

# The Yonso Project

Breaking the cycle of poverty in rural Ghana by providing access to improved educational and economic opportunities.

Annual Newsletter: July 2015

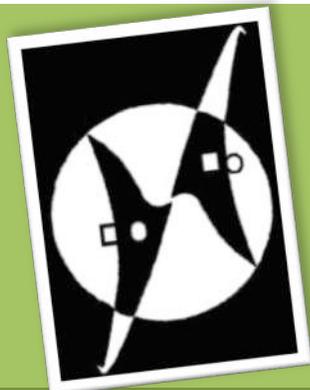


## In this issue:

1. Reading for All
  - i. The Reading Project
  - ii. Update on our Libraries
2. Scholars
  - i. Scholarships this year
  - ii. Featured Scholars
3. Microfinance
4. Update from Boomers
5. Looking Forward
6. Financial update

## Onwards and Upwards!

This year, the Yonso Project has seen some exciting new developments. We have re-envisioned our rural literacy program under the title “Reading for All,” and have complemented our libraries program with a teacher training program called “The Reading Project” (hear more on page 2). We have sought to expand our scholarship program and we have seen incredible successes from many of our outstanding students. Our microfinance program continues to thrive and our subsidiary social enterprise, Boomers International, has been growing in leaps and bounds.



## Interested in supporting the Yonso Project?

To donate online through PayPal, visit our website [www.yonsoproject.org](http://www.yonsoproject.org). If you would prefer to donate by check, please send to:

The Yonso Project  
321 Pine Street  
Hood River, OR 97031

Checks should be made payable to the Yonso Project. All donations are tax deductible. Please direct any questions or comments to Sonja Good Stefani, the YP Finance Manager, at (802) 272-7757. We appreciate your input!



## Reading for All!

Our campaign for rural literacy has been improved and expanded under the new program “Reading for All”

Followers of the Yonso Project may be aware of our projects building libraries in rural communities as part of our “Reading for All” program. The outstanding success of some of our library ventures has been the result of increased community involvement in reading and education as encouraged by the Yonso Project. In order to further encourage reading and academic curiosity, the Yonso Project, with support from the Chen Yet Sen Family Foundation, recently implemented an addition to the “Reading for All” program—an educational training program called “The Reading Project”. During a week-long training program last December, the Yonso Project sponsored an educational expert to train 42 teachers, parents, and students in teaching methods that make

reading an enjoyable activity, rather than the laborious task it is often portrayed as in traditional Ghanaian schools. These methods consisted of reading games, such as spelling bees, story-telling, and word-to-picture matching games, which show students that reading can be both educational and fun!

The results of this effort have been phenomenal! Across the board, in schools both with and without Yonso Project libraries, teachers have noticed huge increases in students’ eagerness to read. One teacher in the Dadease primary school, where the Yonso Project eventually hopes to establish a new library, reported that never before had he seen students checking out more than two books from the school’s

meager supply of story books, and returning them within days to take out even more!

Kwabena Danso, director of the Yonso Project, says he hopes to use The Reading Project to increase interest in reading among students, guaranteeing that when the Yonso Projects brings libraries to rural communities, these libraries will be put to good use. In tandem with the library program, the reading program will serve to increase the number of readers in areas where the literacy rate can be as low as 50%. With your continued support, we hope to grow the The Reading Project in this coming year and demonstrate to even more students that reading can be fun!

## Library Update

The Yonso Project continues to make progress in bringing exciting and diverse reading materials to schools throughout our region of rural Ghana. This year, with the addition of our newest library in Tano-Odumase, we have completed our eighth library in the Yonso Project's eight years of work to spread literacy through rural Ghana! Our Tano-Odumase library has been a huge success since its inception in 2014. Teachers have spoken enthusiastically about the phenomenal improvement in students' interest in reading, and the district head of education has said he expects to see a large improvement in Tano-Odumase's students' test scores.

The other schools that received libraries have also seen dramatic improvements in their test scores over the years. In the Akrofoso community, where we built a library in 2011, the local junior high school's pass rate on government exams has increased tenfold from 10% in 2011 to 100% last year! In Sekyere, where we built

a library in 2012, test scores rose from 87% to 100% in just one year, and remained at 100% for last year's exams. We look forward to the results for this year, which will be released this fall!

