

2020

A Photo Story

Defining Moments of Impact





The Ghana Health and Education Initiative (GHEI) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization, founded in 2004. We are based in Humjibre, a community of 6000+ inhabitants located in Ghana's Western North Region in the Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai (BAB) Municipality. GHEI's mission is to enable communities in the BAB Municipality to improve their children's health, learning success and opportunities by building local capacity and providing necessary resources and support. We envision a future where children—free from illness and illiteracy—can realize their full potential, a future where healthy, educated young people will lead their communities out of poverty. GHEI empowers communities in the BAB Municipality of Ghana to build that future through investment in children and youth.



The stories that matter - Connecting you to our world

We make sense of our lives and the world through stories. Regardless of our different backgrounds and perspectives, stories have the power to bind us. As GHEI's Communications Officer, visual storytelling is the most effective tool I have to bridge the space between those suffering from a lack of decent healthcare and education services in rural Ghana and my global audiences. After all, photos have the power to evoke change and stir conversations. They create a better understanding of the world, and inspire us to better act in the world. Photos can make you stop, feel, think and act.



The series of photos included here illustrate some of the work and positive impact GHEI has made in 2020. These in-between moments showcase positive action for sustainable development and offer a truly inspiring picture of our world in 2020. They underscore how 2020 was a year like no other, and this photo story is our reflection on the year's unique experiences. You will see how a grassroots NGO has played a big role in protecting rural communities from COVID-19, and in improving the well-being of women and children through sustainable community-based health and education programs.

Finally, it is the support of donors and partner organizations to GHEI that helps make positive change possible in rural Ghana. On behalf of the GHEI family, I extend our gratitude to our supporters. The people in this book have dreams of a better life, a better future - for themselves and especially for their children. We must make it possible for them to turn their dreams into reality.

I wish you an inspiring read!

Pratik Tandon
Communications Officer
GHEI



Public Address Systems (PAS) in Humjibre and other targeted communities were utilized to deliver 135 public health messages. PAS are shared information facilities for rural communities in Ghana. It is responsible for providing public information, announcements and news to community members. The speakers mounted high on metal or wooden poles blast information to village corners.



Mobile PAS were used in communities without information facilities. Being mobile helped us to reach larger number of community members who were at significant risk of contracting COVID-19. .



On market days at Humjibre, hundreds of traders and customers converge. They are always crowded, thus it is important to assist community members to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in markets. Health Program Administrator and resident of Humjibre, Agnes Obeng, shares Dos and Don'ts traders and customers should adhere to.

"You meet a lot of people on market days. It is necessary to engage with them. It helps to increase awareness and improve covid preventive behavior.," said Agnes.



Staff is delivering a public health announcement in Sefwi Bekwai, a semi-urban town in the BAB Municipality. Delivered on the day of the largest market, the announcements provided life-saving community awareness and education to thousands of community members.



Assistant Country Director, Enock Happy, listens to a community member who called for more information on COVID-19. After completing announcements and radio shows, we received a lot of phone calls from people who were interested in improving their knowledge of the disease, its prevention and protection. Information was shared in a manner that allowed individuals to learn (receive information and ask questions) and to make informed decisions about how to protect themselves, their families, and communities.



Fostering access to health information on COVID-19 through community radio, LORD FM. We regularly hosted a talk show called “Stronger, Together” which was an avenue for participatory communication featuring discussions on issues such as vaccines, prevention/protection, childcare, stress management, pregnancy/breastfeeding, stigmatization, and other topics of local interest. The program was motivated by community well-being and not commercial considerations.



COVID-19 information campaign in action. A community member reads informational flyers which provide critical information about the disease in the local dialect. Graphically designed, the flyers were pasted at key locations in the targeted communities bringing reliable guidance and tips for everyone.



Public Health Nurse from Humjibre, Isaac, interacts with an elderly community member about COVID-19. Response activities were carried out in partnership with health officials from community clinics who actively participated in announcements, thereby lending more trust and credibility to the messages being delivered.



