

# **Challenging Heights**

## **2010 Annual Report**



*“To whom much is given, much is expected”*

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## **Executive Summary**

In 2010, Challenging Heights recorded many successes, with an increase in the number of children we reached. 1,195 children were supported across the organisation's programs, compared with 927 children in 2009.

In January, 2010, a woman was given a three-year jail sentence for child trafficking. It was through Challenging Heights' work that this woman was caught and prosecuted. It was the first successful prosecution under the 2005 Human Trafficking Act, which involves internal trafficking.

One of our oldest programs, the Evening School grew from 70 students to 100. In 2010, the success of the Evening School was seen in the improvements in the beneficiaries' grades.

70 children were supported under the Child Trafficking Survivors Support Project. These children had their school fees paid for 12 months and were given educational supplies such as books, bags, uniforms and shoes. Mothers of these children were also supported through education on alternative livelihood. Across this program and others, 77 women were supported with micro finance to develop businesses.

Enrolments in Challenging Heights' School in Sankor, Winneba grew from 353 in 2009 to 435 in 2010. The school's materials and infrastructure were also improved. New textbooks and furniture were bought and construction begun on three new classrooms and a block of latrines.

Challenging Heights' Anti-Slavery Project resulted in 15 children being rescued from slavery in fishing on the Volta Lake. On top of this number, 10 Burkinabe children were intercepted whilst being trafficked from Burkina Faso to Cote d'Ivoire. These children were rehabilitated, re-integrated into their communities and supported in school. Challenging Heights' involvement with the National Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour in Cocoa also continued with 15 sensitisations held in cocoa farming communities.

We have established several Children's Rights Clubs under our various programs. These clubs teach children about the Millennium Development Goals and human rights issues in a supportive environment. We now have a total of 21 clubs, with approximately 30 children in each.

Our sports program continued to be successful with 80 children participating in football, volleyball, athletics and other activities. This program's successes were seen both on and off the field, with participants showing improvements in self-esteem, leadership and school performance.

Challenging Heights held an Annual Health Day in May 2010. This was in collaboration with the Effutu Municipal Health Directorate. Dr. Helene Hofler provided health care to 54 children, ranging from 3 to 13 years of age. Some

of the health issues presented by the children included malaria, skin rashes, ringworm, fever, anemia, headaches, joint pain, ear and eye infections, and diarrhea. During the event, the doctor trained school staff on first aid administration, dealing effectively with sick children, and knowing when a medical referral is necessary.

Our Women's Human Rights project continued in 2010, reaching 500 girls and young women. These women were educated in areas such as reproductive health rights, HIV/AIDS and child labour and trafficking.

In 2010, we also began several new projects. The Inclusive Education for Children Found in the Worst Forms of Child Labour provided literacy and vocational training for 110 children.

Another new program, the Remedial School, aims to restore hope to young people who, because of their backgrounds in child labour, were unable to successfully complete school. We have so far identified 170 children for this school, with classes beginning in 2011.

We began plans with the American Jewish World Service for a volunteer partnership. These plans will see two groups of volunteers come to Challenging Heights in 2011 to work on construction projects.

Work also began on the planning and construction of Hovde House, a shelter that will eventually have the capacity to house 65 children who are rescued from the worst forms of child labour. This is a very exciting project, which, once constructed, will substantially increase Challenging Heights' capacity to help the survivors of child slavery.

Throughout the year we also carried out community sensitisations. At these events parents, children, community leaders and others were educated in issues such as the dangers of child trafficking and the worst forms of child labour and the benefits of education, family planning, reproductive health, malaria control, treatment and referral, sanitation and general health. Across our programs, we held 45 sensitisations, and an estimated 10,000 people were reached.

The sensitisations, along with Challenging Heights other programs, has led to a dramatic increase in awareness of the criminal nature of child trafficking. This can be seen in the increase in the number of cases reported to Challenging Heights and the police by members of the community.

Challenging Heights' profile in the national and international communities continued to grow in 2010. We received extensive media coverage of our events and programs. Our Executive Director, James Kofi Annan had more than 20 articles and interviews published on the topics of the worst forms of child labour, education, child trafficking and other issues affecting children.

