

## **ADOLESCENT GIRLS PROJECT (AGP)**

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### **PREPARED BY:**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS INITIATIVES GHANA**

**P.O.BOX UP 658**

**KNUST-KUMASI.**

**E-MAIL: [info@rrighana.org/tobaka58@gmail.com](mailto:info@rrighana.org/tobaka58@gmail.com)**

**MOBILE: 0244538998/0208139321**

### **SUBMITTED TO:**

**ALLIANCE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS**

**9 APPLE STREET, EAST LEGON**

**ACCRA.**

### **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, Bosome Freho District and Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly in the Ashanti Region. The objectives of the Adolescent Girls Project (AGP) are:

**JANUARY 2, 2022**

1. To provide Adolescent Girls with special emphasis on girls with disabilities with Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) information and services.
2. To provide Adolescent Girls with Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) literacy.
3. To provide training to 10 parents to support the Adolescent Girls Project in the Bosome Freho District

The project is implemented in Nzema East Municipal in the Western Region and in the Bosome Freho District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Below are the lists of the beneficiary communities:

S/N	Nzema East Municipal Assembly	Bosome Freho District Assembly
1.	Accra-Town	Abosamso-Asamama
2.	Amanfokumam	Ampento
3.	Apewosika	Anyanso
4.	Nkekem	Asiwa
5.	Brawire	Fereso
6.	Bankyim	Nsuaem No. 2
7.	Solo	
8.	Bolazo	
9.	Ewuku	
10.	Nsein	
11.	Anto-Apewosika	

During the period under review, Rights and Responsibilities undertook project activities in the Bosome Freho District in the Ashanti region and Nzema East Municipal in the Western Region.

1. Adolescent Health Champions Education of Peers
2. Girls Space Forum: Peer network meetings and Cube Convos Sessions in Nzema East and Bosome Freho
3. Adolescent Health Fairs on SRHR and issues of abortion in Nzema East and Bosome Freho
4. Training of Parents to support the Adolescent Health Project in Bosome Freho District
5. Training of Persons with Disabilities on SRHR rights and legal literacy issues in Nzema East and Bosome Freho
6. Drama event to create demand for Family planning in Nzema East and Bosome Freho
7. CBO Capacity Building Training in Kumasi

A total of **34,813** persons participated in the activities, out of this number were **34,744** were female and **69** were male. In the Nzema East Municipal, a total of **17,777** persons were reached; all of them were adolescent girls and **14**. In the Bosome Freho District, a total of **17,036** persons were reached; out of the number **16,967** were adolescent girls and **69** were adolescent boys as shown in the table below. Also, ten (10) Parents were trained to support the AGP in Bosome Freho District.

S/N	Project Location	No. of adolescents reached in 20201				Referral
		Female		Male	Total	
		10-14 years	15-19 years			
1.	Nzema East Municipal	10,574	7,203	0	17,777	838
2.	Bosome Freho District	8,212	8,755	69	17,036	190
<b>Total</b>		<b>18,786</b>	<b>15,958</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>34,813</b>	<b>1,028</b>
Bosome Freho		Male	Female	Total		
3.	Engagement with Parents	2	8	10		

**Table 1**

## STRATEGIES USED

The strategies used during the period to ensure Project efficiency and effectiveness included: Drama, Role Play, Lectures, Dancing, Singing, Musical Chairs, Pictures and one on one discussion.

## 2.0 DETAILED PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### 2.1 Adolescent Health Champions Education of Peers

In the Nzema East, a total of 17,174 out-of-school adolescent girls were reached: 10,159 were 10-14 years and 7,015 were 15-19 years. A total of 838 cases were referred to the Axim Hospital. In the Bosome Freho District, a total of 16,431 out-of-school adolescent girls were reached: 7,921 were 10-14 years and 8,510 were 15-19 years respectively as shown in the table 2 below. A total of 190 cases were referred to the CHPs compounds in the project communities. Find below the total adolescent reached in each project community.

