

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES INITIATIVES GHANA (RRIG)



**NARRATIVE REPORT ON THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS PROJECT
IMPLEMENTATION IN THE NZEMA EAST MUNICIPAL IN THE WESTERN
REGION OF GHANA**

REPORTING PERIOD: DECEMBER 2018 TO DECEMBER 2022

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1.0 BACKGROUND

Rights and Responsibilities Initiatives Ghana (RRIG) in collaboration with the Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights (ARHR) with sponsorship from UNFPA worked in the Nzema East Municipal in the Western Region for the period December 2018 to December 2022.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITIES

The objectives of the Adolescent Girls Project (AGP) were:

1. To create a safe space for out-of-school adolescent girls to reduce unplanned and unintended pregnancies.
2. To link out-of-school adolescent girls to adolescent health friendly services.
3. To reduce unsafe abortion among adolescent girls.
4. To educate out-of-school adolescent girls with disabilities on SRHR as a human rights
5. To build the capacities of out-of-school girls with disabilities on SRHR information and services
6. To equip out-of-school adolescent girls with the necessary skills to protect themselves from Gender Based Violence.
7. To reduce unsafe abortion among adolescent girls.
8. To reduce Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV and AIDS
9. To inculcate in the girls the benefits of economic independence
10. Prevention of Covid 19 infection

3.0 PROJECT COMMUNITIES

The project was implemented in the communities in the Nzema East Municipal:

- Accra Town
- Amanfokuman
- Apewosika
- Nkekem
- Brawire
- Bankyim
- Bokazo
- Bolazo
- Ewuku
- Nsein
- Solo
- Anto-Apewosika

4.0 ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS REACHED

A total of **57,671** adolescents participated in the activities, out of this number **33,051** girls were between the ages of 10-14 years while **24,620** were between the ages of 15-19 with **60** Girls with varying Disabilities.

A total of 10 parents were reached with 1 of them being male and 9 females

15.0 ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING THE PERIOD

During the period of the project, the following activities were undertaken:

- Girls Peer Network Meeting (Girls Space Forum) to create open space for girls to express their views
- Drama Events to facilitate the demand for Family Planning
- Girls with Disabilities Sports Day
- Training of Girls with Disabilities
- Adolescent Health Fairs
- Meeting and training of parents to support the Adolescent Girls Project in the District
- Capacity Building for Community Facilitators, Health Providers, Adolescent Health Champions and RRIG Staff

6.0 PARTNERS AND FACILITATORS

The institutions below were our partners and facilitators:

- The Nzema East Municipal Chief Executive, Axim
- The Nzema East Munipal Co-coordinating Director, Axim
- The Municipal Health Directorate, Axim
- Department of Social Welfare and Community Development
- Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ)
- Association of Persons Living with Disabilities
- Traditional Authorities
- Religious Authorities
- Health staff

7.0 STATISTICAL DATA FOR HEALTH CHAMPIONS

YEAR/AGE RANGE	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
10-14 YEARS	-	6,325	8,196	10,174	8,356	33,051
15-19 YEARS	-	5,456	6,032	7,093	6,039	24,620
TOTAL	-	11,781	14,228	17,267	14,395	57,671

8.0 STATISTICAL DATA FOR PROJECT ACTIVITIES

YEAR/AGE RANGE/SEX	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		TOTAL
	10-14	15-19	10-14	15-19	10-14	15-19	10-14	15-19	10-14	15-19	
GIRLS SPACE FORUM			173	256	356	211	283	113	191	132	1,715
DRAMA EVENT			53	44	42	25	69	33	24	22	312
HEALTH FAIR			156	85	168	72	86	30	71	15	683
TRAINING OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES					7	13	6	14	10	10	60
TOTAL	-	-	382	385	573	321	444	190	296	179	2,770
							MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
MEETING WITH PARENTS									1	9	10

8.1 GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

TYPE OF DISABILITY	PHYSICAL	AUTISM	VISUAL	HEARING	DEAF & DUMB	CLIPPLE	TOTAL
TOTAL NUMBER	40	2	5	3	5	5	60

9.0 COMMUNITY FACILITATORS

NAME

- Ebenezer Nickson
- Felicia Tetteh
- Monica Otoo
- Vincent Appiah
- Patricia Gyeidu

