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Newsletter 2017 | Ghana

Spotlight



Impacting Lives, Inspiring Change

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Foreword

This edition of the *Spotlight* comes at a crucial and momentous time in the ActionAid Federation, when we are gearing up to embrace the major changes occasioned by the new global strategy 'Action for Global Justice.' In this new direction, we seek to shift visible, invisible and hidden powers by working with movements, activists and people's organisations towards a just, equitable and sustainable world. In the midst of many challenges, there are exciting opportunities and greater possibilities to create, innovate and influence the decisive shifts needed to improve the lives of people living in poverty.

Now more than ever, there is renewed energy among social justice organisations and development movements to invest in fiery campaigns and technology for better development outcomes. This has called for a careful examination of our approaches and strategies, often resulting in organisational restructuring, strategic mergers and leadership reorganisation. For ActionAid, a combination of restructuring at the global secretariat and some very bold reorientation in identity and focus, have defined new ways of doing things, at least in terms of approach and how we measure our impact.

These moves have been necessary because the demands on our development mandates continue to change—as a reflection of the inequalities and economic imbalances in the new world order. Meanwhile, the effects of climate change, humanitarian catastrophes, migration and natural disasters have pushed people living in poverty, especially women and children, beyond acceptable limits. As a result, the basic rights of vulnerable populations have often been denied them, exposing them to violence, discrimination and poverty.

In Sierra Leone, Niamey, India and most parts

of the Caribbean, we have seen severe devastation and regrettable loss of human life and property. These and other challenges, such as terrorism and the global financial crises, continue to test the resolve of development and governance institutions to build the resilience and capacities of people to defend their rights and live with dignity.

It is perhaps in this development reality that the 3 Rs espoused in ActionAid's global strategy (Rights, Redistribution and Resilience) become critical and strategic. As always, our HRBA and feminist leadership principles remain effective in protecting, promoting and fulfilling the rights of people living in poverty.

As AAG prepares for a mid-term review of CSP V, it has become increasingly necessary to assess the impact of our interventions in our communities and evaluate our mandate in the light 'Action for Global Justice.' In CSP V, we set for our ourselves four (4) mission objectives and five (5) enabling objectives. To a large extent, most of these objectives have been achieved, especially in CRSA, women's unpaid care work, violence against women and girls and quality education for boys and girls.

Other areas where we have chalked some implementation successes are programme-project integration, financial reporting, staff motivation and visibility. With strengthened partnerships with development institutions, donors and other important stakeholders, there are great opportunities for AAG to remain dominant in the development space and work towards the achievement of the mission and enabling objectives in the CSP.

This issue of Spotlight throws the spot on some of the many exciting advocacy moments and programme implementation successes in the period. It comes tastefully

designed and packed with new columns and categories reflecting relevant themes in women's rights, education and food security.

As a partner of the Spotlight, you are warmly welcome to enjoy the many interesting and impactful success stories in this edition. With this commitment, you have just joined a progressive global justice movement working

together to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.

With compliments!

Thank you very much.

Benjamin Kwesi Tawiah
Communications and Public Relations
Manager

ACTIONAID REPORT GETS PRESIDENTIAL ATTENTION



Eugene Arhin

The Director of Communications
at the Flagstaff House

Flagstaff House, Accra— The Director of Communications at the Flagstaff House, Eugene Arhin, has commended ActionAid Ghana for the complementary role the organisation is playing to promote national development in the areas of education, women empowerment and citizen advocacy. He made the remarks when a delegation from ActionAid presented complimentary copies of a recent report on Taxation and Education to the Flagstaff House in Accra.

The report, which is part of a multi-country project on the thematic interconnectedness between harmful tax incentives and the right to education, was launched in July 2017 at the Angie Hill Hotel in Accra. The 71 page document comes under the title 'Tax, Education Privatization and the Right to Education: Influencing Education Financing in Ghana.'

Explaining how he heard about the report, Mr. Arhin said "The research department at the Presidency has been monitoring the good works of organisations like yours and came across the report during one of our briefings. We decided to find out more about the findings because of the critical issues you have raised about public education."

The Communications Director assured that "The president is aware of the report and will consider it during a session with the Education Minister, to study the recommendations carefully and see where we can work together."

Sharing highlights of the research, the National Projects Manager of ActionAid Ghana, Stephen Caleb Opuni who coordinated the report launch, reiterated ActionAid's commitment to support quality public education through the provision of model educational infrastructure, advocacy and research, to expand access to children in deprived and marginalised communities. Mr. Opuni decried the practice where Ghanaians who have the financial means pay huge fees to send their children to private schools while basic public education deteriorates in form and quality.

Mr. Opuni observed that "one of the basic reasons for the falling standards in public basic education is the lack of adequate government funding, which denies many children the opportunity to enjoy their right to basic education."

He continued that "while there are many demands on



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ALESHA DIXON Campaigns to End Child Marriage with ActionAid Ghana



British musician and judge on Britain's Got Talent, Alesha Dixon, visited the Tampala community in the Upper West region of Ghana as part of ActionAid's campaign to End Child Marriage in the region. ActionAid Ghana reports that more than 50 girls a year are violently abducted on their way to school to be forced into child marriage. The girls are held prisoner by their captors' families, where they risk being drugged and raped, before being forced to marry men often older than them.

By working with both local and international partners, such as UNICEF, ActionAid is working to end child marriage on many fronts, including bringing perpetrators to justice, changing minds and behaviours in local communities through education and sensitisation on human and girl rights. It also involves campaigning at a regional, national and international level to influence policies and legislation to end violence against girls.

Members of the Tampala community, where ActionAid is implementing its End Child Marriage campaign, welcomed Alesha Dixon into their community where she met and interacted with members of ActionAid's Girls' Club and some child marriage survivors.



Members of the Tampala community, where ActionAid is implementing its End Child Marriage campaign, welcome Alesha Dixon into their community

The Girls' Clubs offer girls the platform to meet, identify and fight for their rights in and outside school, educates them on how to be assertive and provides mentorship and leadership training to help girls resist child marriage.

Alesha Dixon talked with Mary Lily, a teacher in the Tampala community in the Wa District of the Upper West region, about tackling child marriage. Mary Lily is an ActionAid volunteer and a member of the Community-Based Anti-violence Team (COMBAT) and has rescued girls from child marriage and abductions.



Alesha Dixon talks with Mary Lily, a teacher in the Tampala community in the Wa District of the Upper West region, about tackling child marriage

COMBAT members are a network of local men and women who are trained by the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DoVVSU) of the Ghana Police, and educate their families, neighbours, traditional officials and community members on human rights and violence against women and girls. They highlight the negative effects of child marriage and early pregnancy



Alesha meets 18-year old Felicia and her 2 month old baby girl in the Tampala community.



Alesha talks to 17 year old Cynthia who was abducted two years ago on Christmas Day when she was 15 years old.

on women and girls; promoting the education of girls in their communities

COMBAT members also directly confront perpetrators of child marriage; either face-to-face or through formal letters to ensure girls are returned safely to their families. When captors do not cooperate, COMBAT reports the cases to the Police, working with authorities to bring them to justice.

Held in a room and instructed to prepare for marriage, Cynthia was rescued by Mary Lily, an ActionAid volunteer and teacher who forced the men to release her or feel the force of the law. Cynthia is back in school now and wants to be a nurse in future.



Juliette, recounts her experience of abduction by two men who tricked her into getting a lift to a local festival. She was held hostage for four days but has since returned to school following her rescue

Also abducted was Juliette, 18 years old, by two men who tricked her into getting a lift to a local festival. She was held hostage for four days.

