

Mid -Year Report

June 2014

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report covers FISTRADs activities from January to June. It outlines the various projects activities and outcomes during the period. It also looks at challenges and the way forward.

This year's plans are mainly a role over from 2013 and this is because our proposals to donors for the year got approved by the end of December. Up to the time of writing this report, we are still waiting for funds to be released for the implementation of two of the projects.

Our vision is an enlightened society without poverty and in which all actively participate in decision on issues concerning their development.

1.1 Our Objectives are:

- To increase public awareness on political and social issues
- Increase capacity of women and excluded people to become economically independent.
- Provide an enabling environment for young people to pass their exams and advance their educational careers.
- Use radio to enhance the quality of life of the two Builsa districts and their environs.

2.0 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

2.1 VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Twenty-five young girls and three boys have been admitted to begin a three- year training course. Presently, we have a total of seventy learners. Reforms to transform the skills training program to a market oriented and self- sustaining project are ongoing. Presently we have increased cloth production to ten pieces a week and produce beautiful smocks for sale. To be able to accelerate the reform program, we applied to the Skills Development Fund (SDF), a World Bank supported program for financial support. This is to train our staff and also to acquire new embroidery and knitting machines to enhance quality .We are also expected to introduce new products like ladies hand bags, purses and hats. Even though our proposal for the grant has been approved, funds have not yet been released for implementation to begin.

2.2 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWARENESS

On awareness creation and promoting community participation particularly among women, people with disabilities and young people, we are working in partnership with STAR-Ghana to ensure that issues of vulnerable groups are reflected in community action plans that will eventually feed into action plans of four districts of the Upper East Region na,ely Builsa North and South and Kassena Nankane East and West, Strategies used are focus group discussions, radio discussion with phone-

ins and community sensitization. In the second half of the year we will carry out sustained advocacy to bring to the public stage critical issues that came out of the focus group discussions and also to lobby district authorities, chiefs and opinion leaders to negative effects of harmful cultural practices. The issues are discrimination against women and people with disabilities reflected at homes and at policy levels, widowhood rights that dehumanise women and exclusion of young people in decision-making. District Chief executives, will be given radio platforms to respond to these issues in an interactive way through radio phone-ins.

2.3 FOOD SECURITY

In 2013, FISTRAD submitted an application to the Ministry of Local Government to implement a food security project funded by the Canadian Development Agency. The project is in line with our objective to support women and other vulnerable groups in society to increase their capacity to become self-reliant in food and cash crop production. It involves homestead mango planting by women as a means of increasing food security because mangoes are cash crops. The project also aims at environmental protection as the mango trees will serve as forestation measure to roll back the increasing desertification and soil degradation of our communities. Another component of the project is to train women in production of compost manure to reduce their dependence on expensive chemical fertilizer which is also contributing to environmental pollution. The proposal has been approved and a contract signed between FISTRAD and The Ministry of Local Government. However, at the time of writing this report, money has not yet been released for implementation to commence.

2.4 REMEDIAL CLASSES AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Remedial classes and library services constitute the main tools we are using to provide a convenient and conducive platform for the youth to realise their academic aspiration after school. It provides some kind of social protection for youngsters who have not been able to pass their exams at the first instance to get access to quality tuition and library services. Patrick Heinecke spent considerable time working in the library at the start of the year. He brought with him fifty books and bought a few more books with local content. Number of books in the library now stand at four thousand and thirty(4,030). Presently, Sarah, a University of Calgary student on internship with FISTRAD is working with the two library assistants to make identification and location of books easier.

Remedial classes started in March. This year has seen one of the largest numbers of students registering to participate. In all, we have two hundred and forty students. Subjects offered are English, Mathematics, Science, Economics and Government.

2.5 RADIO STATION

The radio station continues to be the lead Radio station in the Upper East Region. It is the main tool for sensitization and education on all the social issues we are working on. Presently we have four full time staff and eleven volunteers Three students from Calgary are actively involved news production and programs The main challenges we are facing with the radio is erratic and unreliable power supply and very high cost of electricity. Another challenge is getting qualified personnel to manage news and investigative reporting and tracking of issues. Despite these challenges, Radio Builsa is playing a very important role in the life of the communities we are serving. Programs such as You

and Your Health, 'Culture and You, Builsa this week and Community Development Time are very educative and focus on community happenings and the way out.