S/N	Timelines	Nzema East Municipal			Bosome Freho District		
		10-14 years	15-19 years	Referral	10-14 years	15-19 years	Referral
1.	Quarter 1	2893	1916	441	2164	2368	113
2.	Quarter 2	3206	1894	183	2292	2458	59
3.	Quarter 3	1891	1739	126	1755	1851	6
4.	Quarter 4	2169	1466	88	1710	1833	12
	Total	10159	7015	838	7921	8510	190

**Table 2**

The data indicates that, girls are slowly responding to take control of their Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Rights (ASHR) which are the ideals of the Adolescent Girls Project in the two project districts. The Nzema East recorded a high number of adolescents participating in peer network meetings in the Municipality. In the Bosome Freho District, there is an increasing number of referrals to the CHPs compounds for SRH information and services

## 2.2 Girls Space Forum: Peer Network Meetings and Cube Convos Sessions in Nzema East and Bosome Freho

Twenty-four (4) Peer network meetings and three (3) Cube Convos Sessions were undertaken in both Bosome Freho and Nzema East Districts. The discussions focused on prevention of teenage pregnancy, Drug abuse, Menstrual Hygiene, STIs including HIV/AIDS, dropping out of school and failure to complete Basic Education. Most of the meetings also focused on the need of adolescent to maintain positive relationships with parents, guardians, peers and teachers. Facilitators encouraged them to seek referral services for their sexual and reproductive health, the academic challenge and for their overall psychological wellbeing.

The Cube Convos discussions focused on four (4) themes: Assertiveness, Menstrual Health, Teenage Pregnancy and Violence Prevention.

- ❖ Be Assertive: An assertive girl can NOT be threatened by anyone
- ❖ Be Educated: Know about your Menstrual Health
- ❖ Take Control: Avoid Teenage Pregnancy
- ❖ Stand against abuse: Do not accept to be sexually harassed because you are a girl, speak out.

*A total of 832 participated in the meetings. Out of this number, 777 were adolescent girls out of which 516 were 10-14 years and 261 were 15-19 years and 55 were boys as shown in the table below:*

S/N	Project Location	Age Range		Male	Total
		10-14 years	15-19 years		
1.	Nzema East Municipal	283	112	0	395
2.	Bosome Freho District	233	149	55	437
	Total	516	261	55	832

**Table 3**

In Both Districts, the discussions focused on the importance of delaying the onset of sexual activity until adulthood, take up contraceptive use once they become sexually active, seek early treatment for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and finally, study hard to achieve their academic potential and take up the Technical and or Vocational skills of their choice to become economically independent in their adulthood. Peer Network meetings were held in Nkekem, Apewosika, Nsein, Solo, Bankyim and Ewuku in Nzema East while in Bosome Freho, Peer Network meetings were held in Anyanso, Ampento, Fresno, Abosamso, Nsuaem and Asiwa.

## 2.3 Adolescent Health Fairs in Nzema East and Bosome Freho Districts

One (1) Health Fair each was undertaken in each District. The objectives 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

Participants were drawn from the Adolescents Girls, Adolescent Champions, Persons with Disability, Health Personnel, Community Youth and CSOs.

The participants were taken through;

- ❖ Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS
- ❖ Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)
- ❖ Other activities include:
  - Singing Competition
  - Dancing Competition
  - Musical Chairs

### **Education on Prevention of HIV/AIDS and SRHR Issues**

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's immune system, weakening its ability to fight disease-causing germs. She emphasized if the virus is left untreated, it can develop into AIDS.

They noted that some of the causes are:

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

They also explained the signs and symptoms as:

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Breathlessness
- Prolonged fever
- Aches and pains
- Night sweats
- Tiredness
- Severe Headache
- Loss of weight
- Blurred vision
- Skin rashes
- Mouth ulcers

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
- Avoid unprotected sex
- Use condoms during sex
- Screen of blood before transfusion

The facilitators said that early treatment of HIV can limit the progress of the virus and counselled 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. They promised to avoid early sexual encounters and focus on their education.

