

PANKO YOUTH CENTER

CELEBRATING 5 YEARS OF GROWTH & EMPOWERMENT



Dear friends, partners & supporters,

Five years ago, your belief in our vision helped plant a seed in Northern Ghana. Today, that seed has blossomed into something truly special. Since June, 2020, PANKO Youth Center has become a safe haven where children from low income families can learn, grow, and dream big. Many has been with us from the very beginning, and witnessing their progress fills us with immense joy and pride. None of this would have been possible without your generous support.

In this special anniversary edition, we are delighted to share with you the transformation you have helped to create. Our 2025 mid-year highlights reflect how your donations are making an impact every day. Thanks to our wonderful partners and supporters. This celebration isn't just about milestones or numbers, it's about the children who found confidence here, the families who found support, and the way our entire community continues to grow stronger together. Your kindness and commitment have made all of this possible.

Stay tuned as we share more highlights and stories in this newsletter. We're so grateful to celebrate with you.

Five Years of Rewriting Futures

Since opening our doors in June 2020, PANKO has supported **180 children** over our five years of service. While 20 children have unfortunately dropped out over time due to a lack of interest and direction, the progress and successes we have witnessed far outweigh the setbacks. We are especially proud of the 30 pre-school children who had never set foot in a classroom before joining us. They spent two years at PANKO and graduated as readers. Another 20 of our students have been supported and nurtured right through to the completion of basic school. Of these, 10 are now in high school, while the other 10 are eagerly awaiting their final exam results and preparing to take the next big step.

Currently, we have 110 beneficiaries enrolled, and next month we are excited to welcome 20 more children into our youth center. These achievements are remarkable, especially in a community where only one in four students typically transitions to high school. Here, every success story is truly a celebration. As one of our earliest beneficiaries, Baba Naeem, said, "Without PANKO, I'd be selling yoghurt by the road now."

This is the difference that access and belief can make. Apart from keeping children in school; we are walking beside them every step of the way, helping them reach success.

Nurturing Readers, Transforming Communities

In our community's public schools, only about 20% of basic school students can read a simple sentence. But among children in PANKO's after-school program, over 85% read confidently. The difference is so visible that teachers tell us they intentionally seat PANKO students beside struggling peers because their progress inspires others. One teacher put it best: "*PANKO kids are the only ones who volunteer to read aloud in class.*" What begins as improved literacy soon becomes leadership. These children arrive shy and uncertain, but with patient coaching, they grow into confident readers and eventually, classroom role models.

Through monthly reading competitions, students who once feared public speaking now stand tall, articulating their ideas with confidence. The impact goes far beyond academics: these newfound skills form the foundation for a child's future, opening doors to greater opportunities throughout their lives. When a PANKO student helps a classmate sound out a word, they aren't just boosting grades, but they're lighting the path for broader community transformation.

Where Kids Build a Better Tomorrow

The dangers facing young people after school are real. Drug use, teenage pregnancy, and gang influence are heartbreaking realities.

While 62% of teens in Ghana's Northern Region use illicit drugs, PANKO's approach delivers striking results: zero cases of drug use or early sexual activity in 5 years. Our secret? We offer more than a place to study. Through health education and safe spaces, we give youth the tools and confidence to choose better paths.

When children feel safe today, they grow into the leaders of tomorrow. Every protected child lifts up others, breaking harmful cycles and helping to create a brighter future for their community.

English for Job Readiness & Poverty Alleviation

Many rural children struggle to learn English in public schools because the fear of being mocked often keeps them silent. This discouragement erodes their confidence and slows their progress.

At PANKO, our 4-Formation program is changing that. Through guided speaking and listening practice, we create a space where mistakes are welcome, not laughed at. *"Before, I was scared to say even one word,"* says 16-year-old Zenab. *"Now, I love speaking without fear!"*

The results speak for themselves as children who once hesitated are now raising their hands eagerly, excited to express themselves in English. Their voices grow stronger each day, proving that with the right support, fear can be replaced with confidence. And the impact goes beyond the classroom. Confidence in English opens doors to education, jobs, and a future they once couldn't imagine.

Acting Today, Leading Tomorrow

It began when we noticed some kids avoiding Thursday sports. Instead of pushing them, we created the Drama Club and discovered something magical.