She was rescued by her uncle, with the support of a local chief who had been trained by ActionAid Ghana to become a campaigner against child marriage.



Alesha Dixon talks to ActionAid Ghana's Upper West Regional Programme Officer, Abiba Nibaradun.

Abiba is a passionate human rights activist who has helped save more than 50 girls who have been abducted and forced into child marriage.

Married off at 12 years, Felicia conquers child marriage



Felicia Afarabono, ready for school

Felicia Afarabono was a 12-year old student whose education was cut short by child marriage.

Living in the Bongo-Beo community in the Upper East region of Ghana, Felicia was in class six and was looking forward to advancing her education at the Junior High School Level.

"I was 12 years old and in Primary Six when my parents gave me out to a man for marriage. When this happened, I suffered at the hands of my mother-in-law and husband. They maltreated and abused me. I was beaten often and faced a lot of emotional abuse as well from the two of them.

I had to take care of all the house duties and I was treated like a slave because my husband didn't have a job and salary. He was a school-dropout."

Unable to bear the abuse any longer from her non-working husband and mother-in-law, she fled from the "matrimonial" home back to her parents'.

Fortunately for Felicia, unlike most young girls forced into marriage who come back pregnant, she didn't and was therefore able to go back to school without many difficulties.

"I spent about three years at my parents' house and was able to complete my Junior High School Education"

But her encounter with child marriage was far from over. "My husband came back to my parents to ask that I come back into the marriage again. My parents, especially my father, began to put pressure on me to go back to the marriage."

But Felicia remained adamant

"I had decided that I was never going back to that life. I had the support of Madam Monica, a peer educator and teacher. She heard my situation and she spent time visiting and counselling me. She really helped me and so I began to join her in the campaign against child marriage and teenage pregnancy in my community.

I am now in Form 2 at the Bongo Senior High School reading General Arts and I look forward to making my life better through a good education."

government's budget for education and other sectors of the economy, we give away about \$1.2 Billion in harmful tax incentives to multinational companies. This money could open more spaces for children and improve the quality of public basic education, thereby bridging the quality gap between private and public education at the basic level."

The Communications and Public Relations Manager of ActionAid Ghana, Benjamin Kwesi Tawiah, lauded the Akufo-Addo government's approach to citizen engagement, assuring the government of ActionAid's non-partisan support for public policies on education, human rights, and women empowerment.

He said that "As a social justice organisation, we are non-partisan but we are intentionally political, because we have to be aware of what happens in the political space to be able to engage with policy institutions to improve the lives of people living in poverty. We are grateful to the government for this opportunity; It shows that government is listening and watching what we are doing and is ready to work with us."

The ActionAid delegation included Josephine Samani, Project Officer of the Sustainable Livelihoods and Transparent Local Authorities (SLATLA), who coordinated the visit.

Ghana's Most Beautiful Pageant winner joins ActionAid in **Child Marriage Walk**



Ambassador of the campaign, BACI, winner of 2014's Ghana's Most Beautiful spoke to participants on child marriage and child rights at the final stop of the walk.

In 2015, ActionAid Ghana and UNICEF, in a collaborative effort, started the End Child Marriage campaign to reduce the incidence of child marriage in Ghana.

The project is being implemented in four regions: the Upper East region (Bawku West, the Bongo and the

Binduri districts), the Upper West region (the Jirapa, Lambussie-Karni, Sissala East and West districts), the Brong Ahafo region (the Tain, Banda and Atebubu-Amantin districts) and the Greater Accra (the Ga East and Ga West districts).

On Saturday, 11th February 2017, ActionAid Ghana organised a child marriage campaign walk under the theme; "Can this be LOVE? Marriage below 18 years is a crime. Let's stop Child Marriage!"



Rescued girls of child marriage -Kende Ayindana, Rebecca Ananga (Upper East Region), Sakina Midoho, Cynthia Sangmen (Upper West Region), Mavis Ugrunja and Kubura Sumani (Brong Ahafo region)

The campaign walk started from the Adenta Police Station to the Tetteh Quarshie round-about (opposite the Accra Mall). With over 300 participants, the walk was led by rescued girls of child marriage, the campaign Ambassador, BACI, ActionAid boys' and girls' clubs, ActionAid partners and members of the public.

Women in Agriculture Platforms (WAP) Geared to Influence Government Policies



Formed under the Northern Ghana Governance Activity (NGGA), a five-year initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) the Women in Agriculture Platforms (WAP)s have been formed in 28 districts in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions by ActionAid Ghana and other civil society organisations.

The WAP, according to Ruby Wuni, NGAA Women in Agriculture Coordinator, is a platform that is being used to mobilise smallholder rural farmers to challenge issues that confront them and advocate for the rights of smallholder women farmers.

The focus of the NGGA project is to partner with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), district assemblies in the targeted regions, and other NGOs for the rights of smallholder women farmers.

In the Upper West region, AAG's partners, Network for Peace-building (WANEP-Ghana) assisted in the organisation of the maiden quarterly meetings of district and regional WAPs members in March.

At the meeting, the WAP adopted a constitution to guide their operations and also identified relevant agricultural stakeholders that have to be engaged in their course of actions. Notably, the District Assemblies undergo the processes to develop their 4-year Medium

Term Development Plans (MTDP), the WAPs were also sensitized on the opportunity that exists for them to identify and collate their priorities for input into the plan. It is through this that the women will be guaranteed targeted support in the decentralized agriculture interventions.

In addition, following the roll-out of the government's "Planting for Food and Jobs" programme, the women groups received briefings on its implementation design focusing on how women stand to benefit

from it. Some concerns have been noted for further advocacy and engagement for possible reconsideration of the programme design. This relates to the requirement of 5 hectares (12.5 acres) per applicant, preconditions to make 50% up-front payment for the input cost and the exempting of major crops, such as groundnuts cultivation, from the crop list.

Three selected executive members of the regional WAPs were also supported to participate in the 7th Annual Northern Ghana Pre-season Planning and Networking Forum in Tamale on March 30, 2017. The forum creates a platform for farmers and other actors in the agriculture sector to network and plan for the coming farming season. The women have acquired knowledge on good farming practices, agricultural opportunities, and innovations, as well as where to get relevant information through their interactions with major actors like Farm Radio and International, Essoko and others.

They have also linked to agro processors, input dealers, seed growers, tractor service and other implement providers, buyers and agriculture value-chain actors. This information is being shared with the Regional and District WAPs for onward transmission to women in agriculture groups at the community level.

It's all fun as ActionAid provides KG for community



Priscilla Naazie is a teacher at the ActionAid-supported Mwofo Roman Catholic School Kindergarten in Jirapa

He adds that parents, especially women, who did not have anyone to take care of their children while they went to the farm left the children in the care of their older siblings, meaning they couldn't come to school either because they were helping their parents out. With the construction of the school, toddlers and children who

were too young for primary school had been registered and were benefiting from basic education.

Priscilla Naazie is the Kindergarten teacher of the school and according to her, because of the playground and play things, children are willing to come to school

"The children like to play, even when you're teaching, they will fidget till it is time to go out for break. Most of them just come to play with the swings and see-saws so I try to

include fun things and sing-alongs, to educate them. The capacity of the building falls between 40-50 students, currently I have 182 children registered here so it is hard to control them, as at now, people are still bringing their children and we can't turn them away."

COMBAT...building bridges, making peace

ActionAid Ghana's Community Based Anti-Violence Teams (COMBAT) are groups of men and women who enforce human rights in their communities. The COMBAT team has prevented hundreds of child marriages, reported cases of domestic violence and rights abuse to authorities and contributed immensely in rights protection and social security.