COMMUNITY

Solo
Apewosika
Nkekem
Bankyim
Ewuku

10.0 HEALTH PROVIDERS

- Dorcas Somah Arthur
- Margaret Essoun

11.0 KEY MESSAGES SENT OUT BY HEALTH CHAMPIONS TO PEERS

- Avoid watching pornographic movies
- Avoid bad friends
- Teenage pregnancy can lead to school drop out
- Wash the vagina with only clean water
- Frequent change and wash of under wears
- Dry under wears in the sun
- Avoid use of antiseptics and soap to wash private parts
- Avoid inserting of finger or any object into the vagina
- Visit the hospital when there are discharges, itching or offensive smell for early treatment
- Wash hands after visiting the hospital
- Wash fruits and vegetables with salty water before eating
- Shave pubic hairs when grown
- Bath at least twice a day
- Brush teeth at least twice a day
- Clean teeth and rinse mouth after every meal
- Avoid eating too hot or cold foods
- Limit the consumption of sugary foods
- Practice oral and body hygiene
- Abstinence from sex
- The use of condom
- Practice Family Planning
- Causes and effects of teenage pregnancy
- Menstrual hygiene
- Causes and effects of Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Peers were always encouraged to visit their CLF and Health Provider to learn about personal Hygiene during their menses, avoiding Teenage Pregnancy.

12.0 EMERGING ISSUES THAT WERE CLARIFIED BY THE CLFS AND HEALTH PROVIDERS WERE:

- Sex during menstruation cannot lead to sex
- Giving birth early can help you to take good care of children
- Peer Group Influence
- Causes of body and mouth odour and ways of preventing teens
- The need to abstain from sex
- The need for the girls to have self-control and self confidence
- Peers were always encouraged to visit their CLF and Health Provider to learn about personal hygiene during their menses and avoiding teenage pregnancy

- Causes and negative effects of teenage pregnancy
- Sexuality education for positive SRHR choices
- Building of self esteem
- Assertiveness
- Personal Hygiene
- Effects of Drug abuse
- Effects of negative peer pressure
- Prevention and management of STIs, HIV and AIDS including partner notification
- Effective use of contraceptives
- Effective communication among their Peers, Parents, CLFs and Health Providers on ways to avoid Sexual and Gender Based Violence.
- Family planning helps space child birth
- Importance of maintaining good personal hygiene
- Domestic abuse
- Increased risks of HIV/ AIDS
- School drop out
- Puberty
- How to maintain your positive stance on abstinence

13.0 MISCONCEPTIONS THAT WERE CLARIFIED BY THE SUPERVISORS

- Taking recreational drugs helps boost one's appetite. This not true, it should be avoided
- The use of herbal medicine to treat STIs. The facilitator explained that the best treatment for STIs is the use of antibiotics.
- Giving birth early can help you to take good care of children. That is not true, it will rather bring hardship on you

14.0 TRAINING SESSION FOR PARENTS TO SUPPORT THE AGP IN THE DISTRICT

The purpose of the training was to provide training for Parents to support the Girls on the Adolescent Health Project on daily basis on Child Rights under the theme: "Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and Preventing Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)."

The objectives of the activity were;

- To educate the Parents on SRHR and Child's rights
- To build the capacities of the Parents on SRHR information and services
- To equip the parents with the necessary skills to protect themselves and their Adolescent Girls from Gender Based Violence.
- For the parents to share their experiences and lessons from the previous training.

It was noted that Parent Child communication was a very important tool for the upbringing of the child so the parents promised to do so at least twice a week. It focused on the achievements of the parents with regards to facilitating Parent-Child Communication sessions with their daughters.

All the parents present supported the idea that parents/guardians should have open discussions with their daughters and sons on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) to enable their daughters and have positive values about SRHR.

They all reiterated that regular communication with their daughters regarding positive family values had paid off with their daughters being open about their relationships with their friends and other family members.

It was noted that Parent Child communication was a very important tool for the upbringing of the child so the parents promised to do so at least twice a week.

It was noted that child upbringing is a shared responsibility thus both parents and guardians and sometimes the extended family should support the girl in providing her needs including personal hygiene to prevent the girl from getting involved in transactional sex.

On SRHR, it was agreed that contraceptive use was important for the adolescent girls who are sexually active. It was also reiterated that it protects their Sexual and Reproductive Health, supports them to complete their education, profession and skill training and enable them to become economically independent before the girl starts her family.

All the parents present supported the idea that parents/guardians should have open discussions with their daughters and sons on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) to enable their daughters and have positive values about SRHR.

