

# The Yonso Project

2011 Annual Newsletter

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## About Us:

The Yonso Project is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit that currently operates in four rural communities in Ghana, West Africa: Apaah, Kyekyewere, Yonso, and Akrofososo.

Our mission is to increase access to education and economic opportunities for all residents in our partner communities with hopes to expand in the near future.

The Yonso Project is 100% volunteer operated in the US, and every cent of funding and donations collected reaches Ghana to uphold the goals of our organization.

## Reading Is Fundamental: Grant for Libraries

In 2007 the Yonso Project sent over 7,000 books to Ghana. Those books were split to stock both the Yonso library and the Apaah library (two neighboring villages).

Two years later, a third village, Akrofonso, located ten minutes down a bumpy dirt road from Yonso, asked for help to create their own community library. At the time they did not have a building that could be used as a library, and we did not have the funds to help them construct one.

Over the past two years, the community of Akrofonso has continued asking for help, promising

that if we get the books, they will build the library.

This year, Kwabena Danso, our Ghana Country Director, applied and were awarded a generous grant of just over \$5,700 US dollars from the Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation of Hong Kong. The grant provided funding for seven computers, books, maps, and educational games for a new library in Akrofonso.

Just like they promised, the community of Akrofonso expressed zealous commitment to the library project by constructing a library building. They also held a community meeting to chose a librar-

ian and establish rules of use for the library. It will open soon.

The grant also allows for quizzes and local spelling bee competitions. It is hoped that this will prepare students to compete in the regional and national spelling bees, with a chance to participate in the international spelling bee in Washington, D.C.



## Bamboo Bicycles: The Journey Has Begun



Bike Workshop

The bamboo bike program has achieved a significant milestone this year by producing a small profit, emerging as the second Yonso Project program (after microlending) to become self sustaining and able to operate independent of donor funding.

Throughout the year the program has overcome many obstacles, making success all the more well earned.

We have improved our production capacity significantly and can now (continued next page)...



## Bamboo Bicycles (continued)

As our workers' skills improve, the quality of our products is increasing and we are now adding artistic customizations to our frames and developing a more distinct brand.

In the coming year, we will focus increasingly on domestic marketing. This will enable us to continue providing reliable work for our bike builders while providing top quality bikes locally.

consistently produce over 10 completed bike frames per month. The increasing skill of our workers, opening of a new workshop, re-tooling, and effective inventory management have all contributed to increasing our production efficiency.



Jessica Hurlbert, from Vermont, was the first Teach Abroad volunteer. She taught children English for five weeks at the Akrofoso Junior High School. While in Ghana she visited the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, pictured above.

## Scholars Graduate and Look Forward

In the 2010-2011 school year, seventy-six students continued to be supported by Yonso Project donors. Elementary and Junior High students were provided uniforms, sandals, school bags, math sets, pencils, notebooks, and daily lunch. Several students were provided individual care, such as doctors fees, glasses and mattresses.

Fourteen of our scholars participated in a Peace Corps calendar art contest. But the biggest accomplishment is the graduation of seven high school students.

All our graduates who sat for the exam to enter college passed with very good grades. We are now looking at ex-

panding the scholarship program to include educational loans for scholars who chose to go on to college.

This summer, for the very first time, scholar thank you videos were created for sponsors. Videos can be seen on Youtube and our website. Many thanks and praise to each donor who support our students and their families; you are greatly needed.



Lunch time for middle school students

## Teachers Where They're Needed



In the summer of 2007 we started the Teach For Rural Ghana program, providing educational grants to students seeking a degree in

teaching. In exchange for the grant, the student, in collaboration with the Ghana Office of Education, agreed to teach at one of the rural communities we serve for a term of three years after completing their studies. This year, the first five of the program's candidates have effectively completed their teacher training degree programs.

Three of the teachers were posted at the Apaah Methodist Junior High School: Ataa Kwaretmaa, Benjamin Brefo, and Rita Appiah. The other two were mistakenly posted elsewhere due to an administrative glitch, but will be posted to one of the four communities we serve next year. These teachers will help with Yonso Project programs, activities, and monitoring our scholars more effectively.

## A Look At The Numbers

We have made significant progress towards achieving our long term goal of increasing the autonomy of our programs in Ghana. The majority of financial activity (both spending and revenue generation) now takes place in Ghana. The microfinance and bamboo bike programs are now both completely self sustain-



ing, operated entirely by the staff in Ghana.

