

# PANKO YOUTH CENTER

## Newsletter



January 2024

Dear friends and supporters!

### Let's Discuss PANKO – The New light!

As the year 2024 begins, it's time to reflect back on the incredible journey we've had at PANKO Youth Center. Let's take a moment to rewind through the chapters of the past year, embracing the stories of growth, collaboration, and community that have shaped our unique story.

Join us in celebrating this wonderful space for stories of growth and improvement!

### ***Almost 100 Applications Received From Parents In Just Two Days!***

I remember witnessing the Programs Coordinator affixing a notice on our bulletin board. The notice announced the opening of applications for parents to enroll their children in PANKO's after-school program. Specifically, the call aimed to enroll twenty-five (25) non-readers aged 7 to 10 from the four (4) rural communities we currently serve. This number was determined based on our staff and resource capacity and we wish to have enrolled more kids.

Within just two days, we received an overwhelming 97 applications. Previously, the communities' awareness and response to education and PANKO's programs were modest. However, as the impact of PANKO's interventions became evident through the improved academic performance of its beneficiary children, a significant shift occurred. The narrative of success began to spread, contributing to a notable surge in applications.

Despite the challenge of selection, what guided us was our predetermined criteria, which included reading ability (non-readers), age (7-10), gender (ensuring an equal representation of boys and girls), allotting a quota to each community, prioritizing low-performing public schools, and offering opportunities to households not yet benefited from PANKO's interventions.



After careful consideration of these criteria, we successfully selected the 25 fortunate children. Their parents were invited for an orientation on our rules and regulations, followed by the signing of necessary documents. The selected kids received an orientation as well, and they officially commenced their after-school lessons on January 9, 2024.

PANKO now serves 124 children (70 males & 54 females) in our pre-school and after-school programs. Six students graduated to high school and we're preparing five more for their Basic School Certificate Exam in August, paving way for their transition to high school. We extend our genuine thanks to you for your continued support.

## Parents Show Support Through Action!

There is no doubt that PANKO's interventions have positively impacted the communities we work with, as evidenced by the actions of parents of the children in our programs.

These parents showed their gratitude by roofing a space at the youth center using thatch they gathered themselves, despite having limited financial resources. What they shared was particularly touching: although they may not be able to support us financially for what we've been doing for their kids, they are willing to support in other ways.

This new space symbolizes our collaborative efforts and will serve as a learning area and venue for events and semi-outdoor activities. Before, we used to rent canopies for our events, incurring costs. With this new space, we'll save money by eliminating the need for canopy rentals.

The communities' strong support ensures the long-term sustainability of the youth center, making it a force for positive change.

Thank you for your support in making a significant impact on the lives of the children and families we serve.



## We Took Shots With Our Cameras, Not With Guns!

Guest what? In Ghana, 92% of wildlife traded in markets come from poachers. Hunting wildlife is a common practice even in the communities we serve. But we got a plan! Sensitize and educate the kids on the importance of wildlife conservation.



As part of the education, we hit the road with 80 excited kids on our first-ever tour outside Tamale to the *Boabeng-Feima Monkey Sanctuary*, a leading monkey sanctuary in Ghana, home to over 700 monkeys. It's located in a natural environment within communities where monkeys and human beings coexist.



Imagine this: playful monkeys, and lots of laughs in the green jungle. The kids had a memorable time feeding bananas and groundnuts to the playful monkeys. The day was filled with fun, learning, and unforgettable experiences. I hope and wish one day you get to visit this site too.

Our mission? To show these kids why it's important to protect wildlife. We want them to be the next generation of nature lovers and guardians. Let's make a difference together!

## What A Refreshing, Big, Fun Splash!

After 1.5 hours of learning and pure joy at the monkey sanctuary, it was time for the next adventure along the way. We made a quick stop at the breathtaking *Kintampo Waterfalls*, a natural attraction and one of the highest waterfalls in Ghana.

The kids learned about the history of the site and much more, and then it was time for a refreshing, big, fun splash! Just picture the smiles as the kids cooled off in the clear, cool water under the big, beautiful falls.

At PANKO, it's about more than trips; it's about inspiring the young ones to love and protect nature. Our goal? To raise awareness and empower kids to be environmental ambassadors.





## ***Now, Let's Focus On Our Girl Child!***

We had an amazing celebration on October 11th for the "International Day of the Girl Child"! Parents, kids, and our staff all came together for a heartwarming tradition.

We had a special guest, Mrs. Tembile Juanita Nsengiwi from Create Change, who shared an inspiring message about empowering girls in our communities. The vibe was all about recognizing and boosting the girl child, just as much as the boys.

Our drama club did an awesome job with a performance on why girl child education is important. It was like our very own mini-Broadway right here!

Our community leaders also spoke up and highlighted the need to give both girls and boys an equal shot at success and growth.

This was such a fun event, and we're committed to making sure our girls keep shining bright alongside their male counterparts.

