

# St Mary's Skill Training Centre Profile Jan 2010

## Section A: Contacts

Address: St Mary's Skill Training Centre

P.O.Box 45  
Lawra. UW/R  
Ghana. W/Africa



Contacts/In-charge: **Hon Alexis Faakaay-e –Assemblyman** assisted by the following:

Rev. Fr. Jonas Santah - Parish Priest  
Mr. Zakariah Boreh - Chairman  
Mr. Bede Nuah - Youth Patron

Mrs. R. Die - Adviser  
Mr. Joseph Kulah - Technical Adviser

## Section B: Statements and Principles

**Mission Statement** -To reduce poverty and empower women towards self-sustainability in the Upper West Region of Ghana and in Boo community in particular.

**Vision Statement** - Educating girls leads to better child-care and reduces poverty for the whole family and raises the standard of living in the family.

**Statement of Intent** – With the necessary resources in place, St Mary's Skill Training Centre will eventually become a center that helps in providing quality living to the youth not only within the community but at the national level.

**Working Principle** – The administrative body mentioned above, has a policy of accountability and transparency that has been admired by international organizations such as Action Aid Ghana Ltd and friends of Rev. Br Patrick Norah abroad. You Touch Africa UK, Action Aid Ghana Ltd., the Missionaries of Africa through Rev. Br Patrick Norah, were some of the major contributors to a 3-classroom building that was commissioned by the Regional Minister of the Upper West Region Ghana, on the 12, Dec 2009.

## Section C: Aims

### Our Aim

In partnership with the Boo community, the Sacred Heart Parish of the Catholic Diocese of Wa, the Ministry of Boo Youth Development Association (BOYDA) and other donor agencies, we aim, to provide learning equipment to recently complete St Mary's Skill Training Centre which consists of 3-classrooms, an office, a store and now 25 students, so as a/ to offer life skills to girls and boys aged 15-25, b/ raise the standard of living in Boo community and its environs, c/ minimize the outflow of unskilled young girls to towns, where they are susceptible to exploitation.

## Section D: The Background Story

### Sociological and Economic data

- Total population: about 2500 inhabitants
- Source of income: The source of income in the community is basically through peasant farming, rearing of animals, poultry, brewing of the local beer called *pito* which is done by women.
- Literacy levels: About 70% of the population is illiterates. Although a good number of the beneficiaries are school drop-outs, the centre admits boys and girls who have not had any formal education and train them in proficiency.
- Average number of students to be trained per year: About 15 students will be trained per year.

Type of skills:                    a/currently provided:

- Knowledge in dressmaking
- Knowledge in home management
- Knowledge in basic human rights
- Knowledge in childcare
- Knowledge in Religion and Moral Education

b/ to be provided:

With the new classroom building that was commissioned on the 12 Dec 2009, a weaving department has been opened with effect from January 2010. It is our intention to open a catering department in the future depending on the availability of resources.

## **History**

### Chronological Background Information

In pursuing the Educational Reforms launched in 1987, the Government of Ghana gave prominence to Technical and Vocational education as means of developing the middle level manpower of the nation. This is to ensure that majority of candidates terminating their academic programme at either the JSS or SSS level, acquire employable skills that would enable them to adequately function within the economy.

In this regard, the Government had invited private participation from Churches, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities and individuals, towards the realization of this noble objective. Encouraging community ownership and management of education and other social facilities not only reduces the financial burden on Government, but also ensures their sustainability and relevance to the community.

In this light, St. Mary's Skill Training Centre was started in 1999 in the Sacred Heart Parish, Boo, Wa diocese, in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The Project was initiated by the late Mr. D.A.Dong, a retired educationist from Boo.

The Catholic Church in Volvera in Italy, through one late Rev Sr. Nazarene provided a

little financial assistance and sewing machines to kick-start the project under several different dilapidated buildings. The Department of Community Development provided a staff in the person of Madam Georgitha, on secondment. When Madam Georgitha left, the District Education Office Lawra, allowed Madam Alice to team up with Madam Josephine to run the school.



## **Project aim**

With the decline in the quality of education in Ghana, standards in rural communities are very low with high drop-out rates especially among girls as compared to urban communities. Poor facilities and lack of teaching and learning materials are some of the factors for the poor performance in rural areas.

St. Mary's Skill Training Centre is a Community-Based Women Training Centre (CBWTC) which aims at training young girls in vocational skills and educating women in general; in hygiene, maternal and child care and nutrition. The centre is open to women well beyond its geographical location. The Project therefore forms part of a wider existing regional, diocesan and national programmed.