"My parents used to quarrel a lot over trivial issues" recounts 16 year old Felicia Volmeng, a final year student at the Shia Junior High School in the Upper East region.

"Sometimes my father will quarrel with my mother for not fetching water to the bathroom for him to bath or my mother demanding money for the upkeep of the family. When my mother wants to visit a neighbour without permission from my father, he will flare up and sometimes physically assault her. There was no peace at home and we the children didn't like the situation, especially my father assaulting my mother. One day when my father returned from town at about 5:30 pm,



16 year old Felicia Volmeng now lives happily with her parents

and the supper was not ready he physically assaulted my mother.

My mother was in pain and I was very sad. I did not take kindly to that, so I reported the matter to the COMBAT members in my community. They invited my father and after discussion with him and my mother they solved the situation amicably. My father was made to sign a bond of good behaviour and he was also warned never to beat or insult my mother again else they will report him to the police for prosecution. Since then my father has changed and there is peace at home. My father is

now very supportive of my mother and no longer insults or beats her. This has made my siblings and I am very happy."

However, not every case requires mediation. In such situations, COMBAT assists in reporting to the police, as in the testimony below:

"My husband Alhassan Ibrahim was not giving me house-keeping money and also not taking care of our children when he married a second wife. He used to beat and drag me on the ground anytime I demanded for house-keeping money from him. On 1st January, 2015, he beat me mercilessly when I demanded for house-keeping money from him. So I reported the

case to COMBAT and they made one of them to accompany me to report the case to the police in Kenyasi.

I was given a medical form to attend hospital at Kenyasi after which my husband Alhassan Ibrahim was arrested by the police. His family went and bailed him and the case was taken back to the community and settled amicably. He was made to pay my hospital expenses of GH80.00 to me. Since then he has not made any attempt to beat me again and he has been giving house-keeping money every day without me demanding. He also takes care of our children. We are staying together peacefully now."

ActionAid partners two district assemblies to improve lives in the informal sector

economy.



Stakeholders made up of representatives from ActionAid Ghana, the European Commission, Sunyani West District Assembly, La-Nkwantanang Madina Municipal Assembly and traditional leaders take a group picture after the launch

The lives of at least 3,800 informal workers, especially women and People Living With Disabilities (PLWDs) will be improved as ActionAid Ghana and the European Commission team up with two district assemblies to address key issues which affects the livelihoods of individuals in the informal sector.

Under the project 'Sustainable Livelihoods and Transparent Local Authorities' (SLATLA) the two district assemblies - the Madina Municipal Assembly (LaNMMA) and the Sunyani West District Assembly (SWDA) - will challenge issues confronting the informal sector such as limited job opportunities and inadequate economic activities at the local level; unsustainable environmental practices that reduce economic productivity and low revenue mobilisation of local authorities due to a downturn in the local

The long term effect is the widening inequality in society and increased migration of youth in search of jobs while local authorities remain non-responsive and unaccountable to citizens in the collection and investment of revenue for local development.

Launched on Wednesday, 5th April, 2017 in the Teiman community in Accra, the SLATLA project will work on overcoming these challenges by strengthening skills and capacity of target groups dependent on the informal economy to access a wider range of livelihoods. It will also increase coordination, engagement and linkages among micro, small and medium scale enterprises on marketing opportunities and strengthen technical capacity of more transparent and accountable local authorities to increase revenue mobilisation for local development.



Informal workers, governmental agencies, traditional leaders and community members were present at the launch

DREAMS COME ALIVE AT ACTIONAID CAREER FAIRS



Anita Obeng is a participant of ActionAid's Career Fair in the Brong Ahafo region

Career fairs provide an insight for children in school on the various career options available to them once they enter the job market. It prepares them for a successful transition from school into the job market when they are aware of what they want to do in future and what to do to make that possible.

ActionAid Ghana held a career fair to sensitise students and prepare them for the job market. Anita Obeng, a 19-year old Senior High School (SHS 2) student of Nkoranman SHS was part of the fair.

It has been seven months since she participated in the fair and according to her, the event has changed her life, "Before the career fair, I used to feel shy approaching my teachers and even colleagues when I had difficulties in my studies. I was not serious with my studies, I did not learn at home and I used to think that teaching was just a waste of time and with no good reward. At the fair, I was taught how to build my confidence level by the resource person who spoke on general career guidance and counselling.

Teaching has now become my dream career after getting the opportunity to interact personally with the resource person who represented the teaching profession.

I am confident that this year there will be a massive improvement in our performance when we sit for our final examination as we are always in groups helping each other and inviting our teachers to help us through

any difficulty we encounter.

I am most grateful for the opportunity and I call on Ghana Education Service to organise such programmes at school levels to benefit more students".

Zainab Abdulai is a 20 year old Form 2 student of the Gyamfi Kumasi Senior High Technical School in the Asutifi North District in the Brong Ahafo Region who was also a participant in the career fair.

"Before the programme I did not know much about what career opportunities exist for me, how to learn, and learning strategies. I was not attending 'preps'; I was always sleeping and loitering about in the dormitory. But after participating in the career fair, I was exposed to how to learn and learning strategies, career opportunities available for me if I pass my final examination to further my education at the tertiary level. These motivated me because I could see that all the facilitators were living better lives, using nice cars and I realised that to live that better life only takes those who are serious with their studies and have pursued tertiary education."

She adds that the experience motivated her

"I came back to school having been motivated and challenged, I drew my personal time table and started learning very hard and now my academic performance has improved. Before the fair, I used to be in the 36th position out of 64 students in the class but now I am 9th in the class out of the 64 students."

COACH THEM, DON'T CANE THEM... POSITIVE DISCIPLINE APPROACH (PDA) WINS HEARTS

Amiru Kuburu is 16 years old, and a student at the Kong Junior High School in Tumu. She has seven other siblings, six girls including herself and two brothers. All of them are in school except for the oldest brother who assists their father on the farm.

Amiru went to primary school about 2 kilometres away in Kowie. According to her, corporal punishment has always been used. "Sometimes a teacher may cane you and you can't even sit. If you came to school late or you don't get anyone to assist you to do your homework." She recounts. The issue of corporal punishment is one that is popular in many Ghanaian schools and other schools in Africa and across the world.

In Ghana, it is used by teachers to stop or punish "bad behaviours" by students, especially in the public schools. Corporal punishment involves violent and degrading means of correcting a child such as caning, slapping, kneeling, pinching, preventing students from using the washroom and many others. The use of such violent and traumatic measures abuses the rights of children, eventually resulting in long-term emotional and/or acceptance of violence as normal by children. Most importantly, it terrifies children and generates a dislike for education, resulting in high rates of school drop-outs.

To ensure schools are safe for children, ActionAid Ghana launched the Positive Discipline Approach (PDA). An alternative to corporal punishment, PDA is concerned with ensuring healthy child development through non-violent teaching, coaching and mentoring by schools. Currently AAG is piloting PDA in some selected schools in some regions across the regions we work in. Amiru's school, the Kong Junior High School, is one of ActionAid Ghana's supported schools that is currently piloting the Positive Discipline Approach (PDA).

"I like school now. There is no caning and I come to school earlier than I did before. I am not afraid anymore because I know that they won't cane me. Sometimes when you even come late to school, and the teachers just advise you, you also use positive discipline to discipline yourself so that you don't disappoint your teachers. I prefer positive discipline and I never want them to do corporal punishment again."

