

FOUNDATION FOR INTEGRATED AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

HALF YEAR REPORT (JULY TO DECEMBER, 2014)

1. Introduction

This report covers FISTRAD's activities from July to December 2014. It outlines the various projects, activities and outcomes during the period. It also looks at challenges and the way forward. It is a continuation of the activities of the first half of the year.

2. 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.

3. Social and Political Awareness

The period under review was very exciting because of the achievement of some significant milestones. It was gratifying to see that our advocacy to support and involve people with disabilities, women and youth to have greater say in activities affecting them in their communities is gaining roots in the communities. Using radio, our project supported by STAR Ghana titled, "Mobilizing Excluded Voices for Effective Local Governance" has raised public awareness on disability issues and the oppression of women particularly violation of their rights through backward cultural practices.

It was exciting when the chief of Bonia, in the Kassena Nankane District of the Upper East Region held a durbar to announce the abolition of certain dehumanizing aspects of widowhood rites in his community. The ceremony was attended by nearly all the sub-chiefs and Navro Pios representative in all forty five in number a representative of Ghana Community Radio Network and the District Assemblies.

Of all the twenty focus group discussions, composed of youth, people with disabilities and women, the issue of maltreatment of women during the performance of their husband's funeral was raised as main challenge. They complained that the practice was dehumanizing. A woman's freedom of movement is restricted for months after the death of her husband, some are made to walk naked and others are made to bath hot water and when they refuse, they are accused of being responsible for the death of their husbands. The abolition of negative aspects of widowhood rights in Bonia is a history-making event because this problem has existed for generations. It is our hope, that

continuation of the advocacy works in the years to come, will gradually get all the chiefs in the project communities to follow suit.

The main concern of people with disabilities is discrimination against them even in their homes. Some families isolate their disabled children and prevent them from being seen by outsiders because they perceive disability as a curse and disgrace to the family. The wrong association of disability with inability is so engrained in the society. The attachment of religious views and perception of people with disability as people to be treated more with sympathy than as equal human being is a challenge. Unfortunately, that attitude towards disabled people has had a deep psychological impact on majority of disabled people to the extent that they also think they are inferior. This explains partly, why a lot of disabled people in Ghana resign their faith to begging.

Talk shows by disabled people, government officials, parents of disabled children and the community members has radically transformed behaviour towards disability in Builsa. Disabled people are invited to meetings and encouraged to participate. The second challenge is accessibility of public buildings to people with disability, particularly in basic schools and offices. The District Assembly in theory agree to make all public buildings disability-friendly, but in practice very little is being done.

Calls are being made for people with disability to present themselves for local elections in 2015. As part of our advocacy work, we will support women and people with disability to campaign for local elections by drawing public attention to them and providing them with free airtime to market them and build their confidence. We believe that it is only the disabled people who can push to bring about change in their conditions if given opportunity to represent their interest in the district assemblies.

4. Economic Empowerment

To realise the vision of FISTRAD, strategic projects are being implemented to improve rural incomes and reduce poverty. These projects are skills training for enterprise development and the food security project.

4.1 Skills Training for Enterprise Development

Skills' Training for Enterprise Development is a project supported by the Skills Development Fund, (SDF). The project is aimed at improving the quality of training at the centre and consequently come up with new products that will improve income. The project which was to begin in March, 2014 got the green light in August due to late release of funding. Two embroidery machines and two industrial fashion machines have been purchased to enhance training and quality of products. In addition, six looms for weaving kente cloths and their accessories have been purchased purposely to create variety in the cloths woven at the centre with a bid to becoming more competitive. Master craft persons have been engaged and training has begun. It is expected that by the end of the project, the centre will enhance the capacity to improve teaching and learning and also to diversify the products to include embroidery, kente weaving hand bags and fashionable dresses for sale.

4.2 Food Security Project

The food security project is targets women. It is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture with funding from the Canadian Development Agency. The objective is to increase women's incomes and at the same time address the environmental challenges.

The project is targeting 500 households involving 1,300 families. The women in each house hold have been given five mango seedlings to plant around the house. It is expected that the mangos will improve the vegetation cover and also bear fruits which will serve as food during the offseason as well provide income for the women in the household. During this period, our attention was more on educating to get community members to realise that after planting, care and support for the plants is key. Our field staffs visits individual households to monitor the growth, and to offer support and advice where necessary. The innovation in our approach is the use of plastic bottles as a method of drip irrigation. A hole is created at the bottom of the bottle to allow water to drip into the soil. The rate of flow is regulated by relaxing the lead or closing it tightly.

