



Foreword

After having been active for nearly a year, it's good to review this period and share our story with everyone. What a lot has happened! Ups as well as downs, moments of success and moments of sorrow. We are so proud of where we stand just one year later. We're helping more girls than we could have hoped for, have a bigger team and we've entered into some wonderful and useful joint partnerships. 2018 will be another interesting year during which we hope to see a great improvement in social change for which we as a team have worked so hard and as organisation we will also see growth. We would like to thank everyone for their help. Without your donations we definitely wouldn't be here! We hope to be able to count on your support again in 2018.

With kind regards,

Team GGG





Volunteers

When we started in March 2017, there were 20 volunteers ready to help us. We had 2 volunteers per community. Through our collaboration with healthcare, the government health department also us allotted one nurse per community. We also had one volunteer from each community. This did not all go exactly as hoped. Nurses were replaced, volunteers changed, basically because we needed people who really supported our dream and who were enthusiastic enough that they were prepared to go the whole mile. And we found them. Due to our strong presence in the communities, many people reached out to us to offer their help and now we have 3 volunteers per community, 30 in total so we can share the burden more easily. We are extremely pleased with our team who work together on a daily basis to support the girls and their families. Without them no GGG!



Shift in communities

Practice makes perfect they say and in our case it was no different. At the start of our journey we had selected 10 communities. Most of these were pretty small but there were a few bigger ones as well. It soon proved that the larger communities were harder to get on board. The children who needed us were too spread apart which made it difficult for our volunteers to reach out to all of them. Furthermore, we discovered that the problem was far greater within the smaller communities. This is why we decided to change 3 of our communities. In this way we can provide the best support where it is needed the most.

Our community list is now as follows: Awutu-Bereku, Chochoe, Aberful/Adadua, Bontrase, Mfadwen/Nkwadum, Ayiresu/Bentum, Ofaada, Fianko/Otopiase, Okwampa and Bonsuoku.



Teen pregnancies and marriage

By far the biggest problem with girls in Ghana is teenage pregnancy and the often subsequent marriage. In our groups, girls as young as 13 are pregnant. Of the girls in our communities that aren't in school 70% is due to pregnancy. Unfortunately, the subject of sex education is still a big taboo. At home the subject is not discussed and in schools barely. Furthermore, as soon as for example the community nurse starts to talk about sex or contraception, the parents think we're making it too easy for the children. That we're "helping" them to have sex. It's this taboo that GGG is working hard at breaking down. This is a large part of our message whether its during our girl group meetings or when we talk to the whole community in our community meetings.

It sometimes goes completely wrong

We have a very sad example even with one of our own volunteers. The man is a council member who strongly believes in the importance of education and who does his utmost for GGG and the girls in his community. He himself has children; one of whom a daughter who he proudly sends to school every day because he believes that this is the best thing to give his daughter for a successful future. He approached us to discuss her because it appears that, despite all his efforts, she has run away to be with a boy. She has a boyfriend. We asked him whether he had discussed the facts of life with her and the consequences of having sex. His answer was “no, why would I?” where upon we once more explained the importance of talking about this in the home environment. About two months later we received a call. His daughter had become pregnant and had, without telling anyone, gone somewhere where they carry out illegal abortions. This had gone terribly wrong and she hadn’t survived. She was just 16. Our hearts reach out to her father and her family and we wish them much strength with their loss.

At the time of writing yet another sad event occurred. One of our youngest back to school girls, 16 year old Gloria Asharley, collapsed on her way to church, fell into a coma and passed away a few hours later. Unfortunately these kinds of stories aren’t uncommon. We are extremely sad and wish her family much strength with their loss.





Girl Groups

“Our” girls get together once a week. In March 2017 we started with 30 girls per group. Today, barely a year later, there are nearly 50 girls per community in a group. This means that we have 500 girls under our wings and of this we are extremely proud! Slightly more than half of them attend school but are in the so-called vulnerable group to drop out. Problems (no support) at home, boyfriends and running away is the main issue. The other half are no longer in school. Mainly because they had children when they were too young and/or got married but also because their parents took them out of school at a young age. In some cases these girls can’t even read or write and some even only speak the village dialect. In most cases the girls don’t feel supported by their parents and daren’t dream of a better life or even realize that there are other opportunities for them. They are often extremely shy and withdrawn. Due to our volunteers they now have a safe place where they can speak out freely about their problems and their dreams. They get the support and the motivation they need, each individually to fit their particular needs. Besides this we have also put together a programme that offers them sex education, discussions about health and hygiene, occupational choices but also sport and games so that they build a stronger bond together. We see that the girls are becoming more confident, talk more openly and also motivate each other when needed. It’s a wonderful thing to see.

