



GYDlines

gender and youth development // NOVEMBER 2010

HELLO and GOODBYE

Well, it's November. This means, no turkey, no fall, no scarves. Bring on the hot season baby! This also means that Ghana is losing some really great people, including those members of the GYD committee. It's been quite some time since GYD has put out a newsletter, and for the start of this new GYD season, we, the new GYD committee members, wanted to kick things off by saying goodbye to all of you PCVs that will be leaving soon! Thank you Shauna Stribula, Rachel Rogers, Sinae Hong, Lisa Nicolaison, Maria Karlya and Ann Chandler for everything that you've done to help pass the torch along. We can only hope that we're as good looking and hard working as you guys.

With that said, many of you reading this probably have no idea what GYD is, or what we do, which is why we've decided to start at the beginning. So, here goes: **What is GYD?** *GYD is a Peace Corps initiative whose main goal is to focus on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and youth in development, through programming and projects. The GYD committee is currently made up of one Peace Corps staff member and ten volunteers based in all the regions of Ghana, who all hold individual job descriptions and responsibilities. What do we do?* *GYD is currently involved in a number of projects, including this newsletter, which we hope will be published more frequently in the coming years. In the past, each issue of GYDlines was centered around a theme, which is something that we may or may not keep in continuing issues. Other GYD projects include:*

Take Your Daughter To Work Day *Funded by NAWA (North American Women's Association), TYDTW is a program that serves to expose young women to various careers.*

Scholarships *In the past, GYD has provided scholarships to exemplary second year SHS students, all of whom go through an application process, to encourage them to complete senior high school. While this is something that we definitely want to continue, currently we are in the works of revamping the scholarship program.*

Women in Ghana book project *A new project that has been spear headed by GYD member and 4th year PCV Tyanna Clayton, the Women in Ghana book project is on-going, with the main focus being on highlighting achievements of women in Ghana. Hopefully something that can be published by the 50th Anniversary of Peace Corps, everyone is encouraged to seek out inspiring women for this book.*

What we're really trying to do this year is to help generate more funds for GYD through various fundraising programs, so that more money is available to future GYD activities. The GYD bake sale and date auctions have been just a few of the new ideas we're trying out. GYD, more than anything though, is a resource that every PCV can use to help promote gender equality and development within their communities. You don't have to be part of the GYD committee to carry out a GYD activity. Many volunteers have held leadership camps in their communities, while others have taught HIV/AIDS programs.

So, now that you're all a little more clear on what GYD is and what we do, use us! Help us! Tell us about your GYD activities! *This issue, since we're starting from the beginning, will hopefully give you all an idea of projects that volunteers have done in the past, and will encourage you all to take part in GYD awesomeness.*

- GYD Committee

OUR MISSION:

CREATE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO GENDER AND YOUTH EQUALITY ISSUES BY ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE, PROVIDING GYD RESOURCES AND PROMOTING COUNTRY-WIDE LINKAGES

YOUR NEW GYD COMMITTEE:

Gifty Abagre / Accra / Staff Advisor
Pego Jean-Paul / N/R / Chairperson
Sonya Dugal / A/R / Communications
Arjun Khosa / C/R / Partnership Building
Elyse Cleveland / UW / Programs
Peggy Mayo / UE / Fundraising
Stephanie Lagos / W/R / Scholarships
Lindsey Bishop / V/R / Resources
Rachel Diedrichsen / E/R / Fundraising
Rebecca Ross / BA/R / Training
Tyanna Clayton / A/R / Book Project



Girls take over the airways

-Elyse Cleveland / Wat/San / Upper West

**INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
PROJECT**

This past March, Elyse Cleveland wanted to get girls in her community in the Upper West to get take part in recognizing the role of women in society. Her and a volunteer teacher held an essay contest in Jirapa's all-girls Senior High School. The topic at hand was "Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for All." The three top writers than had the opportunity to read and discuss their essays over the airwaves of their local radio station on International Women's Day.

Elyse believes the project was a success. "It gave the girls a chance to reflect on women in their society, their roles, and what having equal rights means for them, their fellow classmates and their families and friends," she says. She also recognizes that utilizing the media gave these girls a chance to not only realize the importance of women in Ghana, but were also able to share these thoughts to the whole Jirapa community.

"I hoped to give the students a chance to share their experience and knowledge while building their confidence and skills. I wanted them to feel important, capable, and influential in their country especially when it comes to women's rights," Elyse adds. "By speaking on the radio it gave these girls a sense of confidence and importance that they will remember for the rest of their lives."



UPPER WEST GIRLS CAMP

-Jason George, Sinae Hong

We lit the bonfire and everybody danced. On the third night of camp, friendships had already formed between 48 girls from various parts of the Upper West region. The walls of shyness were broken and a mood of celebration prevailed as each girl shared a dance from her village. This was one of many high points that pervaded the week-long Upper West Girls Camp located at Talawona Village in the Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary.

The week began with introductions and ice-breakers followed by sessions focused on HIV/AIDS, health, leadership, confidence-building and, of course, friendship bracelets. The majority of the program was led by volunteer Ghanaians and four high school student camp counselors.