The advised them that they have the rights to say no to the opposite sex when they receive sexual advances from them and should report demand for sex to the appropriate authority to deter the boys. They admonished them to avoid unprotected sex and focus on their education and or vocational trade so to be economically independent when they become adults. She also advised them to focus on their education because when they pregnant, they may be abandoned by their male counterparts.

Other socio economic issues to be averted mentioned were school dropout, teenage pregnancies, unsafe abortions and abandoned children. The girls in their response pledged to focus on their education to achieve their academic potential, Learning of Technical and Vocational education was highly recommended as a great way to earn sustainable livelihood. Other socio economic issues to be averted mentioned were school dropout, teenage pregnancies, unsafe abortions and abandoned children. The girls in their response pledged to focus on their education to achieve their academic potential, Learning of Technical and Vocational education was highly recommended as a great way to earn sustainable livelihood. The use of contraceptives whenever the need arises.

Games played included: singing competition and musical chairs. The winners of all these activities received prizes.

***A total of 230 adolescents participated in the meeting, 216 were girls and 14 were boys. Out of the 216 adolescent girls, 116 were 10-14 years and 100 were 15-19 years as shown in the table below. It is also worth noting that out of the 216 adolescent girls, 44 were girls with disabilities***

S/N	Project Location	Female Age Range		Male	Total
		10-14 years	15-19 years		
1.	Nzema East Municipal	86	30	0	116
2.	Bosome Freho District	30	70	14	114
	Total	116	100	14	230

**Table 4**

## **2.4 Training of Girls with Disabilities in Nzema East and Bosome Freho**

Two (2) training sessions, one (1) per each district were held for Girls with Disabilities during the period under review. In Bosome Freho, it was held at Asiwa while in Nzema East, it was held at Axim. The purpose of the training was to provide training for out of school girls with disabilities to build their capacity on legal literacy and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights information and services and life skills under the theme: “Rights and Responsibilities of Children.” The facilitator for the program was Mr. Cornelius Dery and Mrs. Nana Fosuah Odoom, the District Directors of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) in the Bosome Freho District and Nzema East Municipal respectively.

The participants were taken through;

- ❖ The Rights of the Child under the Children’s Act 1998 (Act 560)
- ❖ Responsibilities of children
- ❖ Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

The facilitators categorized the various types of right into:

- ❖ Natural rights: right to life and right to freedom from torture and any form of human treatment or force labour.
- ❖ Legal right: right to self defence
- ❖ Political right: right to vote and right to stand as a candidate to be voted
- ❖ Civil right: freedom of association, worship and movement

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 facilitator reiterated that, “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 promised to liaise with the Department of Social Welfare to get them back to school and/or to learn a trade of their choice.

The participants were taken through;

- ❖ The Rights of the Child under the Children’s Act 1998 (Act 560)
- ❖ Responsibilities of children
- ❖ Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

They further stated that:

1. Every child should be sent to school at age 4.
2. Rape and defilement is a crime in Ghana.

3. Defilement is punishable with a jail sentence between 7 – 25 years.
4. Sexual harassments should be report to CHRAJ.
5. Rape and defilement should be report to the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service.
- 6.