The headmaster of her school agrees, "Positive discipline is very good, I will admit it. Honestly the students are so confident and tend to talk more in



Amiru Kuburu is 16 years old, and a student at the Kong Junior High School in Tumu, a school piloting the Positive Discipline Approach

class. I could remember when we first started implementing it, ActionAid came to educate the students about their rights. So now when they misbehave and you want to use the cane to discipline them, they will refuse it." says the headmaster of Kong Junior High School, Nankpa Jibril.

He also pointed out some challenges with PDA, "The problem we have is with recalcitrant students. Most times, some of the stubborn ones tend to misbehave and will not listen, it sets a bad example for the other children. Also, it is a new project and because most of the teachers are used to corporal punishment, we have to keep reminding them about positive discipline. The biggest challenge is that the children know their rights but not their responsibilities."

18 year old Ambra Moro, a student, agrees with his teacher.



18 year old Ambra Moro is a student at the Kong Junior High School in Tumu, a school implementing PDA

LOCAL WOMAN WINS ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AFTER SEVENTH ATTEMPT

“They said that I would use the resources for development to cater for my children”



**Agatha Achiaa
sharing her political
experience**

It's been two decades since Agatha Achiaa started contesting in district assembly elections. “I started contesting for the district assembly elections since 1996 and each time, I have been competing with not less than 3 or 4 men. Throughout the period that I have contested, the men campaigned that the people should not give me the mandate just because I am a woman. They also campaigned that I would use the resources for the development of the electoral area to cater for my children.”

At 60 years old, Agatha has seen her fair share of losses.

“I have contested for the assembly elections for 6 times and lost because of all these negative allegations. I received a lot of insults and other allegations from the

other contestants, mostly the men.”

However, in 2015, ActionAid organised a forum for women who have lost assembly elections and those who have decided to contest for the elections. It included several forums and capacity-building trainings.

“ActionAid Ghana and partners also organised radio discussions for women contesting in the elections, giving the women the opportunity to reach a larger audience with their ideas and share their campaign messages. The experience sharing and the encouragements from the participants revived my interest to contest for the elections again. I felt encouraged to contribute to the development of my electoral area.”

The abuse did not stop but neither did Agatha. Though she continued to experience false allegations and threats of violence from her opponents and their followers, she did not allow that to prevent her from campaigning for the position of Assembly Woman for her community.

Her efforts and persistence paid off and at the end of the elections, she was declared a winner!

Agatha Achiaa is now the elected assembly woman for Atronie in the Sunyani Municipality in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana

ACTIONAID GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEMBER AND FRIENDS DONATE BOOKS TO COMMUNITIES

Last year, a member of ActionAid's General Assembly, Martin Addison, and his friends, donated 45 books to ActionAid to be given to students from our sponsored communities to enhance reading among them.

They included literature on African and European studies and folklores, as well as dictionaries, puzzles and games. According to Martin, the habit of reading, when cultivated, will help children expand their knowledge and insight.

“Reading good books exposes them to very good things that can inform their way of thinking and that is likely to result in very good habits. Reading widely will also help them to learn more beyond their immediate environment and become very useful for the society.”

The books have been donated to three schools in



**Pupils of Tadamuni
Primary School hold
up some of the books**

ActionAid communities in the Northern Region of Ghana: The Vittin Methodist School, the Tadamuni Primary School in Bimbilla and the Vittin Senior High School.

PRACTICAL TRAININGS FOR PRACTICAL RESULTS

HOW AAG'S TOOLKITS ARE REDUCING CHILD MARRIAGE

AAG believes that to end child marriage, communities must be informed and educated on what constitutes child marriage and preventive measures. A major part of doing this is engaging in sensitisation meetings and workshops with stakeholders.



Lydia illustrating her picture to participants and making her stand to end child marriage.

UNICEF's Child Protection Toolkit is one of the most essential tools used by educators during their sessions in communities that the campaign is being implemented in.

In March, ActionAid Ghana and its partners organised training programmes for selected community members on using AAG's recorded drama on child marriage as well as UNICEF's Child Protection toolkit. The community members comprised Unit Committee members, religious leaders, assembly members and executive members of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs).

The objective of the training was to sensitise community members on child marriage so they can, in turn, continue to provide vital and informative education on child marriage. One person who has benefitted from the training sessions is Lydia Basimtali from the Nayoko No. 1 community in the Upper East region.

According to Lydia, ActionAid's recorded drama on child marriage provided a different perspective on the issue of child marriage, especially in educating her on

what the laws of Ghana regard as child marriage.

"The recorded drama has educated me on child marriage and I take the campaign very seriously. The drama informed me on how marrying children who are underage is punishable by law since the future of girls is

destroyed. I am going to ensure that perpetrators are made to face the law. I was very sad after watching the drama. The girl in the drama was such a promising girl who had good dreams but the marriage just wasted her and made her a laughing stock. I will stand against this old practice that robs girls of their potential"

Demonstrating one of the cards from UNICEF's Child Protection Facilitation toolkit,

Lydia reiterated how crucial the Toolkit has been to her discussions with community members.

"The tools used in the training have made it easier for me to talk to members in my community about child marriage. The pictures show every day occurrences in this community." Between March to May this year, 120 members of community structures within the Bongo, Binduri and the Bawku West Districts of the Upper East region have been equipped with knowledge, strategies and skills on how to effectively engage with girls, boys, parents, school authorities, traditional leaders, community members and other stakeholders in combatting child marriage.

The members have also been introduced to government agencies in their districts that are responsible for the protection of children so they can report attempts and incidences of child marriages to appropriate agencies for action to be taken.

LOCAL RESIDENTS USE PRRP TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNITIES



Mrs Ago at the PRRP meeting in her region

The Volta Region is ActionAid's newest programme region. Working in the Adaklu and Kadjebi districts, AAG has been partnering with community change agents in the fight against poverty. One of the ways of empowering people living in poverty and encouraging community members to take charge of their lives and hold governments to account for the provision of their rights is the use of the Participatory Reflection Review Process (PRRP).

PRRP is a core component of AAG's approach to eradicating poverty and ensuring development and right realisation. It refers to periodic monitoring sessions such as interviews and discussions with our partners, sponsored communities and right holders on the progress of our work. Hence in the Volta Region, PRRP is an integral part of AAG's work to monitor our performance and the expectations of right holders. Working with AAG's partner in the region, Network of Communities in Development (NOCID), AAG began an extensive PRRP meeting with members of the Dzamlome, Wawaso, Kosamba, Atakofi and Akum communities in the Volta Region in the first quarter of the year.

The PRRP meetings provide community members with essential information on the progress by government and local authorities in addressing the developmental and human rights needs of communities.

A participant, Mrs Abo, shared her experience "I am a 48 year old from the Dzamlome community. I am very thankful to ActionAid for all the activities that have been approved for implementation in the Kadjebi District in the year 2017. I am however not happy that some of my expectations have not been met in the budget. I was also expecting that our kindergarten structure could have been captured for reconstruction. I am however hopeful that it would come to realization in the subsequent years. Once again I say thank you ActionAid."

Following this, AAG and NOCID organised a District PRRP on 23rd March, at the Kadjebi District Assembly Hall attended by 58 participants from the various communities.

The District meeting was intended to bring community members and local authorities such as the Ghana Education Service (GES), the District Assembly, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police, (DoVVSU), National Commission For Civic Education (NCCE), Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) together to discuss their developmental priorities and strategies government will be using to address their community needs.

Following the discussions, Cecelia Bani expressed her delight at being given the platform to influence the plans and budgets of government and local authorities in the development of her community.