Staff fixes a tap at the bottom of the veronica bucket. Veronica buckets were built using inexpensive and easy-to-find parts. The DIY approach ensured all handwashing stations were easy to maintain with spare parts available locally.



Tricycle is ready to embark on the distribution of handwashing stations. The response to COVID-19 was generously supported by transport workers who ensured we reached the targeted communities with the necessary equipment.



A man washing his hands. For people living in rural Ghana, access to hygiene facilities is largely poor or non-existent. Our handwashing stations offered hope to rural communities. The response focused on the promotion of hand hygiene as a frontline preventive measure against the virus.



Humjibre Community Library Administrator, Lawrence Donkor, explains Operation and Maintenance (O&M) procedures to a Community Health Volunteer (CHV). During monitoring and evaluation, Lawrence recalls keen interest and initiative by CHVs to ensure handwashing stations ran properly.

“The level and quality of community involvement were very positive, especially from Adobewura 1, Muoho and Ampenkrom.,” shared Lawrence.



Dorothy Gyabeng is eager to impress her teacher using the medium of mobile phone. We safeguarded Dorothy's right to education. She was among the 23 primary school students who received alternate "home school" lessons via mobile phones, textbooks, and weekly reading exercises to support continued learning during school closures in Ghana.



Through a COVID-19 survey, we engaged in active community dialogue and ensured a two-way communication channel was in place to listen to community concerns, combat misinformation and rumors. In-depth interviews were conducted with 289 community members to collect data on several indicators such as willingness to get a vaccine, knowing the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, etc.



Curious passerby talks to Agnes about COVID-19 when she was surveying a food seller. Actively listening to community members helped us to understand their current beliefs, knowledge and practices regarding COVID-19. Results from the survey were used to address misconceptions and stigmatization during public health announcements.



Kwame Mensah (popularly called “Ngyengyenfɛ”) keeps the world moving between Humjibre and Sefwi Bekwai. To promote safe and healthy rural transportation, we regularly provided Kwame and 40 more taxi drivers disinfectants to carry out routine disinfection of their vehicles. Staff demonstrated proper disinfection procedures and provided guidance on physical distancing and hygiene measures that can be implemented by both drivers and commuters to ensure the safety of all travelers.



To encourage compliance with safety measures, create more awareness and solicit feedback, we conducted group discussions with taxi drivers, thereby enabling them to share their experiences, tell stories and voice their opinions in the context of COVID-19. Through the discussions, we focused on understanding risk perceptions, debunked conspiracy theories, and provided information on the safety and efficacy of vaccines.



CHVs review a monitoring checklist for the handwashing stations prepared by GHEI. To ensure sustainability and community ownership of the response to COVID-19, CHVs have been appointed in each targeted community. They are trained by staff on proper O&M for handwashing stations and sustaining community awareness through regular announcements.



Health Program Administrator, Mensah, and CHV, Joyce, speak to a program participant from the Ampenkrom community who had received guidance and pre-delivery packages of items commonly needed at health facilities during childbirth. After her successful delivery, we returned to learn about her delivery experience and provided her with two baby blankets and four diapers.

During COVID-19 and through the Health Facility Delivery Incentive Program (HFDIP), we ensured safe deliveries for 100 women who received GHEI's support and chose to deliver their newborns conveniently and confidently at the health facility.



Health team converses with a HFDIP participant. Designed in collaboration with pediatric residents from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), HFDIP raises women's awareness of the benefits of delivering in a health facility, increases their decision-making power, and reduces financial barriers by giving pre and post-delivery packages.



Before embarking on a journey of parenthood, Hagar Asare and her husband Daniel receive counseling to effectively manage her pregnancy and make informed decisions about pregnancy-related issues. This is the beginning of the Mother Mentor for Child Development Program (MMCD) where we talk to couples about the care the mother and baby are likely to need. The counseling provides space for families to share often not talked about concerns. The goal is to help families adapt and take actions for the better health of the woman during pregnancy.



Akosua, daughter of MMCD participant Sarah, was born under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges and harsh realities of 2020, we ensured Sarah and her family had access to childbirth care, support to start breastfeeding, and to get medicines, vaccines and nutrition to keep Akosua and Sarah healthy.



