



## THE YONSO PROJECT 2013

*Moving Forward, Together*

YP Annual Newsletter, 2012-13

2013

### The YP Expands

As the Yonso Project reaches the close of its sixth year, it has many successes to celebrate. Thanks to the support of our numerous and cherished donors and partners, the Yonso Project has managed to expand its operations and change even more lives of some of the world's poorest people in rural Ghana.

This year, we reached the landmark success of working in 15 communities, providing microfinance services to over 500 women, employing unemployed youth and awarding scholarships to a total of 85 students. (Pictured above: some of our scholarship beneficiaries) We also started three new initiatives: life skills training for rural youth, computer lab provision for schools, and school spelling bees to promote literacy (see p. 3).

We have also experienced increased demand for our Bamboo Bicycles and a new contract to distribute them internationally starts in August (see p. 2). We are now currently in the process

of recruiting more jobless rural youth to produce bicycles to be sold in over 6 countries internationally.

That is not all: our expansion spans both operations and infrastructure. Thanks to our German partners, the Yonso Project is now putting up its own office and building a larger Bamboo Bicycle workshop to deal with the expanded scope of its operations.

Thanks to our efforts and your continued support, we are moving ever forward in our goal: to break the cycle of poverty that has captured so many lives in rural Ghana. We appreciate all your assistance in helping us achieve our goal.

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## Bamboo Bicycles Go International

This year, the Yonso Project signed a contract with a German company called MyBoo to coordinate the worldwide distribution of its bicycles and accessories.

Starting in August 2013, the Yonso Project bamboo bicycles and bicycle stands will be sold in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Brazil, Chile, Australia and the USA. We will continue to sell to independent buyers in other countries as well.

As a result of this significant increase in demand, we are employing around 10 more youth at our Bamboo (Products) Centre with the hope of employing more in the near future.

The additional revenue this new contract will generate will also help us increase our overall impact and ensure the sustainability of all programs.

Thanks, MyBoo and all our customers, for seeing the social as well as product value in our Bicycles!

*For more information on our Bamboo Bicycles or to place an order, please email [ypghana@gmail.com](mailto:ypghana@gmail.com) or visit [www.yonsoproject.org](http://www.yonsoproject.org).*

## Plans for New Bamboo Products

This June, three students and a professor from the International Product Development (IPD) graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania visited the Yonso Project. They spent five very fruitful days here assessing capacities and making plans for new Bamboo products.



Anna Coutourier and Yoshi Araki of IPD discuss products with Kwabena Danso, YP Director

They have been working with the Yonso Project since the beginning of the year, communicating electronically and via phone with Kwabena Danso, the YP Director.

After their brief but pleasant visit to Ghana, IPD and the YP are planning to introduce 3 new bamboo products to complement the Bamboo Bicycles: bicycle baskets, snack bags, and mobile phone holders.

Our new products will meet the same high international quality standards as our bicycles. Further, they will provide even more employment to rural youth as they gain popularity.



The IPD group at work

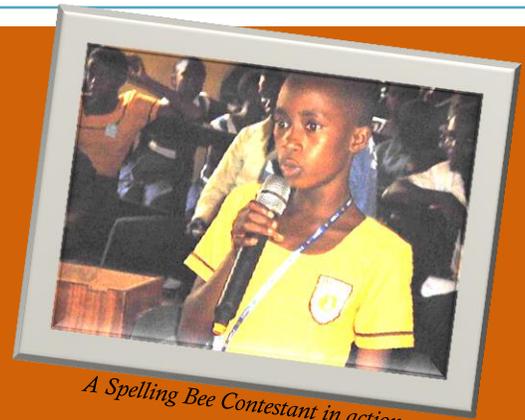
## Rural School Children Get Computers

For the first time since its inception, the Yonso Project, in joint effort with the Technology Services Corps, has been able to provide computer labs to rural schools. The two organizations have supported five rural communities with computer labs to support the education of children in these areas. The beneficiary communities include Bodwease in the Sekyere Kumawu District, Agona Akrofosu, Asamang and Bepoase in the Sekyere South District and Apaah in the Mampong Municipal Assembly.

In all, 90 computers were shared among the communities. Each computer lab has been furnished with 15 to 20 computers. These labs are serving about 2000 rural children who hardly have access to computers, which makes learning IT skills difficult. We thank the Technology Services Corps and their student volunteers for making this possible!



*TSC volunteers set up labs (above); students use computers (below)*



*A Spelling Bee Contestant in action*

## Literacy Boost for Youth

In order to improve students' reading skills, pronunciation and spelling capacity, the Yonso Project sponsored a two day Reading Skills Workshop for teachers at the Banko and Dadease Circuits with support from the Chen Yet Sen Family Foundation based in Hong Kong. The training was organized by the Ghana Education Service in the Sekyere Kumawu District. Forty-four teachers in twenty-two schools benefited from this workshop, after which they began to serve as reading club facilitators in their various schools.