"I am Cecilia Bani from Todome. I am very grateful to be part of this meeting. I want to say that, ActionAid is helping most of us to become more assertive in our communities as a result of the numerous interventions. I want to add that I am very happy that many activities have been approved for Kadjebi this year especially those to support COMBAT to do their work even more effectively.

Since COMBAT was introduced into my village, there has been relative peace in the community. I am also happy about the other activities that are going to help in the development of the communities in particular and the District as a whole. I pledge that we give all our support in the implementation of the activities so that the objectives would be realized."



Local authorities and community members in group discussions during the meeting

ACTIONAID TRAINS LOCAL WOMAN TO WIN BEST FARMER AWARD



Rebecca Amponsah, winner of the 2016 Best Female Farmer in the Tain District holds her certificate

A large part of AAG's work involves working with smallholder women farmers to combat the adverse effects of climate change and ensure food security amidst rural farmers.

For more than 26 years, AAG has been improving the lives of rural women farmers who constitute over 80% of food producers in Sub-Saharan Africa (International Business Times) and yet are the most affected by climate change due to poverty and their lack of access to modern farming practices.

This involves sensitisation and training engagements with smallholder farmers to enhance their produce, challenging patriarchal structures that prevent women from owning and using land, working with the Ministry

of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) to train Extension Volunteers.

One beneficiary of our work is Rebecca Amponsah, a 43 year old farmer from the Tain District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana

Rebecca, with trainings on improving her farming practice provided by AAG and our partners, Social Development and Improvement Agency (SODIA), was awarded the Best Woman Farmer in her district.

She shared her progress with AAG

"I am very delighted to be recognised this year as the best woman farmer in the district. I hope this will motivate other women to put in extra work as I have during the past year. When I started as a farmer, I was working with my husband. Last year I attended the celebration with my husband and I saw a woman awarded by ActionAid. By then I was working independently alongside my husband but was not much. I then decided to put in extra work as I admired the work of the winner last year. Now here I am. I have 5 acres of maize, an acre of cassava, 2 acres of yam, 2 acre of cocoyam as well as carrot. I also have 2 acres of pepper and 7 acres of ground nut as at the time of selection. I am also a mother of six! I want to encourage my fellow women to work harder as farming pays. Now I am able to support my family financially so women should also see themselves as more than capable farmers." – story Bernard Yeboah, SODIA Programme Officer

ACTIONAID TO CLOSE DOWN NABULI CAMP

AAG has been working with stakeholders on the issue of witchcraft accusations and the witch camps in the Northern Region. In 2014, AAG worked with partners and national stakeholders to close down the Bonyasi Witch Camp and has been engaging in sensitisation meetings with community members and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection as well as the Regional House of Chiefs to address the issue of witchcraft banishment and accusations.

In 2016, AAG developed a communication strategy to support the implementation of a roadmap for the reintegration programme. The strategy was inspired by AAG's current communication strategy, and our HRBA development framework, to guide our efforts in

addressing the increasing rate of witchcraft accusations and related human rights abuses in the region. Following this, on 19th April, 2017, the Reintegration Committee (RC) for alleged witches held their quarterly meeting in Tamale.

The objectives of the meeting were to review the committee's work in 2016; their successes, shortfalls, challenges and lessons learnt in order to guide decisions and interventions for 2017. The Committee also met to urge members to bring on board new ideas, innovations and renewed commitment to make the work of the committee better and results-oriented. From the meeting it was realized that 36 alleged witches were reintegrated in 2016 and more than 10

women were stopped from being banished by interventions of the RC. As a result, public awareness of human rights laws increased.

Currently, the Reintegration Committee is working with the Regional House of Chiefs and other development agencies both state and private on the launch of a new road map for 2017-2021 as well as partnering with the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to include the needs of the camps in their Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs).



Azara Wumbei, an alleged witch, stands outside her hut at witches' camp, Picture credit: Louise Wateridge

AAG is working with government, traditional leaders and the National House of Chiefs to close down the Nabuli Witch Camp by the end of the year. Currently, there are five alleged witches' camps in the Northern Region following the closure of the Bonyasi Camp.

AAG has been collaborating with media partners to document the various challenges that face women

accused of witchcraft; including a partnership with an international photojournalist to highlight the plight of women living in the witch camps.

To facilitate the process, AAG and its partners, Songtaba, have profiled 34 women at the Nabuli Camp to gather detailed information on them facilitate the dialogues with their families and communities.

NANGODI WOMEN GET A REPRIEVE FROM UNPAID CARE WORK



The Care Centre before at the commissioning

ActionAid is reducing time women spend in caring for their children and making it possible for them to engage in other productive activities to support their families. In the Nangodi community AAG has constructed a Child Care Centre to reduce the burden of child care on women in the Nabdam District of the Upper East Region.

The GH¢38,000.00 facility is expected to accommodate 30 children and is equipped with an office, bathroom, teaching and learning materials, a resting room with mattresses, carpets, mats, and furniture. The construction of the centre forms part of ActionAid's Promoting Opportunities for Women's

Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project.

Funded by the European Commission, the five-year POWER project is intended to contribute to the economic empowerment of 6,000 rural women in Ghana. POWER is also reducing the burden of Unpaid Care Work (UCW) on women.

"Women and girls who live in poverty sometimes forget that they have a basic human right to education, decent work and leisure time. Instead, due to the burden of Unpaid Care Work, women spend all their time attending to daily household activities. The purpose of the centre is to give women the time to engage in other productive activities", explains Alhassan Sulemana, ActionAid's Upper East Regional Programme Manager. Sulemana said: 'Policies must recognise the role of women and girls in the provision of unpaid care work, taking into account the need to reduce the drudgery of unpaid care work and redistribute it to include men and other family members, thus laying the basis for true gender equality.'

The Nangodi community is the sixth child-care centre in the Upper East region ActionAid has constructed or renovated.

2,078 SCHOOL-DROPOUTS TO ENTER FORMAL EDUCATION



Graduates of the Complementary Basic Education hold their certificates

Over two thousand children have graduated from ActionAid Ghana's Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programme in the Mamprusi East District of the Northern Region. Working with people living in poverty in our operational regions, AAG prioritises education and access to quality education.

Many children across the country drop out of school for various reasons and without support, are unable to re-enter the formal education stream. Since education is a crucial factor for poverty eradication, AAG implements a number of interventions to ensure access to education is available for all children. One of such interventions is the Complementary Basic Education (CBE), which AAG implements in three districts; The Nanumba North district in the Northern Region and in the Atebubu and Banda districts in the Brong Ahafo region.

The CBE programme is an intensive 9-months out-of-school intervention that provides education in the local dialects for children between the ages of 8-14 years who have dropped out of school. The CBE programme aims to reintegrate out-of-school children into the education flow again.

Funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) as well as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with assistance from government, ActionAid has been implementing the third cycle of the CBE programme in the communities that have a high illiteracy and drop-out rates.

The CBE programme has the objective of ensuring at least a 50% enrolment of females in the programme. Implemented in 66 communities with 85 classes, 425 local committee and School Management Committees (SMCs) and equipped with 85 facilitators in the Mamprusi East District, the Mamprusi East District CBE initially started with an 2,125 (1,211 girls, 914 boys) enrolment.

At the end of the course, 2078 (1182 girls, 896 boys) out-of-school children have been graduated and will go on to continue formal education at the primary school level equipped with life skills, numeracy and illiteracy knowledge.