Ernestina stood in front of the group and unfolded in Dagaare the story of how she learned of her HIV status. Issahaque revealed the almost-magical properties of moringa and gave instructions on how to plant the seeds. Vivian, a local nurse, discussed information about HIV/AIDS and its prevention, setting the group atwitter as some of their number repeated the condom demonstration.

Dark rain clouds thundered ominously throughout the week and the heavens opened up more than once. But, despite collapsed bridges, flooding roads, difficulty with speakers and rain pouring down in sheets the group pulled through every mishap.

On the final day, the girls stood on the bank of the Black Volta, clad in puffy orange life jackets. The river was swollen and a storm brewed nearby. Although nervous for their first nautical experience, they would not be cowed. They braved the canoes for the river safari and soon returned with a grin pasted on their faces.

Later that night, the bonfire was lit again. The girls did not dance this time, but sat quietly with their friends around the fire like little warriors, ready to bring their victory home the following day.

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Seven volunteers from the upper west region, brought 3-5 girls from their respective communities to the Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary for a week-long girl's leadership camp. Everyone arrived on August 29th and departed on September 4th. Instead of having the camp be led entirely by peace corps volunteers, four SHS girls and three host country nationals were responsible for leading and supervising the program.

Throughout the week, the girls participated in programs dealing with HIV/AIDS, nutrition, environment topics, the importance of education, etc. There were also guest speakers that ranged from representatives from Ghana Health Service and a PLWHA (person living with HIV/AIDS). Outside of sessions, there was a lot of activities that encouraged the girls to bond and to get to know one another. At first, the girls were hesitant to venture outside of their circles of girls from their own communities, but as soon as we did team-building activities, the girls were having fun and becoming comfortable with each other.

The last night of camp, we had a huge cultural celebration! There was a large bonfire and we all stood around the circle and danced. Each community also showed off their own unique dances/games, and encouraged everyone to learn and join. In the end, the girls expressed to us that they learned valuable lessons, made great friendships, and learned a lot about what they are capable of.



Jason George
Education
Upper West



Sinae Hong
Wat/San
Upper West

UPPER EAST GIRLS CAMP

-Shauna Stribula / SED / Upper East

The first UE girls camp went off mostly hitchless. We learned many a thing about how to make the camp go smoother the next time around, but overall it was a success. Along with any number of team building and leadership activities we had a short period of time designated at the beginning of camp for an arts and crafts period. This stemmed in part from the pile of art supplies I've had sitting in my village for two years. After a few failed attempts at an art club, they have been gathering dust. So we decided to give it a go and see if we could inspire some creativity in the girls. This seemingly benign activity was probably the most surprising part of the whole camp. The girls whole heartedly embraced covering their personal folders in colorful designs. Using markers, crayons, scraps of cloth and popsicle sticks they each whipped up an original piece, worthy of hanging on any museum wall. At each break or few moments of down time the girls would all rush the supplies table to grab the items they had been coveting, the only discipline we had to give through the entire week was when we had to pry the crayons and glue sticks out of their hands in order to force them to focus on HIV/AIDS education. Though not part of the original camp design, art time turned out to be for many, the most memorable!



CAMP GGLOs

Eastern Region Camp GGLOW

-Lisa Nicolaison / Wat/San / Eastern Region

Volunteers of the Eastern Region organized a Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) this past August. The weeklong camp took place at Dorothy Wooldridge's Cocoa Tourism Guesthouse in Adjeikrom. 21 Junior High School girls attended and were mentored by 7 Senior High School girls from 6 different communities in the Eastern Region including the Afram Plains. A large portion of the camp was dedicated to HIV/AIDS education with daily sessions including basic education, stigma, and a panel of three PLWHA (People Living With HIV/AIDS). The girls also attended sessions on family planning, sexual health, relationships with men, goal setting, leadership skills, etc. There were also many fun activities such as bead bracelets, water sachet purse making, art projects, football matches, movie nights, dancing, and a bonfire with s'mores. The students were encouraged to actively participate in discussions about gender issues they encounter on a daily basis. Because the camp was held at a Cocoa Tourism site, there was also an environmental component to the camp including cocoa tours for all the girls, vetiver grass and moringa tree planting. Volunteers believe the camp was an overall success with overwhelming positive feedback from the participants. The girls who attended the camp were absolutely amazing and the Eastern Region is already planning ahead to next years camp GLOW!



Northern Volta Camp GGLOW

-Opie McGuire / Wat/San / Volta Region

In mid-May, Camp GGLOW (Girls & Guys Leading Our World) was held at the District Hospital grounds in Nkwanta, Northern Volta Region. Ten Secondary school students from Nkwanta, Brewoniase, and Kpassa served as leaders for about 40 JHS students from Kpassa, Nkwanta, Kue, Ofulsu, Abinyanya, Hohoe, and Tutukpene. Sessions were held on various topics including HIV-AIDS, Business & Savings, Study Skills, Leadership, and Gender Roles. Local business and organization leaders came and delivered presentations on their pathes to success. At the end of each day, groups presented dramas to demonstrate what they learned that day. A special part of the Camp was a craft session given by a teacher and a few students from the Volta Deaf School. The children were excited to learn and be able to see how hard work and attention to education can pay dividends. They were excited to go back and share lessons learned with other children in their communities.