Sarah Buadu breastfeeds her baby. Navigating first-time motherhood has been both an exciting and challenging journey for Sarah. Becoming a first-time mother during a pandemic came with unexpected feelings. She was understandably worried about whether the virus could be passed through breastmilk and what she could do to protect herself and her baby.

Our breastfeeding support to Sarah and dozens of first-time mothers ensured they could start and sustain breastfeeding safely. We will continue to encourage breastfeeding because benefits outweigh possible risks during the pandemic and may even protect the baby and mother.



Mother Mentor, Alice, and MMCD participant, Annette, are immersed in a one-on-one education session. Using flipcharts, the mentors provide 52 weekly education sessions focusing on nutrition, breastfeeding, infection prevention and cognitive stimulation. This personalized education needed for behavioral change is delivered in a consistent, supportive and locally relevant manner.



Elizabeth Ofori stands in front of her bio-digester toilet which was constructed by GHEI. For Elizabeth and her family, the lack of toilet facilities in their house meant they would have to share toilets with others or sometimes relieve themselves in the bush. This increased their health risks with additional consequences for Elizabeth when she was pregnant. During childbirth, clean water and sanitation can mean the difference between life and death for both mother and baby.

Having constructed a toilet for her home, she is now better able to protect herself and her family from sickness and disease.

To date, the MMCD program has built 46 household toilets.



Before starting Senior High School in Kumasi city, Bright Nkansah received a Long-Lasting Insecticide-treated Net (LLINs) to protect himself from malaria. Fifty-six students were provided with LLINs which help to prevent malaria and ensure children can attend school regularly. We believe in improving the school enrollment of disadvantaged children. The LLIN distribution is contributing to improving equity, enrollment rates as well school performance levels in Ghana.



Did you know the Humjibre Community Library is managed by a local Board of Trustees. Comfort Kwartsin, a Board Member, talks about the impact of the library on girls' empowerment in Humjibre.

"The Library is helping to empower girls. While we encourage everyone to visit the library, I especially encourage girls to participate in activities such as the reading club. A big impact has been that many girls are improving their literacy skills which otherwise they may not be able to do due to stereotypes and social norms. It makes me happy to see that our efforts are improving their self-confidence. They are inspired to pursue and achieve their dreams. I decided to join the library board because I want to help transform my community and create a more equal future. I am grateful to GHEI and its supporters for empowering me to lead and play the role of a positive role model."



The outbreak of COVID-19 in Ghana and subsequent “social distancing protocols” forced GHEI to close the library. The choice was difficult, but clear. However, this closure was an opportunity for us to reinvent the services. The education team cataloged 6700 books, labeled and painted the walls and the shelves for a beautiful and clean look.



Staff informs students about possible career paths, encourages them to set goals and continue their education to realize their professional aspirations.

During the pandemic, we hosted students from community schools for the annual Career Opportunity Lecture Series (COLS). The event was modified to repeat for three days and focused on a small gathering of students, ensuring a safe environment for all participants.



"I am glad to attend GHEI's Career Opportunity Lecture Series which has given me proper guidance about possible career paths and necessary skills required to stand out in the job market. I aspire to become a nurse and the lectures made me aware of the specific subjects I will have to study in school to achieve my goal. I am grateful to GHEI's staff and supporters to have allowed me and other students to empower ourselves and make the best decisions!"

~ Jemillah, COLS Participant



Front Cover - With the mobile PAS mounted on top of the taxi, Enock Happy delivers a public health announcement in Adobewura 1.

Page 2 - After completing announcements in Sefwi Bekwai, the team posed with the valuable mobile PAS.

Page 5-6 - Lawrence engages influential community members from Alata to build community support and ownership of handwashing stations.

Back Cover - In honor of past coordinators who had served GHEI since its inception, a Moringa tree was planted inside GHEI's compound on the occasion of GivingTuesday.

The End

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Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world Nelson Mandela



GO HOME!
The Root of Education
is Bitter But The Fruits Are
Sweet
Aristotle
George