Social change

As an organisation we want to provide sustainable change. A change that in the long run isn't dependent on external help but is based on the strength of the people themselves. It is of course possible to send girls to school with external support but when this support ends, the girls stop attending school and ultimately no one is helped. The biggest problem about schooling for girls lies within the communities, or more specifically, with the parents. Parents do not see the importance of educating their daughters. Mostly because they too didn't get an education but also because down through the generations they have never learned to take responsibility for their children, the children are namely there to help them. Therefore, because they don't make education a priority, they also don't want to spend a single penny on it, nor put any time or any effort into it. It's just fine to let a girl help with the work the parents are doing or even learn a trade, although, due to the numbers doing the same, there is no money to be earned. And, because the parents don't believe in an education, neither do the girls. This has the disastrous consequence of them remaining in a downward spiral of poverty. This is what GGG is all about. Social Change. The change of mind set of the entire community in order to improve the position of the girls. This translates into all our activities, all our partnerships and all our communication.



Home visits

One of the means of obtaining social change is by doing home visits. This is really a form of personal coaching. Our volunteers and the project coordinator are present in the communities all week. Thus the parents of our girls are visited in order to discuss the importance of education but especially to discuss how they themselves can and must take responsibility for their children. We visit two families per community a week. Which is 80 visits a month! We've noticed that after our visits most parents are more open to involvement in the interests of their daughters. In addition they feel supported by our presence and moreover we can bring other problems to the table with which we can offer our support and help. Think, for example of handicapped parents who didn't know that they could apply for financial support at the department of social welfare. We help them with this and this enables them to receive extra support. And however small the amount is, it can still make a big difference.



Community Meetings

Community meetings are extremely important to enable us to convey our message about social change. Since we started we've had two rounds of meetings. A total of 20 meetings. We invite our girls, the so-called community elders, representatives of the local departments of health, education and social welfare to speak to the communities about how they can support their girls to obtain a successful future. For the first 10 meetings we'd produced a documentary. We had interviewed a number of girls from our groups together with their families and they had shared their stories. This documentary proved to be an enormous success. It seems that people believe that they are the only ones facing these kinds of problems. They therefore do not discuss these with others as a result of which they do not see that it is actually a much larger (community) problem that has to be dealt with. Following these meetings we received an enormous amount of positive reactions from within the communities whereby they indicated their desire for change. Nothing can make us more happy!



50 girls back to school!

In September 2017 the new school year commenced. We had already had many discussions in our girl groups with girls that wanted to return to school so our volunteers and the project coordinator went to talk with their parents. We do not want nor are we able to pay for all these girls to go to school. The parents or the guardians need to take responsibility, make a conscious choice, so that they can really provide the support that the girls need to successfully round off their education. This could mean for example that the mothers take care of the grandchildren but also that the girls don't need to help around the house as much in order to be able to do their homework. But also they will need to provide some financial support. Schooling is free but the girls need a uniform, shoes, a schoolbag, books and in some cases extra lessons which need to be paid for. Together with every parent/guardian we have set up a plan with what is needed to get their girls back into school, what they can do and where we as organisation can help. Through this collaboration we discovered that in most cases the parents/guardians could manage a lot by themselves. And they too suddenly realised this which is exactly what we were hoping for! So now we have successfully managed to get 50 of our girls back into school. We now monitor the girls every quarter to see how they're doing in school and if there's a problem, either the school or the parents reach out to us. As of course, nothing ever comes easy. But, of all the things we have achieved this year, this is what really makes us proud!



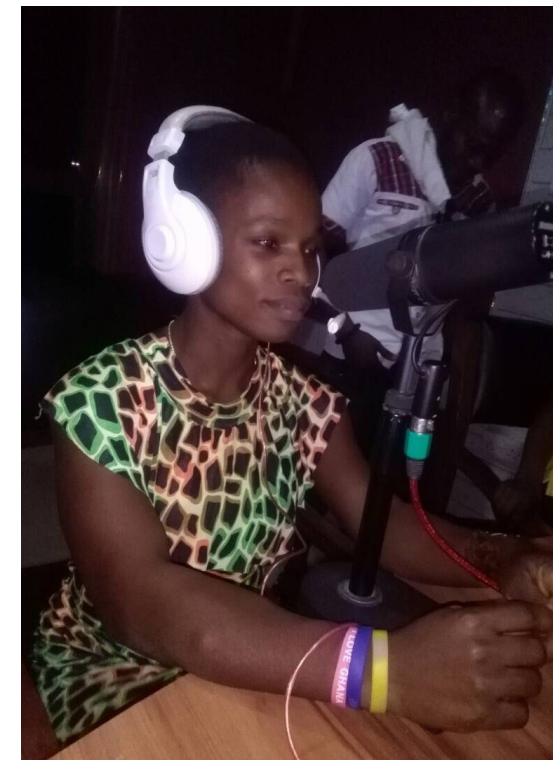
Board of Trustees

We believe local ownership is extremely important. In Ghana, GGG is a standalone organisation and we want the organisation to have a strong position. And it does! In June 2017 we inaugurated the Board of Trustees. A five headed board concentrates on the programme content, governmental support and other local organisations but also local fundraising. The chairperson of the board is a professor in female empowerment at the University of Cape Coast. Other members are a female doctor, a teacher, the only man is a chief and last but not least a girl from one of our groups. The reason behind this last choice being that if we want the girls to have a voice they have to be able to participate in the decision making on what and how we enable this. This board meets every quarter and they are also very often in touch with each other to talk about GGG and how to help it grow