POWER Baseline reveals Unpaid Care Work as hindrance to women's development



Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Otiko Afisah Djaba, launching the baseline report

The Baseline Study used the POWER Programme Project Indicator Matrix along with a modified version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) for its quantitative household survey. It revealed that women spend close to 10 hours a day working, compared to 5.5 hours for men. Women spend more than 2.5 hours a day on housework. Women also

spend 90 minutes collecting fuelwood and water. It also found linkages between domestic violence and unpaid care work.

Recommendations by the study include the reduction of women's workload, as well as increasing women's income.



Deputy Netherlands Ambassador to Ghana, Caecilia Wijgers, speaking at the launch



Sumaila Abdul-Rahman, Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, joins members of the Women's Group in the Upper West region, for a group picture

COUNTRY DIRECTOR TOURS REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

In the first quarter of 2017, Country Director of ActionAid Ghana, Sumaila Abdul-Rahman, kicked off programme visits to all of AAG's implementation regions.

Joined by the Communications and PR Manager, Benjamin Kwesi Tawiah, the CD began his visits with the Upper West Regional Programme from 25th to 28th April, 2017. The visit had followed an earlier tour to the Northern regional programme.

The CD also met with three local partners in the region; Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD), Action for Sustainable Development (ASUDEV) and the Tumu Deanery Rural Integrated Development Programme (TUDRIDEP).

Women Reflection Action Groups, Farmer's Networks and members of the Community-Based Anti-violence Team (COMBAT) members also engaged in



COMBAT members in the Upper West region show their empowered stance in a group picture with ActionAid's Country Director

In the Upper West region, the team had fruitful interactions with the District Coordinating Director in the Sissala East District as well as members of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the Regional Criminal Investigations Department.

discussions with the team.

The team brought their visit to an end by paying a courtesy call to the Deputy Regional Minister, Alhassan Sulemana and held a meeting with the Regional Education Director.

Greater Accra

On Wednesday, 3rd May, 2017, the CD also toured the Greater Accra regional programme; meeting with two women's groups; the Obokwashie Women's Group and the Nsuobiri No. 2 Women's Group in some of our sponsorship communities in the Ga South District as well as members of Girls' Clubs.

The CD also met the Municipal Coordinating Director of the Ga South Assembly and the Municipal Coordinating Director. The Brong Ahafo and Volta regional programmes have also been visited by the CD to complete the tours.



Group discussions with partners and Women's Group leaders in the Upper West Region



GA/Volta Programme Officer facilitating a community meeting



CD meets the District Coordinating Director of the Ga South Assembly

COMMUNITY ON THE SPOT – Biema

As a marked feature of every edition of the Spotlight, we study an ActionAid community in detail, examining AAG interventions across and the community's appreciation of HRBA, AAG values and feminist principles. In this edition, we feature Biema, Brong Ahafo.

District Context

Biema is located in the Banda district of the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. It is one of the new districts created by government and its capital is Banda Ahenkro. It was carved out from the Tain District in 2012. Predominantly made up of a group known as Bandas, and Dagaabas forming the minority of its populace, the most common language spoken in the district is Nafara.

In the rural savannah and rural forest areas, poverty is most endemic, especially among food crop farmers,

who are mostly women. The Banda district has an agrarian economy, and hence community members take advantage of the vast arable land available for the cultivation of food and cash crops. Major food crops produced in the district include maize, groundnut, beans and yam. The major cash crops produced is cashew. However, smallholder farmers in the Banda district are faced with low extension coverage for their farming activities, high post-harvest losses and inadequate market access for their farm products. The extension service to farmer ratio in Banda is 1:1818. Again, large portions of the districts' land area are covered by grass and therefore crops are vulnerable to bush fires and other climate change effects.

Men still dominate in leadership positions and decision-making where political positions do not have adequate number of women. Out of the total population of 45,000 in Banda, 53% represent females. However, when it comes to peoples' representation at the district assemblies where major

decisions are taken, out of six assembly members in Banda, only one is a female. Violence and discrimination against women is also a major problem in the district.

Access to quality education is a right to all children of school-going age. However, many children especially girls, are out of school because of parental neglect, poverty, disabilities, and cultural practices that discriminate against girls. Although the Junior High School completion rates in Banda was 41% for girls in 2013, between the 2013/2014 academic year, 14 girls were reported pregnant in the 15 ActionAid partner



communities which could potentially lead to the termination of their education.

Also, poor school infrastructure and learning materials as well as inadequately trained teachers results in low quality education. As a result, the district reports an abysmal percentage of performance of students during the Basic Education Certificate Examination. Out of the 14 schools who participated in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) as at the end of the 2015/2016 academic year, only three schools have accommodation for their teachers as at July 2016.

Demography: Biema has an estimated population of 1,000, comprising 530 males and 470 females. It has a total number of 400 households, of which 15 are headed by females. The maximum household size is 23 and minimum household size is two with an average number of people per household to be 10. Mainly, the people of Biema are Julas. 45% of its population are children who fall below 18 years, 30% fall within the 18-40 age bracket and about 25% are above 40 years.

Religion and cultural practices: Majority of the population are Muslims. The people celebrate “krubi” as their festival and it is celebrated three days before “idr fetir”. Marriage occurs when a young man approaches a lady for an initial agreement. The man informs his parents, who, along with an elderly relative, visit the woman's family to ask for her hand with a bowl of kola nut and some head drinks, usually soft drinks. These drinks are given to the people around to bear witness to the fact that the said lady had been given out for marriage.

Social services and infrastructure: The community has one basic school (primary) and has now started its first Junior High School. The community is connected to the national electricity grid. As there is no market, community members go to the Nsawkaw Market in the district capital of Tain. The community has poor road network linking it to the district capital and only three households have in-house toilets, the rest use public toilets.

Community leadership and governance system: The people are governed by the chief who is known as the Odikro, they refer to their queen mother as Magazia however the Magazia is not usually included or invited to join in decision-making. Despite all this cultural structures, the Imam has a greater influence when it comes to decision-making in the community. The chief, elders and committee members with the Assemblyman and the Unit committee meet and deliberate on the issues affecting the people. Thereafter the entire community is called and told of the intended decision. This is finally discussed and agreed upon by every member present at that time.

Livelihood and poverty trends

Sources of livelihood: The main source of livelihood of the people is farming and sometimes engagement in petty trading such as; burning charcoal and “pito” a local drink.

Access and ownership of productive resources: Access and ownership of productive resources such as land, are mainly in the hands of men in the community.

Poverty trends: Mostly, women are poorer than their male counterparts in Biema as it is a patriarchal society.

RIGHTS ANALYSIS

Women's rights: The people of Biema have an understanding of human rights following ActionAid's entry into the community. However, incidence of domestic violence such as wife beatings, threats, punishment, abuse by in-laws, and child neglect on the part of men are common in the community. Women are usually forced to undergo four months widowhood rites full of torture and stress in the name of preserving culture. Usually, incidences of violence are not reported as a result of fear of losing marriages on the part of women.

On women's participation in decision making, women are not fairly represented in the political sphere; not even participating in decision making at the family and community levels. Though women farm with their husbands, usually the husbands controlled the proceeds from the farms. Women in Biema are organised into women groups but the groups are not very strong. Generally, community members, especially women, do not receive much support from government neither are they aware of government policies for their empowerment. The women identified lack of knowledge of the Domestic Violence Act and lack of self-confidence as some of the challenges they face in the community.

The coping strategy for the women in Biema has been engagement in petty trading in groundnuts, "pito" and charcoal.

Some of the indicators of change identified were COMBAT and opinion leaders getting violence-related cases settled; peace and understanding among married couples; increase in income levels of women; effective contributions of women at community meetings; more women contesting to be representatives at Assembly elections and women invited to meetings on critical issues.

