



CELEBRATING GROUP EMPOWERMENT

In Bangladesh, Ghana, and Uganda



Dear Friends,

I'm excited to share our latest report for the Group Empowerment Program, featuring stories and updates from Bangladesh, Ghana, and Uganda! Whether you support students in all three countries or just one, I hope you'll enjoy reading about the progress made over the last six months and all the exciting developments.

Your gifts not only positively impact the lives of the children and their families but also contribute to understanding of how best support can be provided. With your help, we can continue to build on this group sponsorship approach and reach even more children, in even more countries!

Thank you for your dedication; it truly makes all the difference.

Festus Addei
Director of Programs & Projects

PILLARS OF THE GROUP EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

When you contribute to the Group Empowerment Program, you help to give children and youth the opportunities to lead fulfilling and happy lives. Currently, 725 participants in this program receive vital assistance in the following key areas:

Education: Thanks to your generosity, 725 students are blessed to be able to go to school, equipped with uniforms and educational supplies.



Brian, a student in Uganda, is so happy to be part of this program. Growing up, his mother did what she could to support him, but working as a subsistence farmer, she could only ever afford three or four books and a pen for the whole year.

Eventually, he'd run out of pages in his notebook, ink in his pen, and new textbooks would be introduced that he couldn't afford. Over the years, this constant financial stress took a toll on his attendance and academic performance.

Now, thanks to the Group Empowerment Program, he no longer worries about school fees and supplies. Each term, he receives new materials that last the entire semester. He can comfortably learn in class, take notes, follow along in textbooks, and study at home.

In Bangladesh, we're happy to report a remarkable 95% pass rate for the students! Adding to the excitement, the schools have added a new module to the curriculum: the importance of volunteering and social philanthropy.



This addition aims to instill values of giving back, promoting not only the welfare of their communities but also nurturing personal growth.

In Ghana, 52 students completed the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) to transition from junior to senior high school.

Two of these students are Rachel and Jones, who earned the highest grades in their school! Performing well in the BECE is important for students as it determines their eligibility and placement in senior high schools. **Rachel and Jones' hard work paid off and secured spots for them in one of the best schools in the country.**



Jones expressed his gratitude, saying, "Being a part of the Group Empowerment Program has supported me so much throughout my schooling and encouraged me to stay focused. I hope to excel in high school and participate in the National Science and Math Quiz representing my school. **Thank you so much to International Needs and all my sponsors!**"

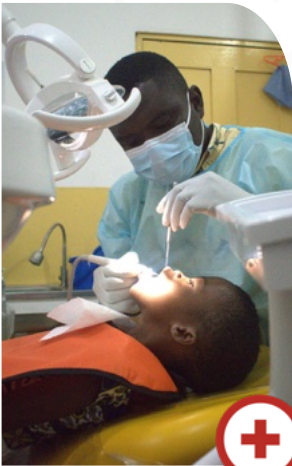


Nutritious Meals: Every day, 725 students enjoy one meal at school, complete with clean water and snacks to maintain their health, energy levels, and participation in class. Height, weight, and BMI are tracked quarterly to monitor their healthy growth and development.

Lunches typically consist of staples like rice, protein-rich stews with chicken, fish, lentils, or beans, and a mix of vegetables. Throughout the day, students receive snacks like fruits, eggs, and milk to help them stay focused in class. **What's more, teachers educate students about the importance of healthy eating habits and how well-balanced meals play a crucial role in enhancing their health.**



Healthcare: 725 students received healthcare support as needed. Doctors addressed a variety of health issues, such as fevers, colds, skin infections, and general aches and pains, and dentists also examined the students' teeth and provided guidance on good oral hygiene practices. Teenage girls were provided with sanitary napkins and soap, ensuring they could manage their periods comfortably without feeling as though they had to miss class.



In Bangladesh, a key focus this period was on preventing parasitic infections, which are quite common among children. This is because they often play and run in fields barefoot where worms can enter through the soles of their feet. These infections can lead to various issues such as anemia, weakened immune systems, and malnutrition. **To tackle this, students received deworming medicine and were educated on crucial practices like wearing shoes in specific areas and thoroughly washing after playtime.**



Life and Vocational Skills Training: In this program, skills training plays a crucial role in shaping students' personal growth and providing a well-rounded education. Over the last period, younger students engaged in easier activities like jewelry making and hand sewing, while the older students participated in activities like machine sewing and computer training. This aspect of the program not only nurtures creativity but also guides students in discovering their interests and considering future career paths.



In Uganda, some students, after learning to craft earrings, bangles, and necklaces with beads, took the initiative to teach their parents! Using inexpensive, locally available materials, parents worked with their children to create and sell jewelry or give it as Christmas gifts. This highlights the program's impact on not only students but their families too, extending the benefits beyond the classroom.