This year, the Yonso Project also organized a very successful Spelling Bee competition for 75 students. Students were given prizes ranging from mini laptops and dictionaries to pens, books

## Life Skills Training

Last year, the Yonso Project received the Starbucks Youth Grant to start a youth-centered program. We used the funds to launch our Civic Clubs, which are clubs that promote basic life skills and knowledge to rural children who often do not have access to this information, and are more susceptible to teenage pregnancies and financial illiteracy. Our clubs also aim to instill a sense of social responsibility in students and actively encourage them to share the knowledge they gain with others.

These Civic Clubs have reached 600 students in 10 schools so far. Other schools have also started contacting us with requests to start these clubs for them, since they see a difference in the youth enrolled in them.



*Students prepare a presentation for their fellow club members as part of a practical learning exercise*

## Microfinance: Meet Rita Darkwa

Until 5 years ago, Rita Darkwa made a living by buying and selling tomatoes, hot peppers and eggplants for a small profit. She bought the vegetables on credit, for higher than wholesale prices, and would make a very small margin off them. "My business was always stagnant," Rita explains, in large part because she could not scale up enough.

With the first few loans the Yonso Project gave her, Rita was able to change this. She began to buy tomatoes at wholesale prices and make larger margins off them. Her shop expanded in size and products. "I used the [increased] proceeds to pay for my children's school fees," she says. Just as for many other beneficiaries, the loans provided by the Yonso Project helped Rita to better herself and her family's prospects.

Her children are all settled now, and have completed their education. Rita, however, is still growing her business, and has plans to expand into three new products before the year is out. The money she makes will help her as she grows older and needs to care for herself after retirement. She continues to come to the Yonso Project for support, and we are pleased to continue to help her empower herself.



*Rita Darkwa at her store. Through YP loans, she has been able to expand her once small store and send her children to school.*

## Microfinance Dept. Expands, Looks Ahead

The concept of expansion and progression that characterized the Yonso Project in 2012-13 has impacted the Microfinance Department as well. From just 36 women in 2007, the program now supports over 500 women. With an initial capital of \$2000, the program can now boast a capital in excess of \$30,000. But of course, our efforts alone could not have achieved this without your continuing support to help us make a difference.

In addition to our numbers growth, this year YP Microfinance expanded into two new communities. We have also started to increase the amounts we loan to exceptional women entrepreneurs. For the first time ever, we gave our first loan above \$300. We loaned \$1500 to a tried and trusted female entrepreneur and gave her the help she needed to scale up. We hope to continue this trend as the Yonso Project expands--to give larger working capital to women who have really distinguished themselves as entrepreneurs. We can afford to do this at little risk because we have a track record of collecting 100% of our loan repayments due to our prominence in the communities we work in.

