



First day at CofA summer 2012 camp

Berekuso Chief and WomensTrust buy into the CofA vision

For this year's summer training camp 30 girls were selected from schools in Berekuso, Ayim and Pokuase, where far too many girls failed to pass their senior secondary school entrance exam. Earlier this year, CofA received the endorsement from Nana Oteng Korankye II, the Chief of Berekuso.

This year's cohort includes eight girls from the Pokuase Community in Greater Accra, who all receive scholarships from WomensTrust – a non-profit organisation that empowers women in Pokuase through micro-enterprise, education and health care – so they can stay in education. However, despite this financial help, many of the girls achieved poor grades in their senior high school entrance exam, due to the poor level of teaching. WomensTrust has become concerned about this and started looking for ways to help improve their grades.

Dana Dakin, WomensTrust's founder, came to hear about the work that CofA was doing and saw the difference it was making to girls and, in particular, their success in passing their entrance exam. WomensTrust decided that this was exactly what their students needed. Wilma Longdon, its executive director in Ghana: "The venue of the camp at the University of Ghana will provide additional inspiration for the girls. It is our hope that our participation in this year's camp will be the beginning of a longer term collaboration with CofA that will see more of our girls benefit from the summer camps."

Berekuso's Chief endorses the work of CofA

In May 2012, Alex Inkoom, Ashesi University's HR director and enthusiastic CofA supporter, facilitated a meeting where representatives from CofA and Women's Trust met with Nana Oteng Korankye II, Chief of Berekuso, to introduce both organisations and offer their programmes to the girls and women of Berekuso. The Chief was thrilled to hear about the CofA initiative and lamented the fate of girls in the village, eight of whom had recently become pregnant and dropped out of school as a result. Of CofA's work he commented that "it is the girls who get



Why CofA?

College for Ama (CofA) provides educational opportunities for adolescent girls in rural areas of Ghana to attain college education. Find out what we do and how you can help by visiting our website: www.cofa-foundation.org

pregnant not the boys and therefore they need special educational attention". He promised his personal involvement in ensuring that the selection of girls for the CofA summer training camp would be fair and reflect the need and potential of the girls. He was also excited to hear about the work of Women's Trust, which provides lending opportunities to female entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and hence have more money to support their families.

The Chief cited his own efforts to help women in the village by granting them rights to harvest and market products from his farm. He felt that there was a need for Women's Trust to work with the women in the village to be able to take better care of their children in school.

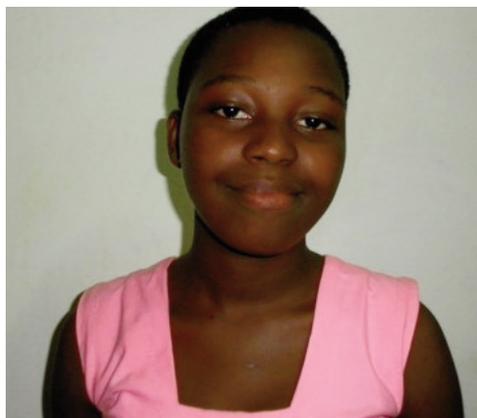
From left: CofA board members Adzo Ashie and Nana Apt, Chief Nana Oteng Korankye II, Women's Trust executive director, Wilma Longdon, and program development director, Gertrude Ankrah.

2012 summer camp kicks-off

CofA 2012 summer camp starts Monday 22 July with an opening ceremony that takes place at the Volta Hall Chapel at the University of Ghana, Legon.

This year's programme includes Maths and English workshops to find out where further training is needed to help the girls pass their senior secondary school entrance exam. The creative arts is another area where this year's camp includes bead-making and designing a tee-shirt. The girls will also be taken on the popular tour of Accra (remember last year's CofA girls spotting Mr Kofi Annan and posed with him for a photograph!).

This year's cohort consists of 22 girls from Berekuso and Ayim primary schools, two villages in Ghana's Eastern Region, plus eight girls from the Pokuase community in Greater Accra (see next story).



