

# Changing lives with AfriKids

Summer 2023 Update





# The difference you've made

The impact of your support in 2023 so far

Thank you so much for choosing to support AfriKids to bring happier childhoods and brighter futures in some of the world's poorest communities this year. With your help, AfriKids has touched the lives of **33,000 more women, children and their families so far this year - in some of the toughest conditions we've ever worked in**. We are excited to share with you here the difference we've made together and look forward to answering any questions you might have after reading it.

People reached in 2023 so far

- **29,100 children** with quality education,
- **532 babies, children and adults** with improved healthcare,
- **2,500 people** to stop to harmful practices towards children and empower the next generation with the agency to protect themselves from harm - including **360 children with disabilities**.
- **750 mothers** with business training and loans to start businesses that provide a better life for their family,

Empowering the change-makers

Since January this year, with your funding the team have been busy launching our award-winning programmes in 60 new communities. These communities are all based in three new districts: Builsa South, Binduri and Mamprugo-Moagduri, all of which suffer from high levels of poverty, family sizes of up to 9 people per household, and limited access to basic rights such as safety and education.

Having completed our needs assessments in 2022, and with the buy in of local authorities, chiefs and headteachers to work with us for the benefit of their community, we spent the first quarter of 2023 conducting training of the key stakeholders. This includes mothers, teachers and healthcare professionals.

This year, 756 women from very poor families have been supported to start and grow businesses that provide for their families. Research shows that when women work, they spend on average 90% of their income on their family so they are undoubtedly the most important change-makers we work with. As we speak, they are learning skills such as saving and bookkeeping, and accessing small loans to get their businesses up and running. They are also being taught skills like soap-making, beekeeping and climate smart agriculture because 90% of the people in these districts rely on agriculture for their income and food and they desperately need to build their resilience to climate change in order to keep their children fed in school.

We have also trained 500+ teachers this year. Kindergarten teachers learned to use phonics to develop early language skills and classrooms were provided with play-based learning materials. Senior high teachers learned to deliver STEM education for girls so that they can access prosperous careers in STEM fields that are historically male-dominated. With just 35% of teachers adequately trained in these new districts, with children turning up to school to find no teacher at all, building the capacity of change-makers is essential. As a result of this training, 25,000 children are now receiving an improved education, including over 1,300 girls in STEM and 1,200 children learning over tablets in primary school.

In addition, we trained 260 healthcare professionals. Midwives trained by AfriKids are making 70+ home visits to provide one-to-one support for expecting mothers and new babies. This is vital for reducing infant and maternal mortality because many mothers do not feel able to travel for treatment due to long distances and stigma. We also conducted health screenings in schools to diagnose children who struggle with hearing or visual impairments, HIV/AIDs and malnutrition, and all highlighted children are being referred to health centres for immediate care.

## Monica's story



Monica, a 14 year old girl was abducted for forced marriage with one of her friends called Erica. During the journey to the abductor's house, Erica managed to escape but Monica couldn't free herself. Wanting to help her friend, Erica ran straight to her school and to the AfriKids Sexual and Reproductive Health Club which both her and Monica were members of. Together with her classmates, Erica mobilised the Chief of their village and AfriKids to rescue Monica from her captors. With the support of the Department of Social Welfare and the police, Monica was successfully rescued and put into protection in temporary shelter where she received counselling to prevent trauma. Today, Monica is now safely back home with her family and back in school.



What AfriKids is doing in our communities is overwhelming. In fact, fathers do not have time with their children health and so for AfriKids to organize this screening for the children and other benefits like the food, sanitary pads are something we cannot thank you enough. God bless AfriKids”.

**- Mr. Alitu Amidu, a parent**

### Supporting the highest risk children

Dramatic rises in the cost of basic goods has led to grave concerns over children's well-being in northern Ghana. 82% of children are anaemic and 33% are chronically malnourished (vs 19% in the south of Ghana). The dry seasons are lengthening in these regions where 90% of people here rely on agriculture for their livelihood and food so it's no surprise that increased crop failures are pushing more families further into poverty, and more children into child labour and early marriage when they should be in school.

Families used to find support in schools which provided meals at lunchtime, but this year the Government stopped the School Feeding Programme, removing much of the incentive for children to go to school in the first place. We are seeing more children dropping out as a result.

There is therefore an urgent need to identify the children who are most at-risk of dropping out of school and support them to stay. So far, we have identified 2,440 children who are at high-risk, and we will be providing them with bicycles to reduce travel time to school, food parcels, uniforms, shoes, schoolbooks and counselling, particularly for children who have fled conflict zones. We have also identified 718 children who are out of school and put on catch-up classes that give 9 weeks of intense classes as a stepping-stone into formal schooling. We hope to reverse drop-out rates and ensure all children have the chance to learn and break their cycle of poverty. In addition, their mothers are also being referred to our livelihoods programme to improve their income and opportunity.