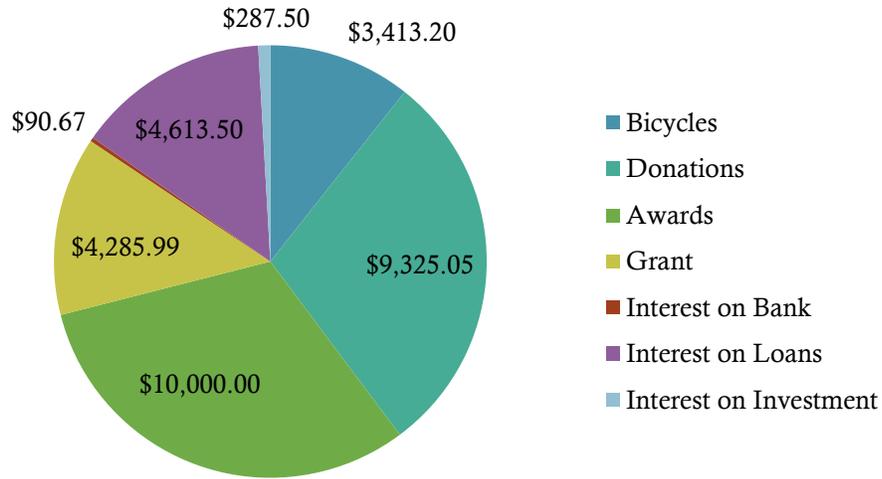


*Selina Boateng YP  
Microfinance Officer*

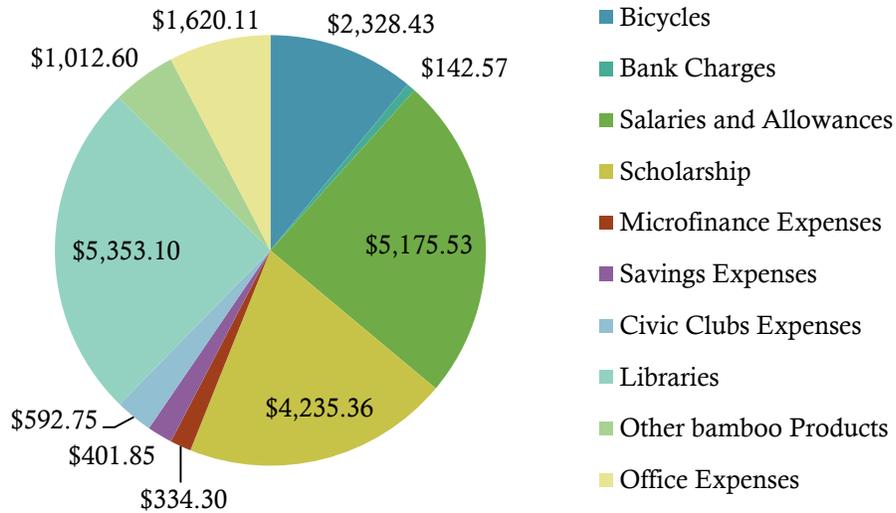
The Yonso Project has a solid name in these communities because our activities permeate them, bringing residents scholarships and employment in addition to microloans. This makes community members far less likely to default, and in the rare case that they do, loans are always recovered. Let us hope our activities continue to be as successful as we bring more growth to rural Ghana.

# YP Financials: Year in Review

## INCOME (\$32,000)



## EXPENDITURE (\$21,200)



*This year, the Yonso Project continues its trend of making surplus income to further benefit our communities. As compared to last year, our Microfinance program continues to grow, bringing in more funds to increase our impact. We also received and raised more funding for our educational programs, which have been running wonderfully.*

*In the near future, we expect a high rise in Bamboo Bicycle revenue, due to our new international contract with MyBoo (see pg 2). Please find a breakdown of our financials above. For last year's financials or other information, please email us at [ypghana@gmail.com](mailto:ypghana@gmail.com).*

# About The Yonso Project

The Yonso Project is a NGO in rural Ghana that works to **break the cycle of poverty** by improving access to 3 essential E's:

**Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship.** It was founded in 2007.

We currently run programs in **education, microfinance and job generation** as sustainable ways out of poverty. 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.

Please consider **sponsoring a child, buying our high quality**, sustainably reared Bamboo products or **donating** to support our activities.

At the Yonso Project, we would really

appreciate your help, and, more importantly, so would the **unemployed, disadvantaged** residents of rural Ghana.

**For more information, or to make a donation, please visit our website or contact us. We are excited to share our work!**

**Website:**

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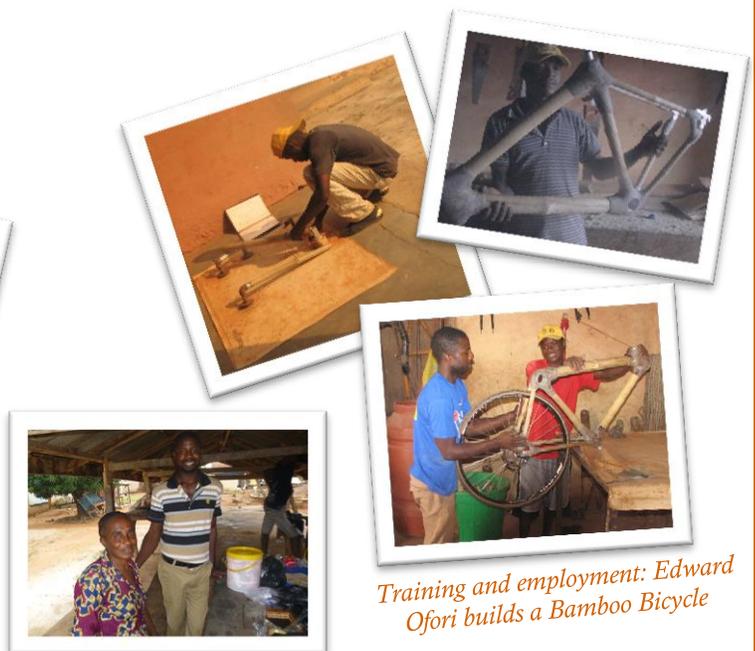
**Mailing Address:**

US: 1147 Virginia St., Berkeley, CA 94702  
Ghana: P.O. Box 106, Jamasi-Asante, Ghana

## You make it happen...



*Reuse, reuse, reuse! Civic Club scholars learn how to make crayons and handbags out of waste. Cecilia Berko, YP Education Officer, models a crayon necklace.*



*Training and employment: Edward Ofori builds a Bamboo Bicycle*

*Kwabena Danso and Microfinance Beneficiary Rita Darkwa*

**Thank you.**