In the next year, we aim to continue improving rural students' access to reading materials by building three new libraries in local primary schools. As discussed in the "Reading for All" section, going forward we are going to build libraries in schools only after we have trained the teachers in the Reading Project curriculum and created a demand for reading materials among the students at the school. The three schools we have selected have demonstrated the greatest improvements in students' literary interests, yet none of these schools can provide the resources students need to develop a passion for reading. Within the next year, we hope to secure the funding we need to build these new libraries, spreading a culture of literary enthusiasm to hundreds of children here in Ghana!



# The Scholarship Program This Year

With the help of many donors over the years, we have been able to provide financial assistance to over 200 needy students. This year, we hope to continue to provide even more students with the opportunity to continue their education.



Providing accessible education is the core of the Yonso Project's mission and this year we were able to offer this opportunity to 42 students overall. We provided school materials and uniforms to 25 students in primary and junior high school. Furthermore, we provided tuition assistance to 13 students in senior high school and 4 in tertiary school. Many of our scholars had great success in their respective schools. All of them performed well in their classes and received passing marks on their exams.

After many successful years of running our scholarship program, we are looking forward to expanding our program this coming year. We hope to sponsor 75 students in primary and junior high school, 21 students in secondary high school, and 6 students in

tertiary school. At 102 students total, we are going to be supporting more scholars this year than ever before!

In order to sponsor so many students, we have sought donations through diverse outlets. We ran a bamboo bicycle frame raffle with the goal of raising USD \$2,000. Furthermore, we spoke to many different corporations around Ghana with hopes of attaining their support for our program. Currently, we



Students taking the required exams in order to qualify for our scholarships

are working on securing a partnership with some of the corporations we reached out to. Finally, for every bike sold by a Boomers distributor, 5% of the proceeds are donated to the Yonso Project. This year, this contribution will amount to at least a \$2,000 donation to support our scholars.

We know our scholars this year will continue to make us proud with all of the hard work they are putting into their academics. One scholar who we are especially impressed with this year is Charity, a senior high school student who is excelling. Another scholar whose story exemplifies our work is Sonanze. We have featured their stories on the next page so you can see the kind of brilliant students who we support.

## Featured Scholars

### Sonanze Kwame Yeboah



Sonanze's mother, Felicia Arko-Yeboah, never could have imagined such a bright future for her disabled son. Felicia was a teacher and was able to afford her

son's school fees until medical issues prevented her from working. However, despite his disability and the financial obstacles his family faced, Sonanze is now studying accounting at Kumasi Polytechnic thanks to the scholarship provided by the Yonso Project, and he dreams of using his education to become an economist or an entrepreneur. Sonanze says that he "smiles everyday" because of everything the Yonso Project has given him and he is so grateful for the opportunity to receive such a great education.

### Charity Antwiwaa



Charity is ranked first in her class at Effduase Senior High School and is a naturally brilliant girl. However, just a few years ago, it had seemed that Charity's school career had come

to end. Charity

lives with her grandmother and her parents provided her and her three siblings with financial support. However, when Charity's father passed away, her mother could no longer afford to pay for her education. For two years, all hopes seemed lost for Charity's academic future, and then she discovered the Yonso Project. With her scholarship, she was able to return to school and now she has ambitions to attend medical school and become a doctor. Charity would not be where she is today without her scholarship and, if her outstanding grades are any indication, she is going to become a great doctor one day!

## Our Microfinance Program

Since 2007, our microfinance program has changed lives in rural Ghana. We have supported over 400 women who run small businesses. This year, we continued to provide financial assistance to many local women by providing them with small loans and we maintained our impressive 99.9% repayment rate.

We look forward to supporting even more women in the future, but we need donors and investors in order to make that happen. If you are interested in helping us grow our program, please consider donating a gift or investing in our program. On our website, you can look to the "Microfinance" page to find

a very comprehensive investor packet which includes success stories from women who we have lent to in the past and a contract for investors.