**More than 80% of children with disabilities or their parents had been abused by others as a result of their condition.**

We are also thrilled to tell you that we opened our fifth physiotherapy clinic in one of the new districts this quarter. Here in Mamprugo-Moagduri more than 80% of children with disabilities or their parents had been abused by others as a result of their condition. Our clinic offers a safe space for families and supports children to sit, stand and walk so that they can gain respect in their community rather than being ostracised. Our clinic is the only service of its kind.

### Girls' sexual and reproductive health

In times of economic crises, girls are often the first to lose out. Family poverty leads to forced early marriage and teenage pregnancy. That's why AfriKids' Adolescent Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights centres aim to provide a safe space, free from stigma, for girls to learn about their rights and to hear how they can protect themselves from harm. Sexual and reproductive health is a largely unspoken topic in northern Ghana so when girls start their periods or become pregnant at a young age, they often have nowhere to turn. Held in schools and led by mentors trained by AfriKids, our clubs educate girls on mental health, sexually transmitted diseases, gender-based violence and menstruation. The club members then use drama to bring it to life for other children, holding plays in the community so that the message is disbursed far and wide.

We are also providing sanitary pads for the poorest girls so that they don't have to miss school on their period. In some of the new communities we are working in girls are being forced into 'transactional sex', a practice whereby girls have sex with older men in exchange for sanitary pads, food and money. A simple gift of a reusable sanitary pad makes an enormous difference to a girl's life in northern Ghana.

### Challenges

1. Conflict in Bawku has caused delays to our programme roll-out in neighbouring district Binduri, one of the three new districts we are expanding into this year. Sadly, 21 primary teachers that we have trained this year were forced to flee the area. A further 6 STEM teachers and 2 kindergarten teachers have been transferred out of the district by the Ghana Education Service. We are seeking to re-train new teachers to make up for the loss.

2. Research shows that during the cost-of-living crisis, donors to charities have chosen to support their existing portfolio of NGOs rather than find new ones, with many still focussing on UK causes after Covid-19. AfriKids is feeling the effects of this shift and raising our needed £2 million this year is proving challenging as much relies on new donors. We are therefore so grateful that you chose to continue supporting us to help us be there for families who we have promised to help.



I did not want my daughter to be absent from school but the current economic condition is forcing me to do that. We have no food, no ingredients to cook and this is the only way we can survive. I wish things were better so that she does not absent herself from school because I know this is affecting her education’.

**- A mother's feelings about absencing her daughter from school to work.**

# Development in northern Ghana

## Tracking development indicators in the region

20 years ago when AfriKids was born in dusty remote villages of northern Ghana, 1 in every 7 children were dying before their 5th birthday and 8 in 10 families lived in poverty. 20 years on, 1 in 15 children die before their 5th birthday and 6 in 10 families live in poverty. Northern Ghana is making progress and our 20th Anniversary is a time to look back at the difference we have seen. The below indicators give a snapshot of the change that children have experienced over the last two decades - both the promising and not so promising.




|  |  |                      |
|--|--|----------------------|
| <b>Education</b>   | Literacy rate among women aged 15 years+               |                      |
|   | <b>41.5%</b><br>2021                                   | <b>40.6%</b><br>2011 |
| <b>Health</b>  | % of women aged 15-19 who have had a live birth        |                      |
|   | <b>6.2%</b><br>2022                                    | <b>8%</b><br>2014    |
| <b>Child Protection</b>  | Proportion of population 5-14 yrs in economic activity |                      |
|  | <b>5.8%</b><br>2021                                    | <b>23.4%</b><br>2010 |

Table: Comparison of indicators over time in the Upper East Region of northern Ghana where AfriKids has worked for 20 years.

|                   |                 |  |
|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| 41.5%             | 29.4%           | Literacy rate among women aged 15 years+               |
| 6.2%              | 17.5%           | % of women aged 15-19 who have had a live birth        |
| 5.8%              | 9%              | Proportion of population 5-14 yrs in economic activity |
| <b>Upper East</b> | <b>Savannah</b> |  |

Table: Comparison of indicators from 2021 in the Upper East Region where AfriKids has worked for 20 years vs the Savannah region where AfriKids hasn't worked.

### 20 years on...

Two brothers, Sunday and Joe, arrived at AfriKids' foster home 20 years ago. Since then, they have been the jokers of the AfriKids family. Supported through school, Sunday (left) is now a chef at Bolgatanga's top hotel. Like many of the children who are supported by AfriKids, Sunday and Joe still play a huge part in our work, frequently visiting the foster home to provide their support to other children living in care. The photo shows them pictured today and 20 years ago.



## M'Pusiah (Thank you) and looking ahead

We are incredibly grateful for your generous financial backing and compassion towards the families of northern Ghana this year. Your donation has been a lifeline to families in communities we have never reached before, in levels of poverty that the organisation has not experienced before. As a team, we are learning every day and we hope you will stay with us as we expand our reach in these new districts and give more families the opportunities they deserve to thrive. Together, over the next three years, we will inspire 2,000 mothers to improve their income, bring quality education to 48,000 children, healthcare to 61,000 people, and child protection for 90,000 people.

Thank you for being such an influential partner in the making of these childrens' stories and the development of northern Ghana.