### **Project Objective**

The primary objective of the project is to empower women to assert their right to education through a skill development programme. The skill training will enhance self-reliance and support systematic changes towards a better socio-economic development in the project environs.

Other objectives are:

- To prepare young girls in the management of home and family
- To train women as agents of change
- To address the issue of the HIV and AIDS pandemic as well as hunger and malnutrition. As the saying goes, "prevention is better than cure".
- To reduce the rate of youth migration leading to streetism
- To reduce teenage pregnancy

### **Project Goals**

Successful candidates are expected to acquire the following skills:

1. Knowledge in dressmaking
2. Knowledge in home management
3. Knowledge in basic human rights
4. Knowledge in childcare
5. Knowledge in Religion and Moral Education

### **Activities**

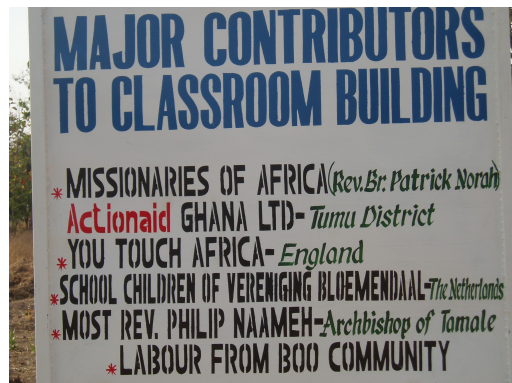
In order to achieve the Project objectives and the overall goal, the following activities are currently taking place:

1. Dressmaking
2. Home management
3. Needle work/craft
4. English language

5. Arithmetic
6. General Knowledge/Current Affairs
7. Religion and moral education

The community has the intention of expanding the activities to weaving, catering and computer literacy depending on the availability of the necessary resources. It is also the hope of the community that a technical department would be opened to boys. At present the school admits any young girls/women who are interested in learning fashion and design irrespective of educational background. Even those who have never been to school are admitted. Though in principle the school runs a three-year programme in fashion and design, in practice, participants progress at their own pace, thus making it flexible to meet the needs of the individual.

The elders of the community generously provided a 10-acre land free of charge as part of local contribution to the project. A 3-classroom building with a store and an office was commissioned on the 12/12/2009 due to the intervention of multiply parties amongst which are: Missionaries of Africa (Br. Patrick Norah), Actionaid Ghana – Tumu District, Most Rev. Philip Naameh, Archbishop of Tamale, School children of St. Chad’s Primary school, South Norwood, UK and St. Luke’s Form Sixth Form College, Sidcup, UK, through the charity You Touch Africa (UTA) – England, School children of VERENIGING BLOEMENDAAL –The Netherlands, communal labour from the community among others.

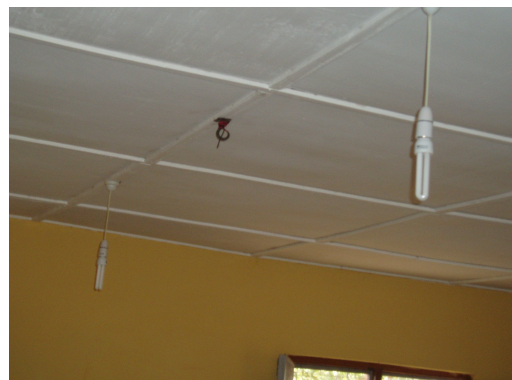


## Section E: Currents Situation and Appeals

### Current Situation and Needs

#### *Achievements of the Project*

As the centre is still very much at the infancy stage, candidates do register with a nearby centre - Bishop Oscar Morin’s Centre Ko, for the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) exams. Seven candidates have successfully sat for the NVTI Grade II. Some of



of the graduates from the centre are working in Day Nurseries and at the same time running their own fashion and design business.

Since the opening of the centre, the project has succeeded in restoring life and dignity to a good number of the beneficiaries through self-employed initiatives. We are looking forward to the day when the school would be absorbed into the mainstream Vocational Schools.

### ***Challenges***

Though there are lots of success stories on the project, we are still faced with numerous challenges. First of all, the people of the project area are largely peasant farmers. As such their income levels are dismally low with over 70% considered to be below the poverty line. They are therefore unable to sustain the project only through local contributions. It is increasingly becoming difficult to run this laudable initiative due to inadequate financial support and other essential logistics.

