

African Women Advocacy Project

Program Manager's Report January 2015

The African Women Advocacy Project (AWAP) founded with the goal of serving as a voice and advocate for women's leadership in Africa, began its operations in Ghana in August 2014.

In 2014, the operations of AWAP in Ghana focused more on the following:

1. Registration of the organization as a Non-Profit
2. Liaison with Science Club for Girls to restart their project in Ghana with AWAP
3. Collaboration with Social Hearts from Japan to present children product from Otushi, Japan to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania as part of a linkage program

Registration of the Organization

Having begun the registration process in November 2014, AWAP is now registered in Ghana as a non-profit affiliate of AWAP which is 501 (c) 3 organization in the US. The Certificate of Registration was received on January 2015.

Liaison with Science Club for Girls

Science Club for Girls (SCFG) is a non-governmental organization with the mission to increase the self-confidence and literacy in science and engineering of girls by providing them after school programs. SCFG has strived to provide the very best in girls-specific programming, by connecting girls in K-12 grade, especially those from underrepresented groups, with female mentor scientists through free science and engineering programs in fun, nurturing, and interactive environment. In Ghana, the SCFG deals with pupils from class 4 to form 2 of Junior High School

The goals of SCFG are to introduce engaging, practical science and engineering activities to girls in under-resourced areas; to increase girls' confidence in investigating phenomenon in these subjects; and increase their awareness of and desire to pursue further education and careers in these fields. This would thereby create a generation of young women who acquire scientific and design thinking as habit of mind and identify talented students early and nurture their development.

The program was created in 1994 in Boston, Massachusetts and initiated in Pokuase, Ghana in 2006. In Ghana, SCFG currently deals with four (4) schools including i) The Pokuase Methodist School ii) St Sylvanus Roman Catholic School iii) Pokuase AME Zion School and iv) Nii Otto Kwame School.

In 2012, the program became inactive due to issues with regards to funds and communications. However, due to the impact the program had on the students, AWAP with the collaboration of SCFG is restarting the program.

In vein of this intention, the team met in Boston, Massachusetts to strategize ways of not only restarting the program, but also making it sustainable. The outcome of the strategy meetings was as follow:

- To visit the various schools; meet up with both teachers and students to inform them about our decision to restart the program and find out why it went on hiatus.
- To meet up with the former coordinator of the program and discuss the way forward with her
- To have a meeting with all the teachers involved in the program

In September 2014, the team paid a visit to the Pokuase Methodist School and St. Sylvanus Roman Catholic School to inform them about our decision to restart the program. The response received from both schools was positive as both teachers and students were excited about the decision, which has been taken by of AWAP and SCFG.

The same response was received at AME Zion School and Nii Otto Kwame School in October 2014 when we visited. The beneficiaries of the program told us how much the program meant to them and how the girls involved were excelling in class. According to the students, the experiments they undertook in the after-school program enabled them to understand science better. In fact, there was a competition organized by Women Trust in 2013 and two beneficiaries (Eva Arthur and Malinda Boateng) both from the Pokuase Methodist School took the first and second positions.

Our visit also helped us to identify some challenges such as inadequate equipment and materials; lack of storage facility for materials; insufficient funds to run the program; Poor communication from management; and involuntary teacher transfer due to Ghana Education Service (GES) regulations. Some proposed solutions included:

- Provision of more equipment and materials
- The need to set up storage facility to safeguard materials, if possible provide science laboratory
- The need to increase stipend and snack of the program
- The need to get support from school administration
- The need to increase the number of educational trips
- The need to employ permanent staff as teachers to serve as trainers, so as to bridge the gap created when teachers are on transfer.

From the observations made, it can be deduced that both teachers and students from all four schools are interested in the program and cannot wait for it to restart. Besides, the interest of AWAP in liaising with SCFG is tenable, as it does fall in line with the overarching mission of AWAP.

Collaboration with Social Hearts

Social Hearts (SH) is a non-profit organization that seeks to overcome the generational gap in Japan and achieve the theme of Happy Second Life for the elderly. SH is currently running a program with elderly living in temporary housing in Otsuchi, which is the hardest hit by the Tsunami on 11th March 2011.

In 2014, the elderly women in Otsuchi informed AWAP of their interest of presenting handmade goods for kids at Christmas in Africa. AWAP therefore, worked together with SH to make the dream of the elderly women of Otsuchi come to pass.

On 23rd December, a team from AWAP and SH visited Honoratha Development Foundation, an orphanage in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania with the handmade goods from the elderly women of Otsuchi. The handmade gifts included Japanese clothing (Hanten), handbags, drawstring pouch and beaded bracelet. These items were given to the kids at the orphanage with Christmas cake and some refreshment.

It was a joyous occasion as everyone especially the kids were filled with so much happiness. Indeed the team from both AWAP and SH were excited to touch the lives of these kid during the festive occasion. This has therefore stimulated the interest of Social Hearts to plan for another presentation.