

Girls Thrive in WomensTrust's Educational Programs

Computer Education Key to Girls' Future Success

By Jeanie M. Barnett, Member, US Board of Directors, WomensTrust

Sophia. Patience. Gifty. Beatrice. Grace. Forgive. They are among a group of smart, enthusiastic girls who come from school each afternoon during the week to a makeshift classroom in Pokuase, thrilled to spend the next two hours learning about computers.

WomensTrust was first able to offer computer classes in 2009 after a generous donation provided funding for 20 PC laptops and allowed us to hire a local instructor. Since then more than 100 girls have attended the class. Most public schools in Ghana can't afford computer labs, especially those in rural villages like Pokuase, so without WomensTrust's classes these girls would have little likelihood of learning the important computing skills they need to build better futures for themselves.

This past January, I visited our office in Pokuase and dropped by one of the computer classes being held in an adjoining room. Two dozen girls, ages 9 to 16, sat at desks and took turns using the laptops, as their teacher, Dominic Osei, guided them through the basics: turning on the computer, creating a password, logging in, saving work, sending emails.

The girls were rapt and completely engaged---the kind of students every teacher hopes for. Yet, challenges remain. Power outages occur on a daily basis in Pokuase and throughout Ghana. Sometimes there is no electricity for hours at a time, and computer batteries have a short lifespan.



Most apparent is that there are simply not enough computers to go around.

Our goal is to provide computer education to each one of the hundreds of girls currently in our scholarship program (we've awarded 700 to date), to empower them with skills they'll need to succeed in the world. But the waiting list to join the classes is very long and we must secure more funds to purchase additional computers and hire more instructors.

Want to make an investment in a better future for girls in Africa? Become a supporter of our computer-training program for girls in Pokuase.

WomensTrust is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to empower impoverished women and girls in Africa through microfinance, education, and access to healthcare in order to break the cycle of poverty and create a better future. Please support our programs by making a donation to WomensTrust via our website at www.womenstrust.org. Or mail your contribution payable to: WomensTrust, 276 Newport Rd., Ste. 214, New London, NH 03257. EIN #56-2426898



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In Her Own Words

Why Education is Important to Me

*By Peggy Saanuo,
WomensTrust
Scholarship
Recipient*



My parents are from the Dagaartis tribe, from the northwest region of Ghana. Traditionally, when it comes to education boys are favored over girls. It is considered a waste to invest in girls' education because they will marry and have children. This culture of discrimination against girls has a negative impact on women's progress, and the society as a whole.

Yet, my father gave an equal education to my three siblings and me. He believes the legacy you leave for your children is quality education, not the wealth you have acquired. He says, "If you think education is expensive you should try ignorance."

Education can transform Ghana and it is time women are acknowledged as equal members of our society.

Partnering for Success

Our **microfinance programs** for women in Pokuase have received new funding from two leading foundations that support organizations devoted to empowering women through entrepreneurship.

Women's Empowerment International, based in San Diego, has renewed and expanded its funding to WomensTrust with a grant of \$20,000 for calendar year 2012.

The Social Visionary Foundation of New York has honored us with a \$50,000 grant in support of our microlending programs.

Both of these partnerships allow us to offer our services to hundreds more women in need of working capital to expand their enterprises and earning power. We are proud and deeply grateful to have the support of these two wonderful partners.

One of the ways I would like to help my country is to study medicine. I want to become a cardiologist. My dream is to become a role model for women in Ghana.

This June I will graduate from high school thanks to a scholarship from WomensTrust. You'll be happy to know that I have been accepted to Providence College in Rhode Island with a full scholarship from the school, and will be pursuing my dream there beginning this fall!

I am highly indebted to WomensTrust and appreciate the impact they have on my life. I will continue to make you proud in many endeavors. Saying THANK YOU cannot describe what you have done for my family and me.

Empowering Rural Women

*By Gertude Ankrah, Development Director,
WomensTrust*

Every February thousands of women gather together in New York City to explore the critical issues facing women globally. Thanks to a sponsorship from **Anglican Women's Empowerment**



Gertrude Ankrah (seated) with UN conference

(AWE), I traveled from my home in Pokuase to New York to speak on a panel at this year's gathering, the **56th Session of the United Nations' Conference on the Status of Women**. The event confirmed for me that women's empowerment is not a destination but a lifelong journey.

This year's conference focused on rural women and their role in eradicating poverty and hunger across the globe. Being born a woman in a rural village automatically puts a lot of obstacles in your path. But I'm certainly not alone on the journey. I was able to personally meet with women leaders like US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice; Melanne Verwee, UN Ambassador at Large for global women's issues; Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee; and Pan-African Women Parliamentarians' President Gertrude Mogela.

I returned to Pokuase inspired and ready to work harder than ever in solidarity with other rural women. I thank the AWE – and all its sponsors and supporters – for making the dream of this rural woman come true. 