Secondly, the elopement of students poses a big challenge to achieving the aim and objectives of the project. Other immediate challenges facing the achievement of the aim and objectives of the project are:

a) Allowance of teachers

Until Dec 2009, when two National Service Personnel were posted to the school under the voluntary National Service Scheme, the teachers of the school (2) have been basically running it on voluntary basis. The community gives a token allowance which is nothing to write home about. Humanly speaking we all need some incentives to deliver.

b) Accommodation

Due to lack of accommodation, some potential beneficiaries are unable to make use of the centre. It is hoped that with adequate accommodation people from outside the project area will be able to benefit from the project.

c) Teaching equipment

With the opening of the 3-classroom block enrolment has increased leading to more demand for teaching equipment such as sewing machines and other administrative logistics.

### **Future Plans/targets**

- Communal work on toilet facilities is beginning this January 2010. This is to be completed before the raining season which starts in early May.
- It is hoped that catering department would be opened as to when resources are available. As a long-term plan, it is hoped that the centre would provide technical training for boys.

### **Action Plan**

Education is critical and of relevance to poverty reduction, especially in the area of human capacity building. It is obvious that the nation's future depends on the development of its youth. Investment in people does not only enrich their lives but also lays a foundation for long-term economic growth and development.

Behind every successful programme lies the interest, commitment and the contribution of other stakeholders to it. Therefore, the development of people requires sustained, long-term commitment of inputs from a range of partners. In line with this, the community appeals to any individual/group of people/organization to support the project either in kind or in cash.

#### *Appeal from local community:*

In order to meet some of the immediate needs of the centre, some literates originating from the community have recently donated six sewing machines to the centre. The Upper West Regional Ministers, Hon Khalid Mahmud, at the occasion of the commissioning of the 3-classroom building promised Gh¢ 500.00 (five hundred Ghana cedis) the equivalent of £210.00, towards further development of the project. Also, the local Member of Parliament Hon Ambrose Dery, promised giving an allowance of Gh¢ 100.00 (about £42.00) to each of the two voluntary teachers every month for six months starting from January 2010. Furthermore, the Ghana National Service Secretariat has given us two teachers (one woman and one man) both paid by the Secretariat. This brings the total number of teachers to four.

The community is ever ready to provide communal labour as community contribution to any development intervention. This is evident in the recently completed 3-classroom building and other projects such as Day Nursery, KVIP, Junior Secondary School building that have been put up with communal labour from the community.

***Appeal from You Touch Africa:***

Following your agreement, from what remained of the money you gave for the furniture, we were able to wire the 3-classroom building ready to be connected to the national electricity grid. (Photos on wiring of the building have been sent to you). This would enable the students and staff to make use of electrical appliances relevant to the programme for more in-depth studies.

With the electricity that would be in place we need electric machines for embroilment etc. At the moment we have only one to start with. One of the teachers from the Ghana National Service Secretariat is a man with experience in men's fashion. In this light, young men who used to be left out of the programme are now welcome to learn tailoring. This brings about the need to have sewing machines that are peddled. The peddled ones are preferred by men to that of the hand which are normally used by women over here. I have been able to buy one peddled machine to start with as we look for more. At the moment, if we could get 10 of the electric machines and 10 of the peddled machines that would be of great help in achieving the aim and objectives of the project.

Below are the estimated prices for the electric and peddled machines as at, 9/01/2010.

The symbol *Gh¢* is what is used for the currency in Ghana. It stands for *Ghana cedi*. At the moment the exchange rate is Gh¢ 2.40 to £1.00

Item	Quantity	Unit price in local currency Gh¢	Total price in local currency Gh¢	Total price in £
Electric sewing machines	10	150.00	1,500.00	625.00
Peddled sewing machines	10	135.00	1,350.00	562.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>285.00</b>	<b>2,850.00</b>	<b>£1,187.50</b>

***Contributions from other organizations:***



On the occasion of the commissioning of the 3-classroom building, further appeal was made to Action Aid Ghana Ltd. Though they expressed interest in promoting the emancipation of girls in the community and its environs, no practical action has been taken up yet. I am in correspondence with them.

Once more, on behalf of the students and staff of St. Mary's Vocational School, the entire community of Boo and on my own behalf, I say a big **THANK U** for your support in making a better world for those in need.

Prepared by Br. Patrick Norah  
(Project Co-ordinator)

On 12/01/2010



Celebrating the Inauguration