Right to Education

The community has one primary school located about 100 meters away from the community. The total number of pupils enrolled in the school is 224 (105 males, and 119 girls). The schools have 11 teachers, four are trained and seven are untrained. Out of the 11 teachers, five are females and six are males. Ten of the teachers are paid by government and one is paid by

the community. There were toilet facilities in the school (one for girls, one for boys).

The school environment is good for effective teaching and learning but classrooms, textbooks and furniture are inadequate for both the JHS and primary school are inadequate. There is only one teacher at the JHS level, making teaching and learning difficult. Government's role in providing education in the community is visible currently, construction of new block is ongoing and the Ghana School Feeding Programme is being implemented effectively in the community.

With these facilities and the shortcomings, the community considered this right as partly fulfilled. The people could easily identify Parents, Teachers, District Assembly, PTA/SMC and GES as some of the duty bearers to ensure the fulfilment of their educational rights.

The school has a PTA which is functional and meets every term. The membership of the executives are ten; comprising seven males and three females. Out of these, five are literate while five are not. The community's understanding of the importance of



Discussions with School PTA executives on improving basic education

education by parents is fair but the real issue had to do with the parental irresponsibility, especially on the part of the men.

Strategies implemented by community members of Biema are maintaining enrolment at the community JHS through levying parents to pay allowance to the only teacher at the school.

The PTA has also been lobbying the District Education office to post teachers to the school and also considering the option of the school into the government stream.

The people of Biema set the following as indicators of change within the next period: JHS teachers being paid by government, children passing BECE to continue to SHS, increase in enrolment and leaving no child at home during school hours. Also, it is expected that all children in the schools are to be computer literate

Food Rights and Climate Change

This right was considered as partially fulfilled. Though the people considered satisfactory extension service delivery in the community, they attributed partial fulfilment of the rights to include high cost of farm inputs and lack of credit to expand their farms.

The people of Biema also have inadequate access to market for both cash crops (cashew) and food crops, as a result of the work of "middlemen".

Other challenges include the effects of climate change and its adaptations, i.e. changed rain fall patterns and rampant bushfires in the community. Bush fires mostly affect cashew famers. However, much has not been seen in regards to what government is doing to promote agriculture in the community. Poor road networks to towns and the districts results in high transport fares to send their foodstuffs to marketing centres.

Indicators of change were identified as increase in farm yields and income levels and cultivation of bigger farms to realise more income.

Right to Water and Sanitation

The right to water was considered partially fulfilled by the community because the community had three boreholes as their water sources. Two of them were constructed by the government and the remaining one was done by the community. There is a Water Committee responsible for its regular maintenance. Water in Biema, though not treated, is considered safe for drinking because no water borne diseases have been identified yet. Water sources are within the community and it is transported by using buckets and pans.

However, the challenge had been that, when the boreholes break down, mainly women and children have to queue to access water especially, in the dry season.

Right to Health

This right was considered not fulfilled by the community since the community has no health facilities and the people normally access healthcare at the Banda Boase Public Clinic, which is about a kilometre away. There were no Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) in the community to take care of maternal and child health services. The people have to hire public vehicles to transport emergency cases to Nsawkaw, the district capital of Tain, which is about eight kilometres away. The people understand that provision of health services is their right and government is supposed to provide this services for them to fulfil this right.

Other rights

Right to participate in decision making

While the women and the men's groups considered this right as not fulfilled, the youth considered it as fulfilled. Issues of low confidence levels of some women and high intimidation from the males were noted as challenges facing women in participating in decision making. To change the situation, women should be invited to meetings on critical issues. More women should be assisted to contest in Assembly elections.

YOUTH

The youth population in Biema is estimated to be 200. The youth are organised into five groups with each having at least 30 members. The youth participate and give their views and suggestions during community meetings where their views are very much counted, however they are not aware of any government policy



Youth group in focus

for their development. Out of 200 youth, only about 25% of them are employed as farmers, drivers and mechanics while the remaining 75% are unemployed.

SPONSORSHIP

The community has been on the sponsorship scheme for the past 8 years. It currently has 118 pupils on the scheme, comprising 63 boys and 55 girls. The sponsorship scheme is managed by 4-member committee (3 males, 1 female). The community thus considered sponsorship scheme as very useful as they mentioned 2-unit KG block and recreational facilities as some of the benefits from the scheme which is helping to keep their children safe in school.

Biema on HRBA

The people of Biema have are conscious and aware of their rights. The people identified duty bearers for the respect, protection and fulfilment of the various rights analysed. In each of the rights, they were able to come out with required actions, change indicators and their responsibilities to effect the change they seek. These would make it easy for the tracking of the required changes in the community. However, they need to be supported to develop advocacy and lobbying skills to enable them to effectively advocate and engage duty bearers for the realisation of their rights.

On poverty analysis, most women have been considered poorer as compared with men in Biema. 15 of the 400 households in the community were headed by females. Issues of male dominance prevails in the community, therefore, working to strengthen the activities of COMBAT and advocating for livelihood interventions especially for women would be

necessary for the total abolition of harmful traditional practices such as widowhood rights. Again, a focus on women's participation in decision making at the district level is very necessary and can be done through confidence building interventions and direct motivation for women and girls' participation in decision making. On education, with an estimated 45% of the population being children, investments and resources need to be provided to enhance access to basic and quality education. Literacy rate for girls has been considered to be higher than the boys, as has been noted predominantly at the primary school level as the community has just now started the JHS. Cases of teenage pregnancies give an indication of the existence of child marriage in the community. This, as well as unpaid care work disadvantage girls in the community because it brings their education to an abrupt end, enhancing disparity at the education level between girls and boys.

The Biema community is also one of the child marriage project communities ActionAid is working in. Attention also needs to be focused to ensure children's rights to good and adequate school infrastructure and other Training and Learning Materials (TLMs) for effective teaching and learning. Inadequate extension service delivery and activities of "middlemen" also needs to be looked at. Education on CRSA would enable farmers to effectively manage climate change and adopt new strategies to combat its effects on their harvest. Non-existence of household toilets in the community poses a health threat. ActionAid is further taking the advantage of the existence of youth groups to utilise their talents and potentials, to be used as drivers of change in the community.

FROM ACTIVITY TO ACTIVISM

ActionAid launches Activista in B/A for youth activism

The Brong Ahafo chapter of Activista was launched on Thursday 31st August 2017 in Sunyani in the Brong Ahafo region. The much awaited launch which brought together 60 youth to represent 26 districts in the region was hosted at the Bob Pierce conference hall in Sunyani. The launch was attended by the President of the Queen mother's Association of Ghana and her entourage, the Director of the Regional Youth Authority and representatives from development sector to foster a rapport between the movement and stakeholders represented.

The Brong Ahafo Regional Programme Manager of ActionAid Ghana, Melody Azinim, gave the welcome address on the occasion and explained the need for Activista Brong Ahafo. Other guests were from youth led organisations and groups within the region who share in the Activista vision. Messages of support and solidarity were shared by youth groups and partners to commemorate the event.

The launch of the regional chapter climaxed the district by district mobilisations that were led by the network's coordinators in the region. The rise of Activista in B/A is

aimed at identifying the pressing issues faced by youth in the region, mobilising youth to address social issues and organising with allies to redress them. High rate of drugs and substance abuse and other social vices presently continue to plague the youth in the region.

At the launch, there were detailed presentations on Activista, an introduction to the Activista Ghana national plan and the development of a short term Brong Ahafo plan with inputs by the members. Activista B/A members networked and proposed communication platforms and channels for impact.