Both fathers and mothers underscored the importance of the quality time with their daughters has encouraged the girls to focus on their education, apprenticeship and other training they are undergoing. The mothers especially said the discussion/education on SRHR with their daughters have made them understand that delaying the onset of sex has huge benefits as they can concentrate on their academic potential and economic independence.

One of the participants lamented that about 80% of the school children from Class 4 to Junior High School (JHS) owns mobile phones which detract teaching and learning. He called on the parents to refrain from giving their wards who are under age mobile phones with SIM cards in them as it distracts them from learning.

15.0 DRAMA EVENTS

The rationale for this activity was to facilitate demand for family planning and redress of SGBV, Teenage Pregnancy, STI/HIV, unsafe abortion and SRH in the District and to equip the Adolescent Girls with relevant skills to protect them from Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights violations by boys and men and to link the adolescents to SRH services at adolescent friendly centres. The meetings were facilitated by RRIG staff with support from the Community Level Facilitators (CLFs) and the Adolescent Health Champions in the communities.

The objectives of the activity were:

- To create a safe space for out-of-school adolescent girls to reduce unplanned and unintended pregnancies.
- To equip the Adolescent Girls with relevant skills to protect them from sexual and reproductive health rights violations by boys and men and to link the adolescents to SRH services at adolescent friendly centres.
- To facilitate demand for Family Planning and redress of SGBV, Teenage Pregnancy, STI/HIV, unsafe abortion and SRH in the Municipality
- To link out-of-school adolescent girls to adolescent health friendly services.
- To reduce unsafe abortion among adolescent girls.
- To reduce Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV and AIDS

The Peer Network Meeting was attended by adolescent girls aged 10-14 years and 15-19 years. Other stakeholders include:

- Community level Facilitators
- Representative from the Ghana Health Service in the Nzema East Municipal
- Adolescent Health Champions
- Adolescents from various communities
- RRIG staff

The drama focused on education on the following:

- Effective parent –child communication
- Teenage Pregnancy
- The need to avoid early sex
- Family Planning
- Negative consequences of girls rebelling against family values
- Stigma and discrimination suffered by teenage mother
- Avoiding bad friends and peer influence

- The need to focus on one's education and
- Neglect by the males when the teenage girls get pregnant by them.

Participants were encouraged to take up contraceptives if necessary, prevent early sex as to avoid unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and unwanted babies, prevent drug abuse and focus on their education.

16.0 ADOLESCENTS HEALTH FAIRS

As part of the activities, Adolescents Health Fairs were organized during the period. The purpose of the Health Fairs was to provide the adolescent girls and girls with disabilities with education on promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and information on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

The Health Fairs were attended by Girls with Disabilities, Adolescent Girls, Media, Health Providers and Community Facilitators from the various communities:

The objectives of the activity were;

- To educate the adolescents and girls with disabilities on SRHR information and services
- Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy and STIs (HIV/AIDS)
- To equip the adolescents and girls with disabilities with the necessary skills to protect themselves from Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) through games.
- To encourage the adolescent girls with disabilities to unearth their talents through games

The participants were taken through;

- Family Planning
- Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS
- Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)
- The delay of the onset of sex and benefits of contraceptive use
- Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy
- The delay of the onset of sex and benefits of contraceptive use

Other activities include:

- Questions and Answers
- Recap of the day's education
- Singing Competition
- Musical Chairs
- Dancing Competition

The facilitators touched on the topic, 'Causes and Effects of HIV/ AIDS and SRHR issues.

They explained that HIV is a virus that attacks the body immune system, weakening its ability to fight disease – causing germs

They noted that some of the causes are:

- Unprotected sex
- Sharing sharp materials such as needles, nails and blades.
- Kissing infected persons
- Through infected blood transfusion

They also stretched on the signs and symptoms as:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| • Diarrhoea | • Tiredness |
| • Vomiting | • Severe Headache |
| • Sore throat | • Blurred vision |
| • Cough | • Weight loss |
| • Breathlessness | • Skin rashes |
| • Prolonged fever | • Persistent diarrhea |
| • Aches and pains | • Mouth ulcers |
| • Night sweats | |

They again emphasized the prevention mechanisms as:

- Avoid sharing sharp objects
- Avoid casual sex and limit sex partners
- Regular check-ups for STIs
- Use sterile needles/syringes and other piercing instruments
- Frequent tests on HIV and AIDS status
- Avoid unprotected sex
- Use condoms during sex
- Screen of blood before transfusion

They reiterated that if HIV infection is left untreated, it can develop into AIDS which is the final stage of HIV infection. Again, it was noted that there is no cure for HIV infection, early diagnosis and treatment can slow its progression.

