

FOUNDATION FOR INTEGRATED AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 2020

Introduction

The year 2020 has been a very challenging year for CSOs in Ghana and the world. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted plans, work and lives of individuals and organization. The impact of the pandemic on FISTRAD is difficult to quantify in monetary terms, but suffice it to say that we had our fair share of it. The pandemic affected certain key departments of the organization that brought development plans to a standstill. Revenue generation from radio was severely affected because companies scaled down or shut down in an attempt to protect their staff. Advertisers drastically reduced their advertising budget. Traditionally, advertising contributes about 70% of the station's revenue.

The general fall in demand for goods and services because of social restrictions affected sales of our products from the weaving section. The FISTRAD Guest House was shut down because all hospitality centers were ordered to stop operating.

Vocational training of young people which is one of our core activities was also shut down for seven months

Project activities that support our overhead cost and personal cost were halted because no social activities could take place as planned. All organizations were directed to halt implementation of project activities. The net result of these negatives was that we were not able to carry out our planned activities in a manner that could have maintained our momentum for growth and development.

Our Operations

FISTRAD operates an integrated change model. We believe in advocacy through radio to enable duty bearers carry out their mandate. We believe in education to empower people to take their destinies into their own hands. We support empowerment of women through skills training and provide educational services through the provision of free library services. Our combination of direct support and advocacy has stood the test of time because the world has seen a swing at different times from advocacy to service delivery and back to service advocacy. This is why we advocate for the state to set up libraries, but still encourage reading through the establishment of the FISTRAD library. The FISTRAD library is a 50- seat, 5,000-book capacity library to help the general public to cultivate the habit of reading.

2020 in Review

The year 2020 as usual began with hope and determination to improve upon the previous year's work.

Fresh students were recruited for the year and materials were procured for vocational training to begin. Plans for other activities like community entry and mobilization for community based sensitization and advocacy were developed. The vocational training started with the second and third year trainees continuing with their work in theory and practice. Unfortunately on the 12th of March the first case of

Covid-19 was recorded and by the end of the month restrictions to contain the spread of the virus was announced and we had to close the vocational training, the guest house and stop community based programs. It was only the radio station that was operating. The radio station however played a very important role in the education of the constituents on the Corona Virus and the protocols announced by Ministry of health and the World Health Organization. Various strategies were used to drive home messages. Jingles using health professionals, chiefs and opinion leaders, children and women were developed to educate the public. Lots of discussions were also carried out using health professionals' opinion leaders with phone-ins to allow for dialogue with community so as to improve understanding of the disease and prevention strategies.

Another key role the radio played during the restriction period was in the education of school children. FISTRAD collaborated with the District Assembly and the Ghana Education Service to recruit teachers to run classes on radio. This initiative was very successful as it helped school children in their lessons. There was a phone-in session and students could phone-in to ask questions on issues they don't understand for clarification.

Our on-air evaluation indicated high participation and satisfaction by students and parents. Some are asking for the program to become a permanent feature of the educational system in the district. The use of radio to educate children in the rural areas helped to narrow the gap between them and children in the cities who got tuition online and via Zoom.

Another initiative that was undertaken as a result of the pandemic was from the vocational training center. In a telephone conversation with Dr. Almuth Schaubert during which we shared experiences of the pandemic in our respective countries the idea of the vocational center producing locally made mask for sale came up. Almuth gave a link to websites showing how to produce masks. She also told me how industries in Germany have moved into the production of mask and other personal protective clothing to generate income. I called a meeting of the vocational staff and we began producing masks. Initially we were able to sell and generate some income but later philanthropists and Government began distributing masks free to the population and that drastically reduced our income. Another factor has been the mild nature of Covid 19 in Africa particularly in rural areas making people to think the disease is either in Europe or in the big cities. This misconception has led to low use of mask and none compliance with Ministry of Health and World Health Organization directives.

All projects requiring interface with communities were suspended and meetings with partners employed technologies such as Zoom or online services. Community advocacy and sensitization was mainly by radio.

Easing of Restrictions

In July 2020, the President of the Republic of Ghana announced a number measures easing the restrictions to allow for meetings of a minimum of twenty-five persons but with strict observance of the Covid-19 protocols. We took advantage of that window of opportunity and recalled our vocational students to begin training and also opened the library for five hours daily but with strict adherence to the protocols.

The final year students, for the first time, wrote the National Vocational Training Institute examinations. This is because FISTRAD vocational training Centre is now an accredited institution and recognized nationally. We conducted our annual graduation ceremony on the 29th December 2020. Thirty-four girls passed out successfully. The ceremony was attended by people from all walks of life including relatives and loved ones of the trainees. Unfortunately most of the participants disregarded the Covid-19 protocols due to excitement amidst drumming and dancing.

Lessons Learnt

The use of radio as a teaching tool for school children and the success it achieved is a very important lesson to us, the education ministry as well as parents. Today, community members are seriously considering the use of radio as a means of extra lessons for children after school.

Another lesson learnt is that in the midst of challenges people can be innovative. The rate at which our staff and students were able to understand the process of making face mask to the extent of coming up with their own designs was amazing. People preferred our locally made mask to the imported ones because they are reusable and therefore economical to use.

Acknowledgement

It is important to note that all the successes FISTRAD achieved over the years bringing smiles to thousands of young girls and boys is the result of the sacrifice of many people and this has to be acknowledged. Paul e. V chaired by Gertrude Schauber has traditionally supported us at the beginning of the year. This has made it possible for us to begin the year smoothly with resources that we need to take off. They have also been supporting other activities as the radio and the library in terms of equipment and salary support.

Sandema Educational Resource Centre, a UK based Charity was initiated by Patrick Heinecke mainly to support the Sandema project. Mr. Patrick is a Founding member of FISTRAD. He and his dedicated trustees have over the years supported the project and made it possible for us to endure over the long period of twenty-three years of our existence. Unfortunately the Charity folded up in December 2020 due to the poor health and old age of the founder, Patrick Heinecke. Sandema Educational Resource Centre and Paul e.V of Germany Chaired by Gertrude Schauber and Dr. Almuth Schauber will ever be remembered in any historical narrative of the Sandema project.

Last but not the least is Zephyr Trust also a UK based charity which has over the past few years been supporting the Sandema project with a small grant of two thousand British pounds annually. The support from Zephyr Trust we hope will in the years to come complement the vacuum by the folding up of Sandema Educational Resource Centre.



LEARNERS PRODUCING FACE MASKS



LINE UP GRADUANTS AT PASSING OUT CEREMONY



CROSS SECTION OF PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED THE CELEBRATION