Partnering with other organizations has been instrumental in expanding our funding, developing our programs, and identifying new opportunities.

Project	Income
MicroFinance	33,327
Donations	20,966
Grants	14,223
Bamboo Bikes	6,743
Other Projects	4,934
Haiti Project	1,437
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 81,630</b>

Program	Expense
MicroFinance	34,971
Scholarships	10,744
Salaries	8,016
Bamboo Bikes	6,683
Libraries	4,487
Office Expenses	2,602
Other Programs/Admin	1,363
Haiti Project	1,338
Fundraising	1,046
Teach For Rural Ghana	968
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 72,217</b>

\*\*\* New this year, the financial numbers above now include microloan disbursements and repayments from our Ghana office.

## Meet Janet Fobi

By Ghanaian standards, Janet Fobi owns a Wal-mart. She sells fresh food, cosmetics, underwear, clothing, shoes, candy, ready-to-eat foods, drinks, and school supplies. In the past eight months, she has proudly increased her store size by purchasing a shipping container which she has retrofitted as a storefront and fully stocked with goods (pictured right). This was not an easy task to complete at a price tag of 1,650 Ghana Cedis (\$1,115); yet Fobi is devoted to her trade.



It all began while she was a young girl just in junior high school being cared for by her single father. Finances were meager and so she took the initiative of selling candy. She purchased inventory by saving money through a savings club within her school. As time passed, she added kerosene, underwear, and cloth to her inventory. Her vision was to own a container and open a shop. From her increasing profit, Fobi continued to contribute daily to her savings.



Today, she has taken out six loans as a client with the Yonso Project and recently became community leader of the Kyekyewere program. Upon receipt of her last loan, she purchased what is now Onyame Aye Bi (God Has Done Well) store. Fobi is a single parent who greatly treasures her family, takes her business seriously, and maintains precise accounting records- a rarity in the community.

Her other goals include owning a taxi service and building herself a house. With her stellar repayment record and wonderful rapport, Janet Fobi is a pleasure to work with and a role model to fellow clients.

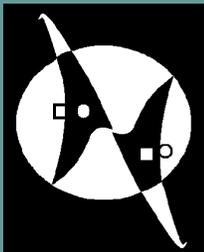
## THE YONSO PROJECT

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"Moving Forward Together"

### Forward Ever, Backwards Never: Ghana Office Changes

Samuel (Sammie) Boateng has joined our Ghanaian team as of as new Office Manager. He will primarily help with office organization, financial records, the libraries, scholarships and bicycle programs.

Congratulations to Selina Boateng, who has officially taken the lead over the microfinance program as Microfinance Officer.

Emmanuel Osei Jr., a previous Yonso Project scholar graduated successfully this year and has come aboard as a small hand to help until he begins courses at teacher training college in the near future.

Special thanks to Country Director Kwabena Danso for all his hard work and success in obtaining grants and media attention to our organization, which include his recognition as a International Youth Foundation Fellowship.

Lastly, we thank our dedicated Peace Corps volunteer Nivole Lowe, who has been with us for almost two years. Unfortunately she will be leaving us this coming summer, and we can only hope her replacement is equally as capable.



### \$10,000 Microfinance Grant Awarded

It has been an eventful year for the Microfinance program. Peace Corps volunteer, Nivole Lowe has been collaborating with the staff to significantly improve record keeping and program management. This has increased our operational capacity and enabled the program to begin pursuing larger funding opportunities.

As client activity and repayment volume increase, the need for secure cash storage in the office has grown and this year a double lock safe was purchased to meet that need. Alternatives to public transportation are now being considered in an effort to decrease transportation costs and our ability to visit clients.

After over two years of service our office manager, Bright Aidoo, has left the YP to pursue another non-profit opportunity to promote rural development. In addition to

his regular responsibilities our new office manager, Samuel Boateng, will be teaching literacy classes for our clients as a supplemental microlending program benefit.

To date, all loans have been repaid in full. At the end of the fiscal year, there are 111 current loans worth almost \$17,000. YP founder Nick Caccavo was recently recognized for his outstanding volunteer service by Wells Fargo and awarded \$10,000 for The Yonso Project. These funds are being used to bolster the microlending program and will have a significant impact.

Loan applications continue to be in great demand as more women continue seeking support. Men and those living with physical challenges have also approached the Yonso Project for assistance and we hope to be able to address their needs in the future as we continue to expand the program.