They advised the adolescents to be mindful of the causes of HIV/AIDS and if they see any of the symptoms, they should rush to the hospital or any health facility closer to them. The girls were able to digest the topic and were able to sight examples concerning the causes and effects which they promised to avoid such situations.

Also, they advised them that they have the rights to say no to the opposite sex when they receive sexual advances from them and should report them to the appropriate quarters.

They also admonished them to avoid unprotected sex and focus on their education or trade so as for them to be economically independent when they become adults. And that they should focus on their education because when they get pregnant, they may be abandoned by their male counter parts.

Other Activities

The following competition were held:

- Dancing Competition
- Musical Chairs
- Singing Competition

Presentation of Prizes

The winners were presented with prizes in the form of books, stationery, Notebooks etc being wrapped.

18.0 TRAINING SESSION FOR OUT-OF SCHOOL GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

The purpose of this activity was to provide training for out-of-school girls with disabilities to build their capacity on Legal Literacy, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Information and Services and Life Skills. The topic for discussion was “*Rights of Persons with Special Needs/ Persons with Disability*”.

The types of disabilities were: physically impaired, visually impaired, autism, deaf and dumb, mentally disabled and hearing impaired.

The facilitators were from the District Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ)

Topic discussed:

Rights of Persons with Special Needs/Persons with Disability

- Article 29 of 1992 Constitution
- Responsibilities of PWDs
- Persons with Disability Act, Act 715, 2006
- United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
- What disability is
- Reality of Disability
- Causes of Disability
- General picture of Disability
- Negative effects of Girls with Disabilities

- The rights of PWDs as guaranteed by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana
- Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
- Parents/Guardians roles in safeguarding PWDs
- Support Institutions

The participants were duly educated on their rights and were encouraged to take bold decisions to equip them to attain social and educational skills for their personal development and economic independence in their adulthood. The facilitators reiterated that, “even with their disabilities, they can work hard to achieve their potentials since disability is not inability” hence they should stand up for their rights no matter their conditions to attain their economic independence if their disability allows them to embrace independent living and gainful economic activity.

The facilitators emphasized that the girls have the right to be educated so they encouraged them to have the passion for education or learn a trade. That, any of them willing to go to school or learn a trade should contact the CHRAJ for assistance. The facilitators encouraged the girls to be abreast of their rights and responsibilities. That they are entitled to all general fundamental human rights and freedoms enjoyed by all such as:

- Right to life
- Right to protection of personal liberty
- Right to freedom of speech
- Political right such as right to vote
- Right to education

They further elaborated on their rights as:

- Right to live with your families and not be subjected to differential treatment
- Respect for dignity
- Assistance and Support from family and friends/general public
- Respect for privacy
- Freedom of speech/expression.
- Non-discrimination by persons or organizations/ private enterprises.
- Protection from abuse e.g. verbal, physical, violence, ill treatment, degrading punishment
- Protection from exploitation
- Judicial Rights – taking into consideration the condition of disabled persons in proceedings.
- Equal Opportunity for jobs, education, health i.e. right to education, work etc.

- Full and effective participation in political and public life society e.g. joining any associations/forming clubs
- Participation in cultural life, recreational/sports
- Respect and acceptance for PWD
- Right to Accessibility - appropriate facilities for PWDs example access to buildings, public places, schools, hospitals, transport system etc. esp. e.g. provision of staircases, lifts for those using wheel chair, Braille for blind PWDs or easy to read signage.
- Special Incentives to be given to PWDs in business and business entities who employ a lot of PWDs.
- No calling of Derogatory names, when caught, a fine or up to 3months in Prison-Act

The facilitators also touched on their responsibilities as:

- Respecting the rights of others.
- Obeying laws, rules and norms in society
- Cooperating with family and friends/members of general public

Again, the girls were educated on the institutions in which they are to report any abuses on them as follows:

- CHRAJ
- National Council on Persons with Disabilities.
- Department of Social Welfare
- DOVSU
- Police
- District Assembly
- Law Courts

Furthermore, speaking on their Sexual and Reproductive Rights, the facilitators asserted that:

- People with disabilities have same sexual and reproductive health rights as everyone, equal access to health services
- PWDs have right to information about their sexual n reproductive health
- Inaccessibility to health is as a result of physical limitation and hearing impairment.
- There is the risk of sexual violence for people with disability in Ghana

The types of sexual abuses as:

- Rape
- Defilement
- Incest
- Carnal knowledge of person with disability
- Unnatural Carnal knowledge
- Marriage under duress
- Indecent assault
- Sexual harassment

These offences are punishable by provisions from Chapter 6 of Criminal Offences Act, Act 29, 1960.

