

### **AUGUST 2025**

# **GROUP EMPOWERMENT**







IN BANGLADESH, GHANA, AND UGANDA

# PILLARS OF THE GROUP EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

Through your generous support, children and youth across Bangladesh, Ghana, and Uganda continue to overcome barriers and build brighter futures. From February to August 2025, 410 Group Empowerment participants received support in core areas:

Education: Students across all three countries received uniforms, books, and school supplies, giving them a sense of stability and allowing them to focus, participate fully, and dream big.



In Ghana, one student excitedly told her teacher about receiving a new schoolbag. Before that, she had to share a torn backpack with her brother because they couldn't afford one each. They constantly ran back and forth between classrooms to grab what they needed from the shared bag. Now, both of them can sit in class with everything they need, feeling more comfortable and prepared.

Another student shared that he used to have just one exercise book for the entire semester: "If I looked through my notebook, one page had science notes, another had math, another had English! It was hard to study for exams like that." With enough notebooks now, he's able to take proper notes and revise more effectively.



My name is Esther, and I'm 11 years old from Uganda. I come from a family with 10 children. Both of my parents are farmers, but a few years ago, my father was badly injured and hasn't been able to work since. As one of the youngest in the family, my education wasn't seen as a priority. I could only go to school if my fees were paid, but most of the time, they weren't. It made me sad to watch my siblings head off to school while I stayed home.

But now I don't have to be sad anymore because I have sponsors! I feel like the happiest girl in school. I get to go every day in my uniform, with school supplies, and I even get breakfast and lunch. When I grow up, I want to be a teacher. Thank you so much to my sponsors for helping me!

**Nutritious Meals**: Each day, students received healthy meals and snacks to keep them energized, focused, and well-nourished.

In Bangladesh, Body Mass Index checks are conducted every quarter to monitor each child's physical health. This helps identify when extra support, like nutritional supplements, might be needed. The program also extends beyond the classroom, providing older students with hands-on training and seeds to grow vegetables at home. This not only improves family nutrition, but also builds valuable skills and encourages self-reliance.

During midterm holidays, students in Ghana received food baskets filled with essentials like rice, cooking oil, milk, sardines, fruits, and vegetables. One student shared, "My grandmother fell sick during the holidays and couldn't work. I would have had to find a job instead, but the food basket we received meant we had enough to eat and I could stay home to take care of her. We are so grateful for the support."



Healthcare: In all three countries, students received access to medical care, dental care, and regular wellness checks. Girls received support to manage their menstrual health, while all students were taught essential practices for staying healthy, such as proper handwashing, using mosquito nets, and preventing disease.

In Ghana, many students received health insurance cards for the first time, allowing them to easily access medical treatment. A mental health session was also held to help students talk about stress and self-worth. One activity used balloons to show the harm of bottling up emotions, a simple but effective way to get students to open up.



In Bangladesh, each school day starts with a morning assembly that includes stretching, jogging, and other simple exercises.

These routines boost students' moods, improve their fitness, and help them focus better in class. During breaks, students enjoy playing cricket, soccer, and skipping rope, making the school day both active and fun.

In Uganda, whenever Florence got sick, her parents could only afford to give her part of the prescribed antibiotics. They would save the rest in case she fell ill again. Although their intentions were good, taking only a partial dose meant the infection was never fully treated, causing Florence to get sick more often. As a result, she missed a lot of school. Now that she receives group sponsorship, Florence no longer has to worry about the cost of medication. She receives full treatment when she's unwell, helping her recover more quickly and stay healthy.



**Life and Vocational Skills Training:** Helping young people build practical skills that support their future opportunities and personal growth remains a key part of this program.





In Bangladesh, in addition to advancing their skills in sewing and computers, students also got creative this past period by making items like pen holders, toys, and home décor out of waste materials. This activity encouraged both imagination and responsible resource use.

As shared in our last update, the Ghana program shifted direction at the start of the year to focus more on older students, who are at greater risk of dropping out due to the rising costs of education, early marriage, and the pressure to find work. This led us to begin working in Bubiashie, one of Accra's largest urban slums.