During 2010, Challenging Heights received a number of international visitors. One high profile visitor was the singer Jason Mraz who travelled with Challenging Heights staff to the Volta Lake and to Challenging Heights School in Winneba.

Mr Annan travelled to the United States of America three times during 2010 where he spoke to many communities, schools, universities and churches. He also spoke at the 2010 Free The Slaves Awards in Los Angeles. Challenging Heights work was showcased as the best example of what the Freedom Awards can do for laureates. These engagements increased Challenging Heights' international support base.

None of Challenging Heights' successes would have been possible without the help of the many donors and supporters. A number of our funding partners continued their support in 2010, while several new partners also joined us. Our inclusion in the GlobalGiving website led to a highly successful donation campaign in September, where we were able to raise enough money to sponsor 170 children in school.

During 2010, we also faced some challenges. The work Challenging Heights does is not without risk, and in the past year Challenging Heights and its Executive Director received death threats from those who oppose our mission to end child slavery. To combat this risk, Challenging Heights' staff underwent training in risk assessment and security management.

Another challenge we faced was one of resources. Most of our programs had more potential beneficiaries than we were able to reach with the resources available.

Challenging Heights continues to focus on its goal of ending the worst forms of child labour. We believe this is achievable, so while we can congratulate ourselves on the hard work we have done in a very successful year, we are also focused on continuing to grow and help more children in 2011. In 2011, we hope to increase our programs and reach a target of 1,350 children in need.

## **Organisational Structure**

### **Board of Advisors**

#### **Outgoing Board Members:**

Challenging Heights outgoing board members. This board will cease in January 2011, with new board members selected in February 2011.

Ms Sheila Acquah-Asare – Chair

Ms Acquah-Asare brings to the board sound educational background, with a number of University degrees and practical training in organisational and systems development. She has over 20 years of practical experience in business development and a number of years on a number of boards.

Nafisatu Naa-Larmiokor Chinery

A gender expert, she is currently the Capacity Building Manager at the African Women's Development Fund. She is also an expert in livelihood options.

Emmanuel Kwame Mensah

Programs Officer at International Labor Organisation (ILO), he is an expert in child trafficking and child labour programs.

Joyce Odame

The Child Rights Programs Manager at Plan International in Ghana. She is an expert in children's rights issues, with over eight years of experience.

Emmanuel Otoo

Mr Otoo has several years experience in children's rights, child labour, organisational development and has worked in various capacities at Plan International, ILO, UNDP and Free the Slaves.

James Kofi Annan – Executive Director

Mr Annan is the founder of Challenging Heights. He worked in the Barclays Bank of Ghana for five years, ending as a manager.

### **Staff**

#### **Administrative Staff**

James Kofi Annan – Executive Director

Leah MacLennan – Development Officer

Cynthia Adjoa Annan – Administrator

Derrick Idan Frowne – Accounts Officer

#### **Programs Staff**

David Kofi Awusi – Programs Officer

Stephen Addo – Field Officer

Victor Debi Mensah – Educational Programs Manager

William Komla Mensah – Rescue Officer  
John Eduafo – Field Officer  
Rosemary Afedzie – Volunteer Services Co-ordinator  
Samuel Aidoo – Driver  
Daniel Addo – Driver

### **Teachers**

Rosemond Aikins  
Peace Yamoah  
Ajara Salifu  
Irene Sulemana  
Constance Afrifah Brobbey  
Veronica Alanyo  
Newlove Acquah  
Francis Dadzie  
Peter Akowasuapim Sam  
Alfred Mensah  
Mary Adokoh

### **Volunteers**

Anjala Kulasagaram  
Danielle Zielinski  
Kelli Leser  
Christiana Abernathy  
Azri Malek  
Asmah Fatehi  
Erika MacNeill  
Muhammad Zalganker  
John McAdam  
Abena Pokuaa  
Gina Ampomah  
Stephanie Kundrik  
Krystle Botermans  
Cynthia Werier  
Caitlin McKay

### **Funding Partners**

Global Fund for Children  
American Jewish World Service  
EMpower  
Free the Slaves  
Barclays Bank of Ghana  
Vodafone Foundation Ghana  
Hovde Foundation  
GlobalGiving.org

Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare  
Mothercare International School  
African Women's Development Fund



## **Programs**

### **Evening School**

Many children in the communities Challenging Heights works in don't have facilities at home to learn after school. This means the children don't do their homework and don't perform well. When this happens, they often become de-motivated which can lead to them dropping out and becoming at greater risk of trafficking and child labour. Challenging Heights identified this problem and established the Evening School to address it in 2006.