19.0 RESULTS FROM THE ACTIVITY

During the peer networks, participants were assessed on their understanding and awareness of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The assessment suggested that they understood the importance of being able to take decisions for themselves whenever they are approached by the opposite sex and to report any issue of Sexual and Gender Based Violence to their parents, a trusted adult or a Child Protection Agency in their districts.

The girls with disabilities realized their rights and responsibilities during the training and were encourage to exercise their rights and responsibilities. Some also expressed their desire to go back to school and learn a trade to enable them to achieve their goals.

20.0 PICTURES



FIGURE 1: SPACE FORUM AT APEWOSIKA



Figure 2: Peer network Meeting with Adolescent Girls in the Apewosika community in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 3: Peer Network meeting at the Ewuku Community in the Nzema East



Figure 4: Peer network meetings at Nkekem Community in the Nzema East



Figure 5: Mrs. Nana Fosuwa Odoo, the District Director of CHRAJ interacting with adolescent girls with disabilities in Nzema East Municipal



Figure 6: Adolescent girls with disabilities observing a physical distancing on 1 meter apart during the training in Nzema East Municipal



Figure 7: A group picture of participants after the training in Nzema East Municipal



FIGURE 8: GIRLS SPACE FORUM AT BANKYIM IN NZEMA EAST MUNICIPAL



FIGURE 9: GIRLS SPACE FORUM AT NSEIN IN NZEMA EAST MUNICIPAL



FIGURE 10: GIRLS SPACE FORUM AT SOLO IN THE NZEMA EAST MUNICIPAL



Figure 11: Pictorial view of the adolescent girls, parents and girls with disabilities during the fair at Nzema East, Axim.



Figure 12: Girls Space Forum at Apewosika in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 13: Girls Space Forum at Ewuku in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 14: Girls Space Forum at Nkekem in the Nzema East Municipal



FIGURE 15: GIRLS SPACE FORUM AT APEWOSIKA IN THE NZEMA MUNICIPALITY



FIGURE 16: GIRLS SPACE FORUM AT NKEKEM IN NZEMA EAST MUNICIPALITY



FIGURE 17: GIRLS SPACE FORUM AT SOLO IN THE EAST MUNICIPALITY



Figure 18: Peer network Meeting with Adolescent Girls in the Nkekem community in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 19: Peer Network meeting at the Ewuku Community in the Nzema East



Figure 20: Peer network meetings at Bankyim Community in the Nzema East



Figure 21: Mr Samuel Dzodzogbe, the District Director of CHRAJ interacting with adolescent girls with disabilities in Nzema East Municipal



Figure 22: Adolescent girls with disabilities observing an opening prayer during the training in Nzema East Municipal



Figure 23: A group picture of participants after the training in Nzema East Municipal



Figure 24: Peer network Meeting with Adolescent Girls at Apewosika community in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 25: Peer Network meeting at the Solo Community in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 26: Peer network meeting at Ewuku Community in the Nzema East Municipal.



FIGURE 27: A GROUP PHOTO OF THE PARTICIPANTS FOR THE TRAINING AT AXIM IN THE NZEMA EAST MUNICIPAL



Figure 28: Madam Felicia Tetteh giving education during the Drama event at Axim in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 29: Performances of the actors during the drama event at Axim in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 30: Some adolescent Girls with Disabilities and the Adolescents during the Health Fair in the Nzema East Municipal



Figure 31: Some of the activities being performed by the Adolescent girls in the Nzema East



Figure 32: Some of the winners receiving their prizes at their various schools in Nzema East

21.0 CONCLUSION

The activities provided comprehensive information on Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The training of out-of-school girls with disabilities encouraged them to own up to their rights and responsibilities and be more positive. They called on ARHR and the UNFPA to continue to provide empowerment opportunities for this vulnerable population to enjoy healthy life.

The adolescents reported a positive and assertive approach in dealing with their Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and a deeper understanding on the need to protect their

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, lifelong education and learn a profession, vocation or trade. This will guarantee them economic independence and high socio-economic standing in their adult years.