Gifty – a Takoradi Senior High School student

So what happened next?

Gifty is one of the 12 CofA girls who successfully entered high school last year. She took part in the 2008 CofA summer camp has now completed her first year at Takoradi Senior High School.

With above average grades, Gifty passed all her core classes. She came fifth in her English class, 11th in Computer Science and 7th in Physical Education.

Generational difference

Her story is typical of many girls from rural Ghana: one of six children - two boys and three girls - ranging in age between 6 and 22 years, in a household where mother is a farmer and father is a driver. Also typical is that Gifty's father completed Junior Secondary School, while her mother has no formal education. With all children in education, finances are often stretched and they may not always be able to

pay school fees on time. When this happens, students are sent home until the fee for that term is paid.

Before joining CofA, Gifty had difficulties with her Maths and lacked self-confidence – two areas that are covered in the programme. In her words: “CofA taught me to be proud of myself and not be intimidated by Maths.” After some help from the CofA Maths teacher, she found that this wasn't quite as difficult as she thought. Gifty also lacked self-confidence: “I was not confident to talk in public; now I can talk in public,” she says. Building confidence is part of the CofA programme and this also helped Gifty passing her entrance exam and completing her first year at senior high school successfully.

Transformation

“It never ceases to amaze me to see the transformation in the girls when they first attend our summer camp. Within a week they lose their shyness, become more confident and open up. With additional help with their English and Maths, this has meant that last year 12 out of 17 CofA girls entered secondary education, where previously there was a 100% exam failure from rural schools,” says Nana Apt, one of CofA's founders.

More help needed

This year, CofA provided Gifty and the rest of the girls with the money to buy all their books. However, there are not enough funds to help with school fees and it is hoped that donors can be found to help where this is needed. If you would like to sponsor a CofA girl, please contact us via info@cofa-foundation.org

With her new confidence, Gifty has the last word: “Cofa should continue doing the good work they are doing to help those who need help and God will bless them.”

“In Ontario there are no goats roaming the streets”

Early June saw the arrival of Mabel Wong and Kasey Furry, two students from Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada. They have come to give a helping hand with this year's training camp: working with the girls during the two-week camp and writing the evaluation report afterwards.

As well as a keen interest in international development issues, Mabel and Kasey come with specific skills that are useful to CofA: Kasey is studying for her Honours Bachelor of Education and has been a student teacher, while Mabel has volunteered with Laurier Students for Learning – a voluntary organisation that provides teaching experience for students who want to work with young children and teenagers.

This internship with CofA will give them a chance to work with an African-led NGO and experience the challenges that young women face in rural Ghana. For CofA, they will



Kasey Furry (left) and Mabel Wong

Get involved!

CofA is entirely funded through donations from friends and well wishers. Last year we received some generous donations, including a contribution of €5,425 that Erica Burggraaff collected from colleagues and friends on her departure from Regio College Zaandam in the Netherlands. Erica is now working in Ghana and actively involved in CofA's work.

If you have a novel idea of raising funds, we would like to know. Please contact us by email: info@cofa-foundation.org or visit our website: www.cofa.foundation.org

contribute to the planning and running of the 2012 training camp, follow-up on the achievements of the 12 CofA girls that are now in secondary schools and start laying the foundation for the much-needed administrative support. “I hope to help CofA develop project sustainability plans and start preparing the documentation required for future grant applications”, says Kasey. Mabel would also like to resolve some of the underlying problems that CofA faces and, at the very least, hopes to lay the foundations for future interns to build on.

For both students, this is their first visit to an African country. Kasey already noticed the huge number of NGOs that operate in Ghana and is glad to be part of a movement to see Ghana make progress, while Mabel thought that Accra is, in many aspects, not that different from Canada, perhaps with the exception of chickens and goats roaming the streets freely!

If you are a student and interested in a future internship and have relevant skills, please get in touch with us. We need all the help we can get.