Classes are held from 4pm to 6pm on weekdays at Challenging Heights School in Sankor, Winneba. Teachers are present to help the students with any homework or assignments they have been given in class. Students are also given tutoring in any subjects that they are struggling in. On Fridays, the students take part in a health program where they play sport or are involved in singing and dancing. This helps unearth the children's talents and it keeps them occupied, preventing them from being engaged in child labour. These activities also help increase the children's self-esteem and develop social skills.

Under this project, the students are provided with materials such as uniforms, books, pens, pencils and footwear. Some also have their school fees paid.

In 2010, 100 children (45 boys and 55 girls) aged from 5 to 17 were supported in this program. A sensitisation program was also held where the parents, children and other community members were brought together. They were educated on the issues of child trafficking, child labour and the benefits of education.

During 2010 significant improvement was noted in the children who were part of the Evening School. For example, in Challenging Heights School, at least one in five of the best performing children in each class was a beneficiary of the program. Parents were so happy with the program they were asking for it to be expanded.

The Evening School is supported by the Global Fund for Children.

### **Child Trafficking Survivors Support Project**

This project helps children who have been trafficked and have escaped slavery without any outside assistance. Because these children were not rescued, they have no one to help them once they return to their communities and are therefore vulnerable to being returned to the worst forms of child labour. This project also looks at children who are at risk of being trafficked such as orphans and children whose older siblings have been trafficked.

To help these children we pay for them to go to school for one year. We establish networks for them with community leaders, teachers and ourselves at Challenging Heights to make them less vulnerable to trafficking.

In 2010, 70 children (38 boys, 32 girls) aged 5 to 17 were supported in the project. The children were provided with educational support materials such as bags, books, uniforms and shoes.

The mothers of the children in this program were educated on alternative livelihoods, and 27 women were provided with micro finance to start their own businesses.

One major sensitisation was held in Sankor on November 18, 2010. At this sensitisation, the children, their families and the wider community were educated on the dangers of child trafficking and child labour and the benefits of education.

This project also led to the interception of two trafficking cases and the return of three trafficked children to their families.

A Children's Conference is also being formed under this project and will take place in March 2011. So far 84 children from 26 schools have been selected to participate. At the end of the conference they will have developed a communiqué on human rights issues, which will be presented to the Municipal Assembly.

The success of this project can be seen in the number of child trafficking cases that have been referred to Challenging Heights by the Department for Social Welfare and other organisations. Members of the community have also approached Challenging Heights about cases of child trafficking. This shows the level of awareness and respect that government authorities and the community have for the work Challenging Heights does.

This project is supported by the American Jewish World Service. During 2010, the AJWS also supported Challenging Heights to hold several staff training programs. They were in the areas of risk assessment and security management for human rights defenders, project management and development planning and financial management. The AJWS also supported Challenging Heights to set up a new, more secure national office in Accra.

### **Remedial School**

Child trafficking and labour is high in fishing and farming communities. These children are often denied an education or perform poorly in school. Challenging Heights' Remedial School targets these children and young people to give them a second chance at education.

In 2010, Challenging Heights began the identification process for the Remedial School. So far 170 beneficiaries have been selected (83 boys, 87 girls) between the ages of 17 and 36. Graduate teachers have been engaged to teach the classes which begin in February 2011.

This project is funded by EMpower.