Activista Members in a group picture with traditional leaders

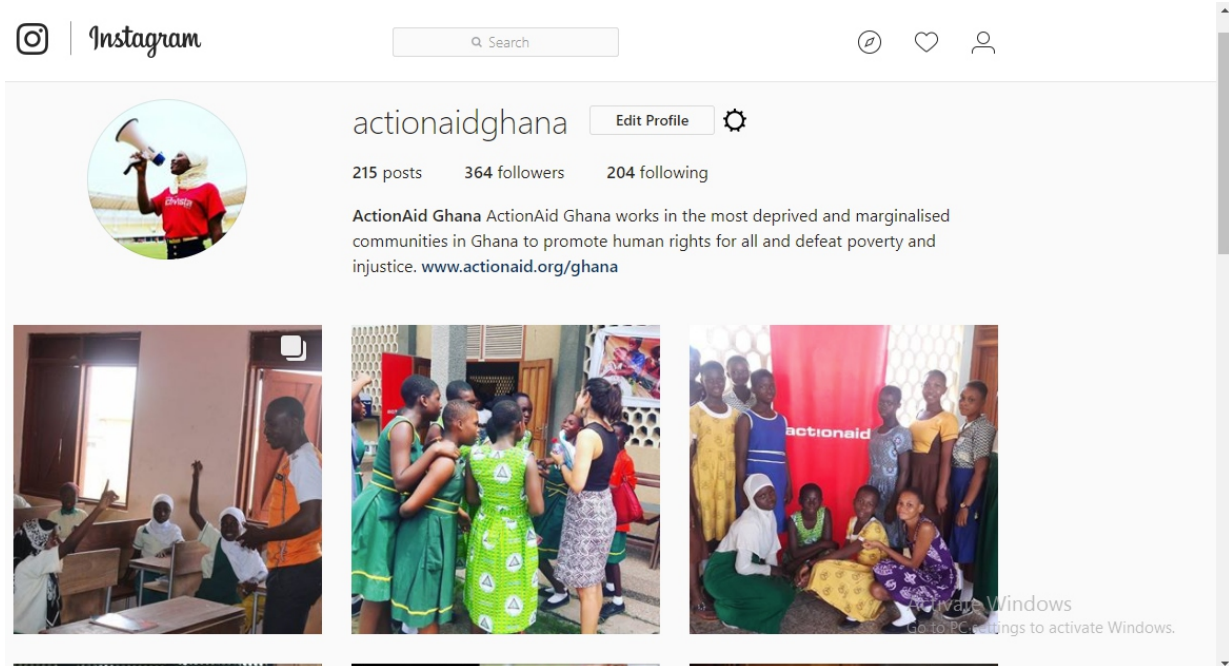


Traditional leaders at the launch

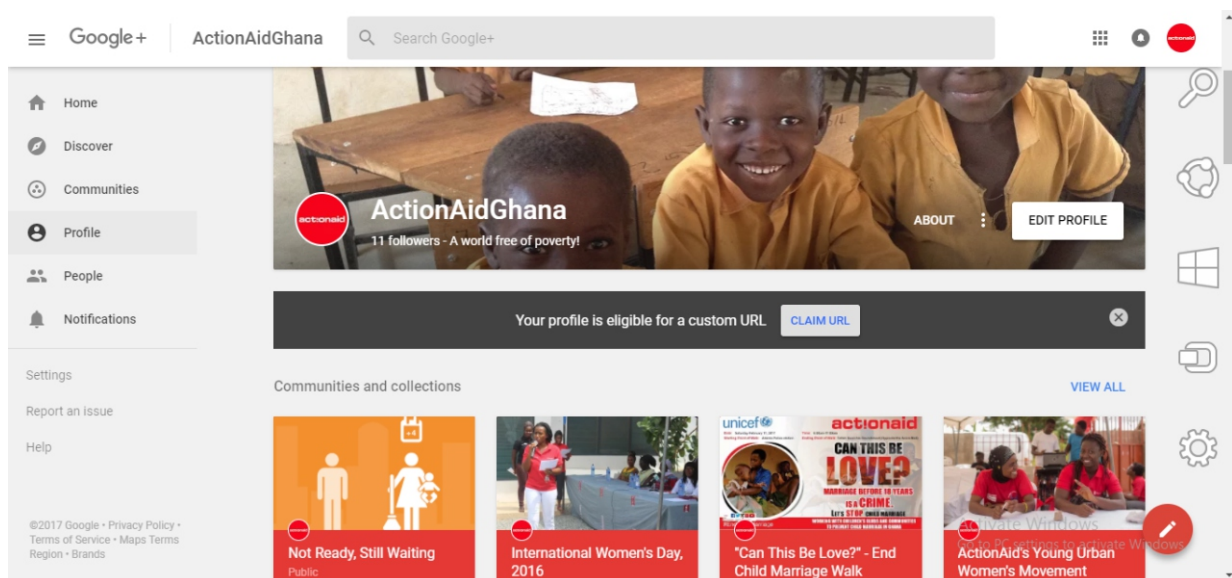
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Social Media Storm



Instagram



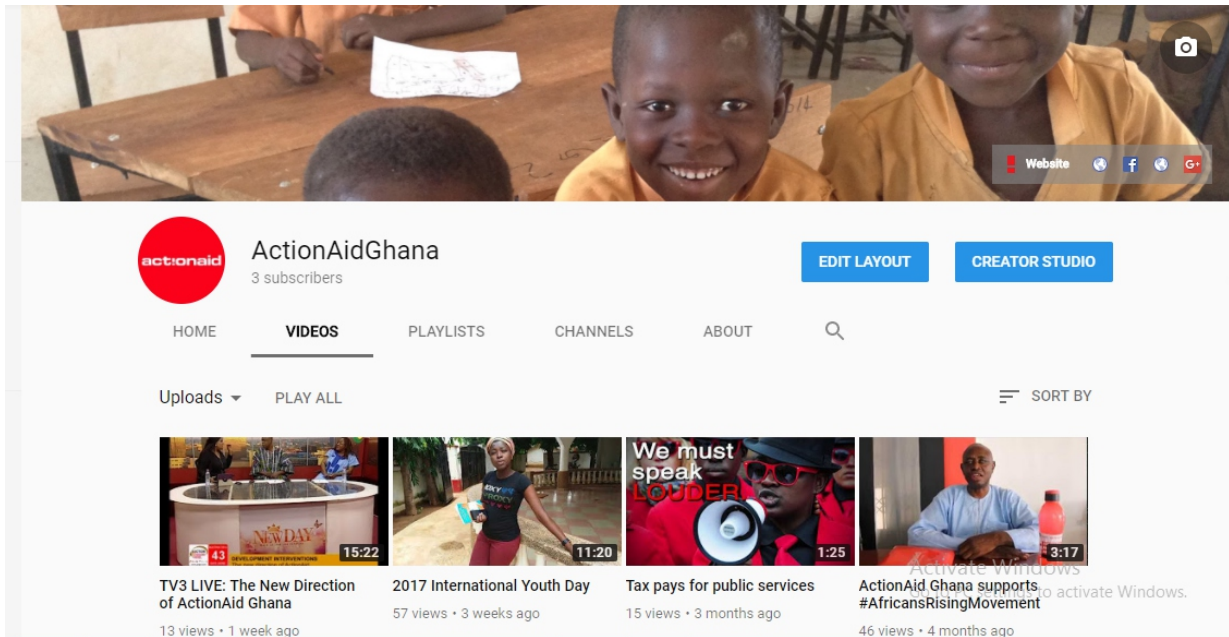
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