is the Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) initiative. The PRS is a collaborative effort between ActionAid and Right to Education Project, an initiative of



A section of participants at the TOT PRS Meeting in Accra

educational aids including furniture, books, playground equipment, and many others to promote equality in access to quality education in deprived and

the first UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education which is directed at ensuring free, compulsory and quality public education for all.



Participants engaging in role-playing

The PRS strategy supports parents, children, teachers, unions, communities and local organisations to monitor and improve the quality of public education.

Under the PRS, the Action for Children's Rights in Education (ACRE) programme has been enrolled in six countries in Africa; Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Ghana. The Charter of 10 Rights is one of the practical tools the PRS is using to support and sustain quality public education.

Through the use of indicators to measure the implementations of the Charter, trainers and users of PRS can capture systematic information about their local schools. From Friday, 3rd September – Saturday, 12th September 2015, ActionAid held its first ever international Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on the PRS in Ghana. The Promoting Rights in School Skill Share and Training of Trainers workshop brought together ActionAid education advisors, implementing partners, professionals with experience in working with PRS, and other stakeholders from government and other public institutions.

During the TOT PRS workshop, participants observed through interactions with local community schools that despite international policies, free public education was not being implemented. This, according to Julie Juma, the Acting Head of Programmes at ActionAid Malawi, is very common, "In the countries where surveys have been done, the trend is that education is not free despite legislation being in place on free education. Parents are being charged other costs for

their children's' education, which is a violation of the children's right to education as children who cannot pay are excluded from school."

Participants from over 15 ActionAid member countries attended the event. According to Marie Antoinette Corr, General Secretary of Gambia Teachers Union, the TOT and skill share workshop helped to build capacity and make their work more effective. The participants dealt with real-life situations through role playing, learning the unique communication and tools to use for various stakeholders in education such as parents, Parent and Teacher Associations (PTAs), School Management Committees (SMCs), community leaders, and many others.

Held at the Ramada Hotel in Accra, the objectives of the ToT PRS workshop were to:

1. Ensure staff and implementing partners are well equipped to mainstream the promoting rights in school as a tool to monitor the implementation of the children's rights to education and to take action to fill the gaps
2. Develop participants' capacity to train others in PRS and to provide on-going support to the education programme in their own countries/sub regions.
3. To enable participants to share experiences of working with PRS, as well as identify and learn from best practices.



COMMUNITY ON THE SPOT

Every quarter, we put the spotlight on one community in any of our sponsorship areas, giving a close-up account of their peculiar development story—from a Human Rights-Based perspective. We analyse their basic human needs and the part they have played to shape their development story and improve their lives.

This quarter, the Spotlight lenses fell on Koru, an ActionAid sponsored community in the Volta Region.

Community statistics

Geographical Location: 44km from Kadjebi

District: Kadjebi

Population: 700

Major occupation: Subsistence farming, gari processing

Name of Chief: Nana Kwasi Krah I

Most distinguishing area of need: Education, teacher accommodation

Most distinguishing Action: Construction of teacher accommodation

Most distinguishing ActionAid Development tool: HRBA

The town of Koru in the Volta Region is a small community between Kadjebi and Ho. The community is made up of 700 people, made of about 300 males and 400 females. The people of Koru are committed to ongoing sustainable development for the improved livelihood for all of its inhabitants.

Unfortunately, Koru has faced a number of difficulties in delivering quality basic education to the children of the community. Since 2005, ActionAid Ghana's regional programme in the

Volta region has worked with the community to address some of these challenges, providing the needed capacity and development inspiration to improve the lives of the people of the community.

As a result, the people of Koru have come to appreciate their responsibilities and obligations in the development process. HRBA enjoins duty bearers and rightsholders to analyse their vulnerabilities, inequalities and obligations, while deploying the tools of campaigning, solidarity, empowerment and empowerment to work together with poor and deprived communities towards change. The people of Koru have demonstrated a refreshing appreciation of the principles of HRBA and have worked hard to initiate some great developments in the town.

HRBA is the most crucial element of all of AAG's programmes, as it works to empower both the individual and their communities. The people of Koru understand that the children of the community are entitled to quality basic education, and their lack of access to education is a violation of their human rights. ActionAid Ghana worked with community elders and



The completed teacher's quarters that members of the community built

leaders including the Chief, Nana Kwasi Krah I, to ensure their aspiration of providing education to their children could be met.

One of the main obstacles the community faced was lack of accommodation for teachers, resulting in teachers not willing to stay to work in the area. The community mobilised resources from community members and offered communal labour support towards the construction of a building to serve as accommodation for teachers. The facility will also solve some of the challenges teachers faced in commuting long distances to the community.

Additional interventions that AAG has contributed in the last 10 years include training for Parent-Teacher Association and the School Management Committee, as well as workshop for teachers. AAG has also worked with the community to provide additional skillsets by teaching livelihood skills in the baking of bread and pastries to provide economic livelihood support for the women of the town.

understand their rights including access to basic education. The Girls Camp, which is highly patronized by the gild in the Volta Region, is designed to empower young girls to be assertive and aspire to greater heights in education while teaching them useful skills and lessons in leadership, computer science and personal hygiene.