A total of 39 participants were reached. In Nzema East 20 participants were reached and in Bosome Freho, 19 participants were reached as shown below:

**Types of disabilities recorded in Bosome Freho and Nzema East**

S/N	Type of Disability	Nzema East	Bosome Freho	Total
1.	Physically challenged	13	12	25
2.	Dumb and Speech impairment	4	4	8
3.	Mentally retardation	0	0	0
4.	Visual impairment	0	3	3
5.	Deaf	2	0	2
6.	Crippled	1	0	1
	Total	20	19	39

**Table 5**

## **2.5 Drama Events**

Two (2) Drama events were undertaken during the period, one (1) each in Bosome Freho and Nzema East

In Bosome Freho, the drama focused on the following:

- Effective parent –child communication
- Negative consequences of girls rebelling against family values
- Stigma and discrimination suffered by teenage mother
- Neglect by the males when the teenage girls get pregnant by them.
- Causes and Effects of Teenage Pregnancy

In Nzema East, the drama emphasized the following:

- Drug Abuse and its effects
- the need to focus on education
- Failure of parents in giving positive advice to their adolescent girls
- Peer influence

The girls 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.

They mentioned that socio economic issues to be averted were school dropout, teenage pregnancies, unsafe abortions and drug abuse.



The girls also in their response pledged to focus on their education to achieve their academic potential. Most of them said that they will pursue technical and vocational education to facilitate earning a living through entrepreneurship with small to medium capital. They will take up contraceptives when they become sexually active in the adolescent and plan their families when they become economically independent.

The Peer Champions who led the Fora encouraged the girls to be assertive, stay away from unprotected sex and to say no to sexual advances they do not want. It was reiterated that acquiring vocational and technical skills leads to a girl to become economically independent during adulthood.

A total of 107 participants were reached with 62 aged 10-14 years and 45 aged 15-19 years as shown below:

S/N	Project Location	Female Age Range		Male	Total
		10-14 years	15-19 years		
1.	Nzema East Municipal	40	32	0	72
2.	Bosome Freho District	22	13	0	35
	Total	62	45	0	107

**Table 7**

## **2.6 Training/Engagement with Parents in the Bosome Freho district**

Parent-Child communication trainings were held in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of the period under review. The purpose of the meeting was to equip the participants with the relevant skills and knowledge about efficient Parent Child Communication on positive living. The participants were taken through:

- The Children's Act 1998, 560
- A Bill of Rights for Children
- IPPF Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights through the PPAG Reach Out Manual.
- Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

The participants reported that they had understood the need to hold discussions with their children on positive values to promote socio-economic independence later in life. That the onset of the discussion may differ from family to family.

A follow up on the parents trained was held and the purpose was to encourage them to continue to provide support to 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 facilitators for the program were Aba Oppong, Executive Director, RRIG and Madam Esther Dinni-Addo, Public Health Nurse, Bosome Freho Health Directorate, Asiwa.

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. A mother 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 ten (10) 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 SRHS.

Madam Esther Dinni-Addo encouraged the parents to counsel their daughters on SRHR wisely with this proverb “*An adult sitting can see further than a child standing.*” She also informed them about the referral systems in place for the management and care for unwanted pregnancy, STIs, HIV/AIDS.

A male participant reiterated that some girls go wayward because their mothers do not allow their fathers to discipline them. A female participant explained that it is only when fathers insult the mother of the girl when they are disciplining the girl that mothers’ caution them to stop the insults. It was concluded that parents should discipline their children by speaking kindly to them and in private so that they do not lower the self-esteem of the children (both boys and girls)

The parents were informed that RRIG would contact them every month to find out how well they are discussing SRHR issues with wards. RRIG will also find out how many people they are sharing the information they gleaned from the training.

Furthermore, it was agreed that WhatsApp Platform will be set up to discuss any emergency issue which may arise. The platform will also collect data on activities of the participants.

Ten (10) parents all mothers participated in the first training in quarter 1 while the second training were attended by ten (10) parents: 8 mothers and 2 fathers in quarter 3 as shown in the table below:

PARTICIPANTS		
QUARTER	FEMALE	MALE
1	10	0
3	8	2

**Table 8**

## 2.7 CBO Capacity Building Training in Kumasi

A capacity building training workshop was organized by the Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights (ARHR) for Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Community Facilitators, Health Providers and the Media on May 28, 2021 at the True Vine Hotel at Ahodwo-Kumasi. From the Nzema East, 10 people participated in the training. They were: 5 Community Facilitators, 2 Health Providers, 1 Focal Person (Health Staff) and 2 RRIG staff. From the Bosome Freho

District, 10 people participated in the training: 5 Community Facilitators, 2 Health Providers, 1 Focal Person (Health Staff) and 2 RRIG staff.