### **Challenging Heights School**

Sankor in Winneba has been identified as one of the worst affected communities in West Africa for child trafficking. Before Challenging Heights there was no school servicing this community, and the Government did not have funds to address the problem. Children in this community were unoccupied and often falling prey to child traffickers. Challenging Heights decided to take on the problem and establish its own school. This has been one of the most successful ventures in Challenging Heights' history. The school is a collaboration between Challenging Heights and the parents of Sankor community, with the parents expected to contribute 20% of the costs of the school.

In 2010, enrolment in the school grew to 435 (212 boys, 219 girls). The students showed a significant improvement over the 2010 school year. This can be seen in their final term results, class tests and other exercises. 80 to 90 percent of the students are punctual, an improvement on previous years.

The success of the school is partly attributable to the support given through various programs such as Sponsor a Child. It is also attributable to strong supervision and monitoring by the teachers.

2010 saw a lot of improvements in infrastructure and equipment at the school. There are now enough textbooks to allocate one for each student in each subject. Construction will soon be finished on three new classrooms, which will relieve pressure on current infrastructure.

### **Anti-Slavery Project**

The Anti-Slavery project identifies children who have been trafficked, rescues them from slavery, enters them into a shelter where they are rehabilitated and offered health care and counselling. These children are then re-integrated into their families and communities and supported to return to school.

In 2010, Challenging Heights facilitated the return of three children from slavery on the Volta Lake. Challenging Heights' Rescue Officer conducted rescue operations for 15 children from slavery in fishing on the Volta Lake.

In March, sensitisation programs were held in 10 schools, 10 churches and five communities. In these sensitisations, people were taught about the dangers and laws relating to child trafficking. As a result of these sensitisations, 43 cases of child trafficking were reported to Challenging Heights.

Mothers of children under this project were educated in alternative livelihood options and 50 women were supported with micro finance.

In April, 10 Community Action Plans towards the elimination of child trafficking in fishing were developed in 10 different communities, in both Effutu Municipal Assembly and Awutu Senya District Assembly regions.

This program was supported by Free the Slaves.

### **Inclusive Education for Children found in Worst Forms of Child Labour**

This program supports children who are victims of the worst forms of child labour. Many of these children are illiterate and have not had the chance to attend school, but are too old to fit into the normal school system. This project offers these children literacy classes and vocational training.

In 2010, 110 children were supported under this project. They attended regular literacy classes and business management classes. They were also placed with master craftsmen and women in the community to learn a trade such as dressmaking, hairdressing, carpentry and plumbing. The master craftsmen and women reported strong improvements in the skills, knowledge and behaviour of the children in these projects.

Challenging Heights partnered with five government and non-government institutions for this project. These included the Department for Social Welfare, Ghana Education Service, Effutu Municipal Assembly Secretariat, Winneba Peace Initiative and the Non-Formal Education Division.

This project was sponsored by Barclays Bank, with the literacy classes supported by the Vodafone Foundation.

### **Sports Program**

Sport is a key instrument in community mobilisation. Playing sport such as football, athletics, volleyball etc. gives children a social outlet, which keeps them from becoming involved in child labour or criminal activities. Before Challenging Heights began this program, there was no recreational outlet for the children in Sankor and surrounding communities.

80 children and youth are involved in Challenging Heights' Sports Program. The program has three football teams: under 12, under 14 and under 17. In 2010, Challenging Heights' football team, the Challenging Stars, played 20 matches, winning 90% of them.

This program also had successes off the field, with participants showing improvements in self-esteem, leadership and school performance.

### **Women's Human Rights Project**

Under this project, 50 girls and young women were trained in reproductive health rights, HIV/AIDS and child labour and trafficking. These women were then formed into supportive social networks where they acted as mentors for ten other women. This program then reached 500 women.

This program is supported by the African Women's Development fund.

**Child Labour in Cocoa Project**

15 communities were sensitised as part of Challenging Heights' involvement in the National Program for the Elimination of Child Labour in Cocoa. Through crowd estimates of the events, Challenging Heights believes at least 4,130 people were reached by these sensitisations.

In these communities, 180 children were supported with educational materials such as books, bags and uniforms. In each community a women's group was formed with 180 women trained in financial management and children's rights. 92 people were also trained in child protection strategies and formed into Community Child Protection Committees to monitor child labour in the 20 communities.