While the community has seen a huge amount of progress in the last ten years, they do continue to face a number of obstacles. In particular, the lack of roads in and around Koru makes it very difficult to access transportation, or to transport farm produce and other resources to other town centres to sell. The lack of a health facility means members of the community must travel long distances to access health care, putting them at greater health risks. While teachers in the community can look forward to having basic accommodation, many of them are not on salary. Koru also has some challenges with drinking water, as many of the standing pipes in the community have broken down.



AAG Country Leadership Team and NOCID staff in a meeting with community members.

AAG has also introduced a number of community-led interventions such as Community Based Anti-Violence Team (COMBAT) to promote gender equality, and assist in curbing gender-based violence in the community. Others include Children's Rights Empowerment Social Transformation (CREST) which is intended to educate and empower children to

As we celebrate 10 years of partnership and community development with the wonderful people of Koru, AAG hopes to meet other basic needs in the community to enable the hardworking development agents of Koru live with dignity.

Hot on the Press...

excerpts from AAG's weekly column in the Finder Newspaper

A Foreigner's View **ON HUMAN RIGHTS**



Amy McLaughlin, Communications Intern

As an Irish person who has traveled and worked in Ghana throughout the last four years, I was confident that I had a basic knowledge of Ghanaian culture. However, as an ActionAid Ghana intern, I have realized more than ever the importance of cultural competency when examining a topic like human rights. As a foreigner in Ghana, I can never fully understand any human rights injustice that I am exposed to, because I cannot and will never be able to grasp the cultural context in which it occurred. There is a historical trend of people from developed countries coming to "save" Africa. But I do not see anything that needs to be saved or fixed in Ghana or any other African country, especially by me.

Instead, I see a society that is evolving at lightening speed. I came to Ghana for the first time in 2011, and it is shocking to me to see the progress that has occurred since then. Today, every street in Accra is home to a construction site of some sort – a new apartment, office or infrastructure. Underdeveloped and serene areas that were then ruled by wildlife and dense forests have paved way for towering structures and the sound of bustling traffic and commuters.

Every person seems to have six phone numbers attached to three different phones, as well as a tablet, a laptop or another device that is connected to every social media platform. The amount of information that the population has access to is unprecedented and people are connected and able to share ideas in new

ways everyday. It's an incredibly exciting time to be in Ghana and watch what development and advancements could occur in the coming years.

However, in spite of this progress, there continues to be vast inequalities across Ghana such as, education, access to health, income, and gender. While many of these development topics are related, I strongly believe that none of them can be addressed effectively without acknowledging the inequality of women in Ghana.

There is inequality towards women all over the world. I can think of very few places globally, in which women would be deemed to be superior. It's apparent in politics, business, education, and many other fields. This gender gap is not something that was created unintentionally; it served a purpose and continues to do so today. Men are the beneficiaries of this system, and as long as they continue to profit, what is the point of fixing or changing it? Ghana is no exception to this pattern. The amount of work that is required of women, particularly at home, is astounding. As a fellow woman, it is something that I find very difficult to be quiet about. The amount of domestic responsibilities thrust onto women in Ghana, that are considered to be more important than education, furthering a career, or pursuing other interests, seems incredibly unfair. Again, I recognize that I did not grow up in Ghana, so my insight may seem ignorant.

In my various trips to Ghana I have been propositioned for marriage countless times either by men, or by women with brothers, sons or nephews who they think would do well with a foreign wife. My usual joking response is, "Oh you don't want to marry me, I would make a terrible wife!" And in Ghana, I would. I don't have the patience to make fufu or banku, nor would I be willing to take on sole childcare responsibilities, cleaning, and other domestic duties. These Ghanaian women I've met are rock stars! Their ability to run a household, take care of their children, work during the day, and never complain or ask for help would be inspiring if it wasn't so blatantly unjust.

Women's rights, among other controversial topics, were a subject of President Obama's recent speeches in East Africa. He discussed the importance of equality for all human beings, regardless of gender, class, sexual orientation or any other differentiating identity. This is an argument that I agree with, and I think given his global leadership position, he should use his platform to share his views. However, I also think that



history has demonstrated that no change regarding discrimination towards women, or any other form of inequality will last anywhere in the world, unless it comes from within the country.

It is not the role of Western nations to dictate to the rest of the world how to behave, especially considering the hypocrisy that exists within those declarations. There are millions of strong, intelligent, capable women in

Ghana and I have no doubt, that when they are ready, they will take the necessary steps and use their voices to effect positive change around them and achieve the equality they deserve. Furthermore, there are people working fervently to end inequality in education, health, and other areas that experience discrimination and marginalisation. You don't have to look further than Facebook or Twitter to see that there are masses of young Ghanaians striving for a better tomorrow for their communities and their nation.