2.6 GUEST HOUSE

There has been less activity at the guest house. Presently, there is only one guest who will stay for three months with a few people coming in and out once in a while. However, a new gas cooker and a fridge have been purchased to equip the kitchen.

2.7 MTN HEROES OF CHANGE

In 2013, the mobile phone giant in Ghana MTN called on Ghanaians to nominate individuals who have made contributions to their communities and made an impact in the living conditions of deprived and underprivileged people. Mr. Abubakar George our Project Coordinator nominated Alandu Richard on behalf of FISTRAD. One thousand nominations were made nationwide. Interviews were conducted in the communities in which nominees are serving and the number was reduced to one hundred. A research on each nominee was conducted and further cut down the number to twenty using a criteria not known to participants, Documentaries on the twenty nominees were made in January 2014 and a committee of eminent people selected the best five for awards. Mr Alandu Richard representing FISTRAD won the award for economic empowerment of deprived people. The award came with a citation, MTN products and ten thousand Ghana cedis(GH10, 000).

2.8 CHILDREN'S PLAY GROUND

The children's play ground was established in 2011 and the initial reason was to create a safe and entertaining place for children of the girls and women learning tailoring and cloth weaving. Today, it is one of the few opportunities for children to play and learn after school. Pressure on the few equipment makes them breakdown frequently. There is therefore the need to expand the place to meet the increasing demand from the kids.

2.9 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Three students from University of Calgary in Canada are doing internship with FISTRAD. The purpose of the internship which begins in June to August every year since 2009 is to expose the students to "Third world conditions" in Africa and to acquaint them with the workings of grassroots organizations and the challenges they face.

3.0 CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

FISTRAD has several challenges as an organization and in the implementation of projects. As an organization, inability to employ full-time qualified staff affects our efficiency in carrying out several activities. The vocational centre for instance needs a professional in textiles and design. The radio station needs a qualified journalist and the secretariat requires a competent secretary to support administration.

The target population FISTRAD is serving(mainly poor and vulnerable people) makes our operations very challenging as it is difficult to demand payment for the valuable and expensive services. Even if

we demand they will have no money to pay. Cost of utilities are gone up more than hundred percent. Since the project depends much on electricity, operational cost is escalating far beyond earnings. We used to spend less than one thousand Cedis on electricity but now a whopping three thousand Ghana Cedis monthly is spent on electricity.

The location of Sandema does not seem to be attractive to advertisers whose target is mainly urban populations. The radio station therefore depends on projects and funding from donors and friends.

Increasing depreciation of the Cedi and inflation has rendered salaries and allowances valueless leading to disaffection and indiscipline in some cases.

FISTRAD has no vehicle of its own the main vehicle used for projects is Mr Alandu Richard's vehicle which is over aged and breaks down frequently at very high maintenance cost.

4.0 WAY FORWARD

The way forward is for FISTRAD to push ahead with reorientation of the vocational centre so as to generate income and make it sustainable. Aggressive marketing has to be undertaken to penetrate the advertising market. Perhaps, we may need to employ a professional to handle marketing of our products on commission basis.

We have to diversify our services to cope with the changing times so as to remain relevant and attractive to donors and other partners.

5.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is important to acknowledge people who have behind the scenes made this modest achievement in the first half of the year possible. Patrick Heinecke needs commendation for the frequent nearly annual visits he makes to Sandema to support the project particularly in the library where he spends considerable time.

Our gratitude also goes to Paul eV of Germany particularly Almuth Schauber and Gertrude Schauber who despite her age still gathers energy to fund raise to support our project and many others.

It has also been exciting working with STAR Ghana, Ghana Community Radio Network, The District Assemblies and communities especially the people with disabilities, women and the youth groups that constitute the community development committees.



Working with people with disabilities



Calgary Student works in Library



Star Ghana project with PWDs



Vocational Programme produce new products



FISTRAD receives Award



Richard takes Economic empowerment award



CHILDREN PLAY GROUND