5.0 Remedial Classes and Library Services

Remedial classes continued through the period with students participating actively. Two hundred and fifty students registered and attended the classes. Ninety-seven were girls and one hundred and fifty- three were boys. Subjects offered are: Mathematics, English language, Science, social Studies Economics and Government.

The library is often used intensively at this time of the year as students depend heavily on the books for their revision to rewrite the Senior High School Exams. Sarah, a University of Calgary Intern, successfully completed labelling all the books and arranging them in their designated shelves for easy identification. She also provided training for the two library assistants.

Patrick Heinecke donated twenty books to the library. When he arrived in December, he spent considerable time in the library working with the library assistants. The library currently has eight thousand five hundred and fifty -one books. The library needs to undergo some modernization to include computers and possibly internet services so as to become more relevant to the youth and a place for research in Builsa.

6.0 Children's Playground

The children playground was established four years ago with the support of a University of Calgary intern, Johanna Dolton. The reason at the time was to create opportunities for children to play and learn after school. Another reason is to keep the children away from their mothers at the vocational centre so as to give them time to learn their trade. The children playground is presently the only organised place children come to play and learn after school. The main challenge is that the number of children who come to play and learn exceed the equipment.

7.0 Radio Station

Radio is now the main instrument by which FISTRAD activities are disseminated to communities. The interactive nature of radio makes FISTRAD very much connected to the communities of our project

area. Our strategy is to accompany all our activities with radio programs that are replayed several times. In this way, our messages get to far more people since total listenership of Radio Builsa is about a million people.

Radio Builsa apart from providing information and entertainment, have also been able to mobilise communities to participate in voluntary activities. A blood donation exercise was organised in conjunction with the Ministry of health and it was widely patronised. Clean-up exercises in Sandema and Navrongo organised in collaboration with The District Assemblies was used to highlight education on cholera and Ebola .The year ended with Radio Builsa staff organising a grand beauty contest for the youth as part of the Feok festival, the main annual festival of the Builsa people.

Through our membership of the Ghana Community Radio Network, staff of the station benefited from several training programmes from news reporting to presentation on air.

Despite the potential of the radio station to generate revenue, it is sad to note that the station has not lived up to expectation. The main reason is high electricity and fuel increases during the year. Due to the high electricity cost of, three thousand Ghana Cedis a month and a monthly wage bill of one thousand four hundred Ghana Cedis, the Radio station has been operating beyond her income. To enable us cope with the deficit, The Board and management had to take a painful decision to reduce the number of hours we operate daily from seventeen hours to ten hours. This measure has reduced the monthly electricity bill by a thousand five Hundred Ghana Cedis.

Erratic power supply and fluctuations pose serious danger to our equipment and damages them more frequently thereby increasing maintenance cost

8.0 Guest House

The guest house has seen little activity during the reporting period. Few visitors came to use the place.

9.0 Challenges and Recommendations

The major challenge is the escalating running cost which is due to increasing electricity cost. The second is frequent power outages that interrupt transmission and damage equipment. Increasing fuel cost has led to inflation thereby affecting cost of materials used in training of the vocational students. The best solution to the electricity problem is for us to install a solar power system that will power all equipment at the centre. Even though, solar has a high initial cost, in the long run it is cheaper, more reliable and consistent

Yet another challenge is getting a trained journalist to manage news production at the radio station .Currently, those managing news production are volunteer teachers who have little time to spend on research and interviews to prepare news professionally. A permanent solution to this problem will be to employ a qualified journalist.

Continuation of advocacy projects after donor support is ended is a big challenge The STAR Ghana project on advocacy to end widowhood rites officially ended in December 2014 but FISTARD has the obligation to continue the advocacy since practically the objective of abolition an age old practice like

widowhood rites cannot be achieved in nine months. We have to look for funds from other donors and friends to continue with such project.

10.0 Acknowledgement

Thanks also go to Paul eV who has supported us on a yearly basis, without which FISTRAD could not be making impact on people's lives.

Our gratitude also goes to local partners STAR GHANA, Ministry of Local Government, Ghana Community Radio Network, Builsa North and South District Assemblies and the Chiefs and people of the communities we work in.

Let me use this opportunity to thank Sandema Educational Resource Centre Trust for the support they are giving over the years, special tanks needs to be given for the new vehicle they have provided the centre. It will facilitate movement and organization.

GALLERY



New Embroidery Machines for Tailoring Shop



Remedial Classes Students



Widows celebrating an end to widowhood rites in Bonia



Beneficiaries of Mango Project receive seedlings



“Feeding bottle” method of drip irrigation under FISTRAD mango project