Quarterly meetings with volunteers

Every three months the board of directors in Ghana and all our volunteers get together to discuss the progress made. These have meanwhile taken place four times. We take the time to thank our volunteers for their commitment but especially to listen to their narratives of the problems within the communities and their ideas how we can/should improve our programme. To this end, the volunteers are an important part of our organisation and consequently take more responsibility for their duties. Probably even more important is that in so doing we ensure that our girls and their communities always receive the best possible support.





Enyidado FM Radioshow

Enyidado FM is a local radio station with which we have been working together with since April 2017. Radio presence is important in order to share our message with the whole region and therefore reach a broader audience and gain more support on the matter of the improvement of the position of girls. Every other Saturday we have an hour within an existing youth programme. Here all the issues that we also discuss in the girl groups and in the community meetings are brought up. Our volunteers and our girls share their experiences. And it works! This is how we got more volunteers but also more applications to join our groups.



A donation of shoes

At the end of 2017 a local shoemaker heard about us. Evans Boateng was so inspired by what we were trying to achieve that he wanted to show his support. He made a pair of shoes for each of our girls, free of charge. That means 500 pairs of shoes! In February 2018 he will produce another 1000 pairs. This helps our girls and their families enormously. We are extremely grateful!

Member of the advisory board of the Ghana Education Services

As of June 2017, GGG has become member of the advisory board of the Girls Education Network in the Central Region of Ghana. GEN is a collaboration between Ghana Education Services (Ministry of Education), Ghana Health Services, Ministry of Gender and various NGO's to guarantee the improvement of the quality of education for girls. We are very proud to be a part of this board.

<http://www.ghananewagency.org/education/central-region-girl-child-education-taskforce-inaugurated-118823>





Partnership Origin8

Origin8 is Ghana's number 1 advertising agency and have even won a prize for being the best ad agency in West Africa. Coincidentally the CEO comes from one of the communities we're active in so when we entered into the partnership with Origin8 we killed two birds with one stone. You may ask yourself why the importance of having an alliance with an advertising agency. Well, social change is all to do with marketing and media. Media is the most important way of bringing structural change in a society. Origin8 initially helped us with a PR campaign in newspapers and online. They ensure we maintain our visibility in the papers but we're also considering whether it would be possible to come up with a national radio or tv programme in order to guarantee long-term presence.

Donations

Go Girl Ghana would not exist were it not for the generous donations we received and hopefully will still receive this year. From friends who believed in us, to foundations who saw a connection with their own objectives, we are grateful that we have received support from all sides. We have up till now received half of our project budget and will be holding a benefit evening in the first quarter of 2018 to which we will invite all our donors and possible new donors. We would like to thank everyone for their contribution!

What are our plans for 2018?

Of course we will continue with what we are already working hard for! This year we want to get more girls in school and book more success with all parts of our programme. But there are also new things on our programme.

Distribution of stationary

In our 2017 budget we included snacks for our weekly girl group meetings. However, the suggestion of our volunteers was to save this amount during the last three months of the year in order to provide the girls with exercise books to help with their school work. A brilliant idea of course, so in January 2018 we distributed these amongst the girls.

Mother clubs

Parents form a large part of the solution in getting girls educated. It's very often left to the mothers to bring the children up. This is why we want to give them a special place as well where they can get together to discuss the problems they are facing, but especially to discuss possible solutions. We will provide information about what we do within the girl groups, how they can help and how we, in turn, can support them. In this way we hope to ensure an even stronger and sustainable change.

Training community life competence

This training was originally planned to take place in 2017. However, because it took a while for the funds to come in, we have had to postpone to 2018. So, from March 12th - 14th, twenty of our volunteers and the GGG-team will be trained in the Community Life Competence Process. This will provide them with the necessary tools to motivate the communities, using their own strengths and competences, to create their own solutions to keep girls in school.





A year supply of sanitary towels

Another issue the girls struggle with is their monthly period. Something that isn't pleasant in the best of circumstances but if you lack hygienic provisions it's even worse. As such the girls generally don't attend school during this time as a result of which their school work deteriorates drastically. In March 2018 we will be providing all 500 girls a years supply of sanitary towels so that they can attend school without any worries.

Growth

GGG hasn't finished growing yet. We don't plan to just remain active in our present 10 communities, in 2018 we aim to grow. We aim to approach other communities in Ghana, further improve our collaboration with the government authorities, but, we also want to start a dialogue with different partners in other countries in order to launch our programme there as well. 2018 is going to be an exciting year!