I have interned with ActionAid for just a few weeks, and in that short time I have learned a lot about the human rights situation in Ghana, most of which, I was unfamiliar with. While much of it shocks me, I recognize that my role in any change is one of support, rather than leadership. The people that I work with continue to change my perceptions every day and I am constantly learning how to better help them. I know that there are millions of activists out there and I can't wait to see how this country evolves as a result of their actions!

THE INTESTATE SUCCESSION LAW DOES NOT WORK IN SOME PARTS OF GHANA



“Rahanda got married three years ago to a formal sector worker, who passed on two months after their third wedding anniversary. Atanga, a nephew and customary successor of the deceased seized all the property from the widow and her son David, who is barely two years old. They were also sacked from their matrimonial home. Atanga says Rahanda is not the wife of the deceased because the final customary marriage rites were not performed. Based on this, he wants to safeguard the property for David. When attempts to solve the case amicably between the

parties failed, Rahanda was advised to seek justice at the courts. But all she kept saying was “I don't want to mar David's future relationship with his family. After all, he is the only child of my late husband”. (WOM 2014)

Rahanda's story resonates with many women in Northern Ghana, especially among women who have customary marriages. This article will attempt to examine the provisions of the Intestate Succession Law, 1985 (PNDCL 111) that could support Rahanda obtain redress at the courts, if she wanted to. Secondly, it will find out why she and other women do not want their cases to end up in court, and lastly propose solutions for the challenges. Had Rahanda adhered to the advice of pursuing her case in court, the Intestate Succession Law, 1985 (PNDCL 111) would be paramount to her claiming her spousal property rights.

The law promotes spousal inheritance of property when a person dies without making a will. It recognizes the spouse(s) of the deceased, their biological or adopted children, surviving parents and the customary family, prioritizing spouses and children. It applies to self-acquired property after 1985 which has been bought, inherited or would have been inherited, gifts or awards. It allows a spouse, child, parent and customary family to apply for 'Letters of Administration' to distribute the property of one who died without a will.

Rahanda would have had to apply for Letters of Administration to get the property shared among her, David, the surviving parents of the deceased and Atanga, who in this case represents the customary law. A greater percentage of the property would have been allocated to her and David, including the matrimonial home she was ejected from. However, Rahanda chose not to pursue the case as many women do, particularly in the rural setting of Northern Ghana.

Even though there is a statutory law that seeks to ensure that widows/widowers and their children are not disenfranchised when it comes to inheriting property of their deceased spouses and parents, many women do not take this route. Again, there are traditional succession plans, depending on the ethnic group, that are contrary to the statutory law. These traditional succession plans instill fear in women. They are afraid of physical and emotional abuse, and being neglected by in-laws means that many do not challenge the traditional practice.

One example of such traditional succession plans is wife inheritance commonly practiced in the Upper East Region of Ghana. In most instances, the woman is seen as property to be inherited by a man. A brother of the deceased man has a right to inherit the widow and all property of the deceased man. In some traditions, the widow has a number of options – she may choose a family member of her deceased husband to re-marry, remarry another person outside the deceased man's family or not marry but stay in her late husband's house.

Each choice made by the widow has consequences. These include (a) re-marrying from the dead man's family, which most likely leads to the widow bringing forth many children with no support from the man because traditionally the children born belong to the deceased man and are therefore not the responsibility of the biological father; (b) re-marrying outside the family of the deceased in Talensi and Nabdam districts of the Upper East Region means the widow cannot carry her children to her new husband's house and her dowry will have to be paid back to the deceased man's family; and (c) the choice of not re-marrying but staying in the deceased man's family house to take care of the children also leads to neglect and denial of farm land to cultivate. While the choice is dependent on each specific case, it is evident that many women face a number of challenges when their husband's pass away.

There are other challenging factors that deter women from seeking redress in court. These are high legal fees, delays with court action, ignorance of human rights and lack of knowledge on PNDCL 111. Additionally, the unwritten customary rule is that a woman should not be washing the family's dirty linen in public. If she takes them to court to claim her property rights, she would be seen to be doing exactly that. A widow desires to keep a conflict-free relationship with their in-laws because if she has female children, they cannot marry without the consent of their patrilineal uncles and extended family. And if they are male, they can be denied their share of the family property. Most women would often consider all these implications, and refuse to seek justice in courts as seen in Rahanda' case. So one would ask, what do we do then?



Some school of thought would say that sensitisation should be carried out while others would say we need more legal aid lawyers, with others arguing that we need a shorter court process. These measures may deliver some good results if pursued properly. However, customary families need to rethink through their succession plans and make them friendlier to women. Women like Rahanda will have to be bolder to seek redress in courts amidst all the challenges so that customary families will be deterred from adhering to their succession plans that disinherit widows and children. It is important to note that the Intestate Succession Law is the law of the nation and it's superior to all other customary laws. We are all obliged to abide by it.

By **Fati Abigail Abdulai**
Widows and Orphans Movement (WOM)
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