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I.N. NETWORK GHANA

Walter Pimpong
1ST Quarter, 2011

Dear friends,

Juliet Fianu is 20 and lives with her grandparents. She was not educated and had no skills. At the age of 17, Juliet felt she had no choice but to depend on men to sustain herself. She had multiple relationships in order to realize enough income for a living. Some of the men were abusive but she had nowhere else to go to and had to submit to them.



Walter Pimpong chatting with Juliet in her workshop

Juliet is like many young women in her community located in Chorkor, a depressed community with a rundown infrastructure. This suburb of Accra was once a planned residential community in the 1950s. Over population and the lack of maintenance of houses and infrastructure resulted in the creation of a slum. The population is about 30,000 people living in about a two-square mile of land. The community does not have any good hygiene and sanitation. The outlook of young people in this community reflects to a great extent the depressed nature of the community. It is not uncommon to have children as young as 12 pushed to the streets by their parents to fend for themselves. The abuse of drugs and the indulgence in sex is a common pastime among these young, unemployed, and uneducated people.

In 2009 I.N. Network Ghana, with funding by I.N. Network United Kingdom, started a three-year training project in the Chorkor community for victims of commercial sexual exploitation; 81 young women were identified, counselled, and placed in a training program. Leaders and churches in the Chorkor community were actively engaged in the formation of committees to locally oversee the program. The spiritual nurture of these young women was very critical in the creation of new identities for themselves. Project officers from I.N. Network worked closely with these women and served as role models.

These young women acquired skills in dressmaking, hairdressing, manicure, and pedicure. Three of the women acquired skills in batik tie and dye making and are producing this fabric for sale in Accra. After almost one year of training, most of the girls trained in Chorkor can make dresses, provide pedicures and manicures, as well as do different hairstyles with little or no supervision.

The need for this project arose from lessons learned from the previous project where interactions with community members revealed that young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years were victims of commercial sexual exploitation. It was found that young girls engaged in commercial sex because they were poor, lacked financial support, had dropped out of school, and did not have any employable skills. Many of them ended up as teenage mothers and had two or three children with different men.



Juliet with fellow apprentices in their workshop

Juliet decided she wanted to have a different lifestyle and enrolled in the project in 2009. She was known to never smile when she came to the shop. She was always the first to enter and the last to leave. She was hard working and within a year acquired the skills to sew. She now smiles because she can partially take care of herself from the sales she makes. "Do you still keep men to help you?" I asked. She smiled and responded, "I do not need to keep those abusive men because I am able to fend for myself by selling the clothes I make."

Praise and Prayer

- Thank the Lord for the support of our partners making a difference in the lives of many like Juliet.
- Thank the Lord for the young women who are committed to learning and giving themselves to the Lord.
- Thank the Lord for the committed staff of I.N. Network Ghana who risk a lot to be in this slum community.
- Pray for growth in the lives of these young women.
- Pray for I.N. Network Ghana reaching out to 4,000 children and young adults in other projects.
- Pray for a deeper devotion to the Lord in our work.

Blessings,

Walter Pimpong
Director, I.N. Network Ghana