GYDistings

Women in Ghana

Book Project :

An ongoing project that is focusing on highlighting achievements of Ghanaian women from all walks of life.

The process: 50 Ghanaian women to be interviewed and have their stories turned into narratives that will be published in this book, that will be then be used to integrate gender programming at the JHS and SHS levels.

Interested? :

1. Find inspiring women that are at least 18 years old.
2. Pick up an interview packet and a recorder from the main office or one of the sub offices.
3. Record the interview using the questions as a guide for the conversation.
4. Make sure the women sign the release forms.
5. Turn in the tape, interview notes and release forms to Tyanna McLaurin or Pego Jean Paul via office mailboxes.

If you have any questions contact:

Tyanna 054 116 1244
tyannaclayton@yahoo.com
or Pego 027 924 2679
pegojeanpaul@gmail.com

STARS LOGO

COMPETITION :

The STARS committee is having a logo competition for next year's conference. STARS (Students Taking Action Reaching for Success) is a week long youth leadership conference held for Form 2 SHS students.

To submit:

Logo must include "STARS : Students Taking Action Reaching for Success"

Deadline: December 17th

Send submissions to:
sonyadugal@gmail.com

A FEW WORDS ON CULTURE:

Traditionalism vs. Modernization – Everybody loses

Ana Fried / Wat/San / Northern Region

Traditionally, in polygamous communities around the world, when a woman marries she moves into the home of her husband and his parents. When the time comes for a man to marry, his new wife will move into his family's home. Often, a woman will marry a man from outside the community where she lives, meaning she must then move far from her family.

Due to separation and distance, Dagombas have developed practices to strengthen their family bonds. When a woman is 6 months pregnant with her first child, someone, usually her sister, will come to perform a ceremony preparing food and bringing small gifts for the mother and baby. This ceremony is as an essential ritual for a healthy baby to be born. Once the child reaches 5 years, the person who performed the ceremony has the right to come and ask for the child. Usually aunts will ask for their nieces (pringa pl.) at which point the young girl (priga s.) must move permanently to their auntie's house. It will fall completely under the auntie's responsibility to raise the child. The reasoning behind this custom is to bring families closer together but is also in response to the popular opinion that women will spoil their first child and therefore her sibling will provide with more discipline.

It is said that in the past these nieces/nephews who had to move into their mother's siblings homes were the most successful and powerful in the community. Before the introduction of formal education the prinsi had to fulfill the same duties as the cousins they were living and growing up with including farming, chores around the house and other day to day work, although they did receive harsher discipline. When schools first started to appear they were viewed as punishment since most children were beaten by their masters and many sent the pringa to school in order to discipline them. Receiving an education later became privilege and an expense, immediately excluding these children.

Dagomba men have the responsibility to raise their children equally. This tradition results in one of his wife's sister's children moving into his house, eating his food and

essentially becoming his own child. The introduction of material property meant families could no longer afford to treat these children as their own. They will naturally favor their own blood children especially financially and if they are sent to school the pringa will be excluded unless their biological family provides the money which is rarely the case.

Presently, as these individuals approach adulthood they face even more challenges. When the young girls want to marry they need certain things as a dowry (pots, pans, cloth) but they are often turned away from their aunties who will only support her own children and from their biological mothers who no longer view them as their responsibility. Without a formal education and financial support from either family they find it difficult to find work and many migrate to urban cities to work as porters (kayayo) making them highly vulnerable to STIs including HIV, pregnancy and poor living conditions.

It is contradictory to the essence of this tradition to accept your sister's child and consequently the responsibility to raise her as your own only to later favor own children with better opportunities. Traditionally this custom was very valuable as it forced women to come together to discuss and participate in the rearing of each others children. Sharing the responsibility of mother, aunt, and sister can bring women who have separated from their families together.

Sadly, many educated individuals believe that the only solution to this problem of inequality is to cease practicing this tradition yet ironically many continue to perform it. Even today they exist in almost every rural Dagomba family, but it is a tradition that is very slowly starting to be questioned. There is a very strong belief that if a woman who performs the ceremony for her pregnant sister and later goes to ask for the child but is denied it, the child will be cursed and its life put in danger.

This is one of the very sad instances in which modernization converts customs which were traditionally important and

positive into behavior that results detrimental to the community. There is no solution to this dilemma, this tradition will diminish or these children will continue to suffer inequality, both of which have negative outcomes for this tribe.

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NEXT ISSUE OF GYDlines:

February 2011!

Currently there is no theme for this next issue, but that doesn't mean we don't want to hear from you! Send us submissions on anything you think is pertinent to gender and youth development. We ideally would like more Ghanaian voices to be in our next issues, so if you know anyone with something to say, get them to write an article and send it our way! Pictures, drawings, cartoons, etc, of GYD related goodness are also welcome!

Send all submissions to:
gydghana@gmail.com