With your help, we can offer more women and their families the opportunity to break free from the cycle of poverty!



New bamboo frames complete with colorful kente cloth



Our rental program at the Royal Senchi Hotel in Ghana



Ghana Blackstars player Stephen Tornado Appiah with his new bike

If you are interested in ordering a bamboo bicycle frame, check out our website:

[www.boomers.com](http://www.boomers.com)

Or email Kwabena Danso at [ypghana@gmail.com](mailto:ypghana@gmail.com)

## Update from Boomers: Business is Booming!

Boomers International, the Yonso Project's subsidiary social enterprise, has grown by leaps and bounds this year! In our first year in business, we were able to manufacture and distribute about 200 bamboo bicycle frames. We currently have distributors in Germany, Australia, and the Netherlands and we are in the process of establishing relationships with distributors in Canada, Holland, and the United States. With every bike purchased from one of our distributors, 5% of the proceeds go to the Yonso Project, so with every new distributor, more people in rural Ghana are able to escape the cycle of poverty.

Not only has our business grown, but also we have been revolutionizing our product. Through the creative brainstorming of our employees, we have designed a new bike frame that allows the riders to carry cargo. Furthermore, we have begun to produce frames that are adorned with kente cloth, a traditional Ghanaian cloth that is woven in local villages. This new addition brings a dash of color and more Ghanaian personality to our frames. Currently, we are producing bikes with red, blue, or green colored kente cloth. We hope to continue to differentiate ourselves and produce even more outstanding bicycles in the future.

This year, we had many significant accomplishments. We established a rental partnership with the Royal Senchi, one of the most renowned hotels in Ghana. Now guests at the hotel will be able to bike around Senchi on our bicycles made right here in Ghana. Also, our Executive Director, Kwabena Danso, attended the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Program in Nigeria. There he was able to participate in a bootcamp and also receive a grant in order to help grow Boomers even further. Additionally, we were able to gather some significant media attention by donating a bicycle to a retired Ghanaian football player, Stephen Tornado Appiah.

Looking forward, we plan to continuously improve our frames, expand our product lines, and find new distributors. One of the biggest projects we plan to take on this year is to buy bamboo plantations here in Ghana so that we can manage our own raw materials and grow some new species of bamboo. Having easy access to our raw materials will help us increase production even further to meet the demands of the coming year.

The future of Boomers is looking bright and we thank you for all the support that has gotten us to where we are today!

## The Yonso Project Looking Forward

Over the years, the Yonso Project has been able to make an incredible impact in the communities we work in. We have helped make education accessible to over 200 young people, provided loans to over 400 women, and built eight libraries. We hope that our new Reading for All Program will help to expand our reach to even more disadvantaged youth. With the help of our donors, we have improved thousands of lives here in rural Ghana. With continued support, we hope to improve thousands more in the years to come!

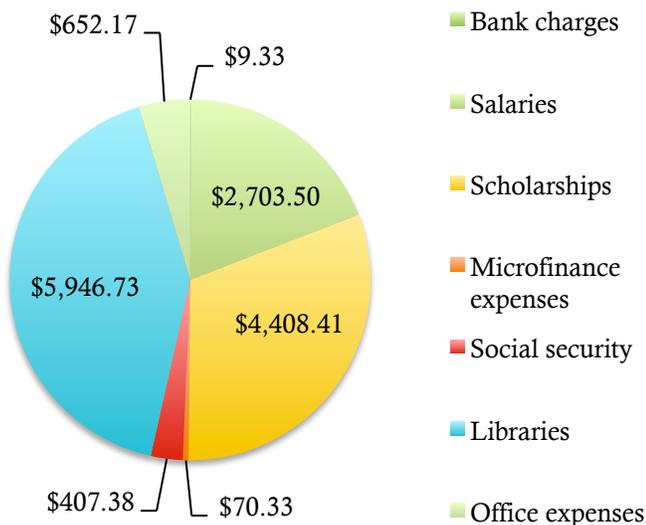
*Moving Forward Together*

**Thank you for your support!**



## 2014-2015 Fiscal Year Financials

### Expenses USD \$14,197.86



### Revenue USD \$12,642.15