Since January, 60 children and youth in Bubiashie have been receiving support. Among them, 10 students enrolled in vocational training for catering, hairdressing, and dressmaking, with all fees and materials covered. Another 25 high school students took part in short-term training in pastry-making, soap-making, and hat-crafting. Like in Bangladesh, they also learned to turn plastic waste into items like aprons and vases, building practical skills while encouraging creativity and environmental awareness.



Parental & Community Engagement: Parental involvement plays a vital role in creating lasting change. In all three countries, awareness sessions were held to address major challenges such as child marriage, domestic violence, and child labour, as well as everyday concerns like preventing heat stroke and promoting hygiene.



My name is Swadhin, and I am from Bangladesh. I've always loved going to school, but when my dad got sick, he asked me to miss classes to help him in the rice fields. Though disappointed, I did what I was asked. But when my teacher noticed I was missing school, he visited our home and spoke with my father about how important education is for my future. Since then, I still help in the fields, but only before school. I'm happy I can continue learning while supporting my family. One day, I want to become a firefighter. I enjoy volunteering at community awareness events with my school, handing out flyers and learning from what I hear.

## **WHAT'S NEW?**

Interactive Learning In Bangladesh: Teachers have found that adding special events and activities to the school routine sparks students' enthusiasm for learning. During the last period, they organized two debates on thought-provoking topics: whether family plays a more important role than school in a child's development, and whether social media has more cons than pros for youth.

They also held a public speaking competition where students addressed issues such as air pollution, dowry, and human trafficking. These events gave students the opportunity to think critically, express their views, and strengthen their reasoning skills. At the end of each competition, winners and participants were awarded prizes.

#### Garbage Clean Up In Bangladesh:

To mark World Environment Day, students in Bangladesh joined a community clean-up and learned about the harmful effects of plastic pollution in their country. They saw firsthand how plastic waste clogs drains, leading to severe flooding during the monsoon season. They also learned how plastic contaminates rivers and soil, harms wildlife, and poses health risks when burned or broken down into microplastics. These activities helped students develop a deeper sense of responsibility for the environment and the importance of keeping their communities clean.





Student Accommodations In Ghana: Several high school students needed special housing support due to difficult home situations. One student bravely shared her experience of facing sexual harassment from a guardian. She said, "If I hadn't received accommodation support, I don't know what would have happened to me. I was scared the harassment might lead to something even worse. But now that I'm staying in a student hostel, I feel safe and can focus on my studies."

My name is Blessing, and I'm a final-year student in Ghana. Before I received housing support, life at home was really challenging. I needed a guiet place to study, but living near a busy market meant there was always noise. On top of that, I had to help my mother and siblings sell peppers at our market stall every day, which left me little time to focus on school. When exams came around, I never felt prepared, and my grades suffered. Getting to school was also difficult because, even though my mother sometimes managed to pay for bus fare, she couldn't always afford it. Now that I live in a hostel close to school, I finally feel confident about my studies. Before, I thought I'd only ever sell peppers after finishing school, but now I see a new path ahead.



Educational Tour In Ghana: High school students recently took part in an educational tour designed to introduce them to university life, inspire their academic goals, and give them a clearer picture of higher education opportunities. They visited three universities, meeting professors and students to learn about various programs and admission requirements. At one university, a midwifery student encouraged them with her story: "Don't let your background hold you back. I come from a single-parent home where my mother cares for six children, but I never let that stop me from pursuing my dreams."



The tour continued through Accra, where students visited landmarks including the Bank of Ghana, shopping malls, the High Court, and Jubilee House, the seat of the president. Their final stop was the Kwame Nkrumah Museum, where they learned about Ghana's independence and its first president. For many, it was their first time seeing these places, making the experience even more memorable.

Bible Camp In Uganda: Students in Uganda recently attended a Bible camp focused on discipleship training, with the goal of helping children and youth grow in their faith. They learned how to apply God's Word to their daily lives, lead by example, and understand the power of prayer. One grandmother shared about her granddaughter: "Hope can now open and read the Bible on her own, and she even reads it to her siblings before bed. I am so happy to see her growing into a strong Christian."









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