Dr. Esi Awotwe, the Programme Director encouraged all stakeholders to ensure due process and accountability with regards to both the technical and financial components of the project which includes the legal environment.

She reiterated that:” It is important that we get the girls at 10 years and provide them with adequate Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights information to ensure that by 25 years they will be in control of their SRHR and be in charge of themselves”.

### **3.0 LESSONS LEARNT AND EMERGING ISSUES**

#### **3.1 Key messages sent out by Peer Champions to Peers**

- a. It is important to avoid bad friends
- b. Early Sexual behavior could lead to School drop out
- c. Always clarify misinformation provided by peers
- d. Abstinence is the best choice for Adolescents
- e. Adolescents should avoid drug abusive Cocaine and marijuana
- f. Do not take drugs without the doctor’s prescription
- g. People who are sexually active must take up contraceptives and use condoms to reduce their risk of acquiring STIs.
- h. Females need to use HPU vaccine to prevent cervical cancer.
- i. Everyone should say “No” to unsafe sex.
- j. Avoid watching pornographic materials.
- k. You should bath twice a day
- l. Do not allow heavily soaked pad to dry on you.
- m. Having regular exercise.
- n. Peers were always encouraged to visit their CLF and Health Provider to learn about personal Hygiene during their menses, avoiding Teenage Pregnancy
- o. They also encouraged their Peers to talk to their Parents, CLFs and Health Providers on ways to avoid Sexual and Gender Based Violence

#### **3.2 Emerging Issues that were clarified by the CLFs and Health Providers were:**

1. Teenage Pregnancy
2. Peer Group Influence
3. Drug Abuse
4. Adolescent Reproductive Health
5. Sexually Transmitted Diseases
6. It is true that hard drugs energize us to do more work.
7. There is the need for free access to condoms to protect themselves.
8. They need free access to family planning.
9. Some Adolescents change their pad once when menstruating.
10. Most of the girls do not have self-control so when the urge of having sex comes into their mind they do not resist.
11. Most of the out of school adolescents do not have self-confidence and they are always afraid to voice out.

12. Most of the girls had less knowledge about where to seek help concerning the reproductive health issues.
13. Out of school adolescents have less knowledge on the importance of wearing Face mask in the quest of fighting COVID-19.
14. Most girls thought HIV was a life sentence or deadly.
15. Girls were educated on how that can be infected but still live positively provided you adhere to the directives by health professionals.
16. Most girls thought they can't continue schooling when they give birth.
17. Most girls thought men have proper decision making skills than they have.

### **3.3 Misconceptions that were clarified by the supervisors**

- i. Taking drugs helps to get more knowledge. This not true, it should be avoided
- ii. Having sex early open one's mind. This should be avoided
- iii. Do hard drugs have any positive effects on us? This is not true and should be avoided
- iv. Can herbal medicine be used to treat STIs? The best acceptable treatment is antibiotics

## **CONCLUSION**

The activities for the four (4) quarters provided comprehensive information on Adolescents Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. 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 their education and learn a profession, vocation or trade.

## **PICTURES**



**Figure 1: Engagement with Parents and Follow up on Parents in Bosome Freho District**





**Figure 2: Girls Space Forum and Cube Convo Session in Nzema East and Bosome Freho**



**Figure 3: Training for Girls with Disabilities in Bosome Freho and Nzema East**



**Figure 4: Drama Events in Bosome Freho and Nzema East**



**Figure 5: Adolescents Health Fairs at Bosome Freho and Nzema East**