Thanks to everyone who made this day a memorable one!



## ***Why I, an Adolescent Girl, Skip School***

As time flies, some of our girls are entering puberty, experiencing the natural monthly process of menstruation. They face challenges such as naivety and the fear of being stigmatized. Consequently, some of these girls end up skipping classes because they can't afford to purchase sanitary products or lack access to clean water and sanitation to maintain personal hygiene and prevent diseases.

PANKO, which simply means 'I'm not alone,' is stepping in to reassure the girls that they are not alone in their struggles. We have initiated a health education program for all beneficiary children, focusing on menstruation, hygiene, self-esteem and garnering support from boys and the community to encourage the girls to stay in school. However, a crucial challenge remains: ensuring the sustainable provision of sanitary pads for our girls, supporting their education and preventing absenteeism.

Join the movement to provide access to sanitary products, health education, and a supportive community. Let's end absenteeism and keep girls in school!



## ***Empowering Dreams With Essential School Items***

While their colleagues, after graduating from Basic School, were busy engaging in menial jobs to gather some money for essential school items to start their High School journey, Iman and Mudasir were with us at PANKO as supporting staff, assisting their colleagues and younger ones at the center. They both demonstrated their commitment to giving back to PANKO, as they had benefited greatly from the center.

As the time came for them to continue their academic journey in High School in boarding schools, their parents faced some struggles to afford all the necessary school items and toiletries. In the spirit of promoting education and community support, PANKO stepped in to assist them with essential school items, including a backpack, calculator, mathematical set, books, graph book, and toiletries. This support also included sanitary pads for the girl to ensure her healthy and comfortable stay in school.

This initiative is all about nurturing dreams and enabling bright futures! We hope that this act of giving inspires others to take their education and learning seriously. We wish these young individuals a joyful and successful time in high school.

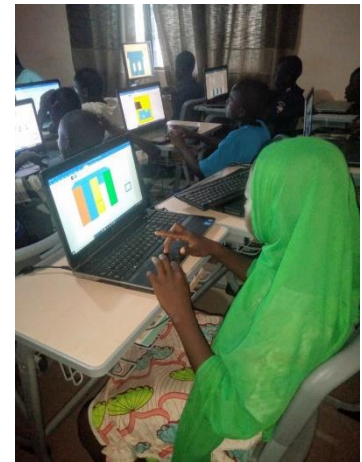


## From Zero To Hero In The Digital Journey

I still remember when we announced to the kids, somewhere in October 2022, that they would start learning how to use the computer. The excitement was palpable; I must confess, they could not sleep that night. They envisioned themselves sitting before a computer, clicking and typing away. However, as we began engaging them, most struggled with holding the mouse without their hands shaking and trembling. I recall instances where a child would take several seconds to a minute just to locate a single letter on the keyboard.

Fast forward to today, and we take pride in noting that the kids are learning at an impressive pace. Witnessing them confidently type letters and stories, design certificates, and even draw using MS Word is truly remarkable. Some have even ventured into using the internet to find words, conduct research, and utilize search engines for their homework.

This will help them in the future because they will be more comfortable with technology, better at solving problems, more creative, better at research, better at critical thinking, and better prepared for the future.



**"Without this intervention, I wonder where and when I would have gotten the chance to use a computer." – Mudirika**

## Voices of Empowerment—Testimonies from Our Beloved Beneficiary Children

*"At PANKO, I learnt to read and do some maths. Before, I didn't enjoy going to school, but now it's fun for me!" – Sadia*

*"I never touched a computer before, but now I can do many things. PANKO opened a door to a new world for me."— Ibrahim*

*"Our classrooms are very comfortable! It has fans, shiny floor, and chairs. Learning is much better at PANKO than my normal school" – Iklima*

*"I can remember going hungry after school most times. Thanks to PANKO! We get lunch before we start learning. No more hungry tummies!"—Hakim*

*"We grow veggies with water tanks at PANKO. Fresh veggies anytime! PANKO teaches us to grow and love nature."— Alhassan*

*"As a girl, PANKO has given me a reason to stay in school and excel. They care about our wellbeing, educating us on hygiene and others."— Fatima*

*"Before PANKO, I only knew my village. Now, PANKO shows us cool places and talks about saving nature. I learned why wildlife and trees are important!"—Zenab*

*"PANKO is not just books; it's fun too! We play football and volleyball and find our hidden talents. I discovered I'm great at drama – something I never knew!"—Iddriss*

*"PANKO is a safe place for me. The computer room helps me with homework, and teachers are always there to help."—Muhsina*

Your support has been the driving force behind these transformative experiences. Through your generosity, we've been able to make a lasting impact on the lives of children, shaping a brighter future for the communities we serve and beyond.

We invite you to join us in celebrating these accomplishments and look forward to your continued support as we create a brighter future together.

Sincerely,

Mubarak Alhassan  
(Managing Director)

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