Parental & Community Engagement: A crucial aspect of the program is to involve parents, recognizing that a secure and supportive home environment makes a big difference in a student's educational success.

Within each Group Empowerment Program, regular parent meetings were organized to facilitate discussions between parents, teachers, and staff. **These meetings addressed various issues, such as any challenges students may be facing at school, important topics like child labour and positive parenting, and guidance to parents on how they can better support their children's education.**



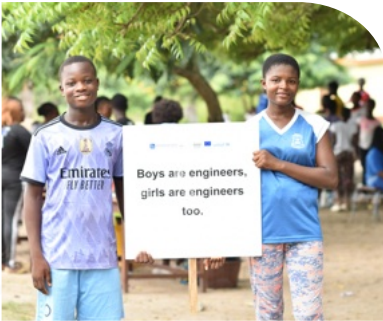
An inspiring example of parental engagement comes from Alif, whose son Sohel is supported in Bangladesh. Working as a cement labourer for modest wages, Alif struggles to meet his family's needs. **He is committed to supporting Sohel's education, driven by the desire for his son to enjoy more opportunities than he had growing up.**

Alif participates in parent meetings to understand how he can better support Sohel's education and nurture his dreams of becoming a pilot. The involvement of fathers like Alif is particularly noteworthy, as these types of roles typically falls to the mother. **His participation represents a positive shift, highlighting the growing recognition among fathers about the significance of educating their children.**



WHAT'S NEW?

High School Tour in Ghana: A tour day was arranged at one of the local high schools for students graduating from junior high this year. Students met with faculty heads and explored vocational departments such as construction, hospitality, mechanical, and automobile.

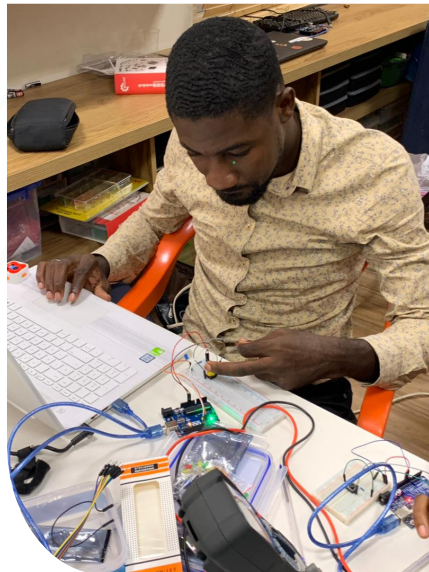


This experience was especially impactful for the girls, given the prevalent gender norms in Ghana that often influence career choices. The visit helped to challenge these norms and provide girls with the opportunity to explore and gauge their interest in pursuing careers in these fields.

Technical Training for Mentors in Ghana: In the Ghana Group Empowerment Program, mentors play a crucial role in guiding students in both their personal lives and studies. Recently, some of these mentors underwent training in Accra, focusing on robotics and computer programming.

The aim of this training was to empower mentors to cultivate not only technical skills but also a creative, problem-solving, and innovative mindset. Everyone involved thoroughly enjoyed the course!

Now, they are better equipped to support older students in their computer training classes and can even pass on some valuable skills to students interested in delving deeper into the world of robotics and computer programming.



Getting Creative in Bangladesh: Teachers have noticed that students really get into learning when it's turned into a game or competition. They've been setting up activities like debates, public speaking contests, and essay writing competitions, where students dive into current topics like mobile phones, the importance of learning English, and the roles of parents and children.



In a new activity, students had the chance to get hands-on by making paper structures. The goal was to encourage students to be creative and see what kind of structures they could come up with. Working together, they crafted some impressive creations!



Awareness Days in Bangladesh: In Bangladesh, staff and teachers place great importance in celebrating national and international awareness days. Over the last period, they observed the International Day for the Prevention of Violence against Women in August, Literacy Day and CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) in September, and Global Handwashing Day and International Day of the Girl Child in October.

Observing these days helps students understand and remember their significance, understand their origins, and encourage each student to become advocates for these important causes.



Bible Camps in Uganda: In Uganda, the schools have started to regularly organize fellowship sessions aimed at teaching children about Christ. These sessions involve praise and worship, reading the Bible, memorizing verses, and learning how to pray.

We're pleased to share that because these initiatives, 120 students have made a commitment to follow Jesus! Teachers and staff are dedicating time to meet with students on their spiritual journey, providing guidance and addressing any questions they might have.



THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone supporting the Group Empowerment Programs. You are helping to provide children with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to empower themselves and their communities, ultimately working towards transforming their futures.

GET IN TOUCH AND LEARN MORE

1-888-702-9805 | www.internationalneeds.ca | festus@internationalneeds.ca