Today, these once-shy children command stages, performing powerful skits about peace, unity, and community change. Dreams once dismissed as "waste of time" are now celebrated. Take 15-year-old Mahami, who once heard, *"Drama is a waste of time."* Now? *"My mum claps the loudest when I'm on stage,"* he says with pride. This is more than just acting.

Beyond acting skills, they've gained confidence, creativity, and purpose, proving that when we nurture hidden talents, we don't just put on shows... we raise future leaders.

Restoring Hope for At-Risk Students

Whilst overcrowded classrooms, often averaging 60 students, and a lack of support in rural public schools contribute to dropout rates as high as 60%, PANKO's personalized approach, with small class sizes of no more than 20 students, dedicated mentorship, and ongoing encouragement cuts that to just 2%.

Take Rafia, for example, at 13, she was ready to give up on school until she joined PANKO. With tutoring and guidance, she caught up and now dreams of becoming a nurse.

This is a proof that when children are supported, they don't give up and with the right support, kids don't just stay in school; they build better futures that lift entire families out of poverty.

More Than Just a Meal

In rural communities, lunch is often a luxury many children miss. Before PANKO, empty stomachs made learning impossible, leaving kids tired, distracted and unable to fully participate in class.

Our Lunch & Learn program changes this. Every child now gets a nutritious meal, giving them energy to study and grow. *"My son no longer goes hungry,"* shares one mother. *"He eats at PANKO and even teaches me healthier recipes!"*

But the impact lasts far beyond the classroom: well-fed kids learn better today and break cycles of poverty tomorrow. It's one of the simplest, yet most powerful things we do, a daily act that continues to transform lives. One meal at a time, we're nourishing both bodies and futures.

The Impact of Career Guidance

In our community, choosing a career path used to feel like throwing darts in the dark. Many teenagers would pick school subjects at random, often ending up with qualifications that led nowhere.

Thanks to PANKO's career guidance program, most of our beneficiaries in high schools are now pursuing skilled vocations with real future prospects, from home economics, electrical engineering, and IT to nursing and beyond. They're now building purposeful careers. This is the power of proper guidance.

The impact is lifelong. These children would grow into future professionals who will uplift their families and transform their communities, one guided choice at a time.

A New Chapter Begins as Our ICT Center Just Got Bigger

One of our biggest highlights this year was the launch of the **TOBI ICT CENTER**. It's been a dream for a long time and now, it's here. With generous support from Tobias Singhammer, we officially opened the TOBI ICT CENTER.

What was once a tiny room has transformed into a spacious, bright hub with room for 25 students, a dedicated ICT officer's office, and a storeroom for equipment. You should have seen the excitement on the faces of our children as they sat in front of their computers in the new space.

Many of our children had never touched a computer before joining PANKO. Today, they're not only learning basic skills like typing and browsing, but are learning graphic design and T-shirt printing. They're already imagining careers that didn't seem possible before.



Monthly Reading Competition

Every month, something special happens at PANKO. What began as a simple reading exercise has grown into our most anticipated monthly event - the Reading Competition. Shy kids become confident readers right before our eyes. Teachers report our kids now volunteer to read first in their regular classes. Parents watch in amazement as their children, who once had trouble reading, now tell stories with confidence.

Such events create a literate generation. Fluent readers become informed voters, skilled employees, and engaged parents who'll ensure their own children never struggle with words. The confidence gained from these events translates to better students, better workers, and better parents and community leaders.



Our Quarterly Parents' Meeting

Every three months, PANKO parents come together, no matter what. It's always a joyful time to see how much the children have grown! At these meetings, we celebrate the kids' achievements, discuss any challenges, and work together on new ways to help the children even more. When parents stay involved like this, wonderful things happen—they help their kids practice at home, spread the word about PANKO, and make sure learning continues. As one mother shared, "When I come to these meetings, I learn how to help my child better. Now she teaches me things too!" When parents and PANKO work together, children don't just succeed now—they keep succeeding for life.



Voices for Peace: Drama Club Takes the Stage

Our Drama Club recently wowed the community with a powerful skit on peaceful elections and the importance of tolerance. The performance tackled the dangers of conflicts and hate speech, highlighting how respect and unity can build a stronger community. Hearing our youth speak up for peace gives hope—they're gaining advocacy skills that will help build a more harmonious future. Watch the performance on our YouTube channel.



International Book Day

Celebrating this year's International Book Day at PANKO brought our love of reading to life. Children read their favourite stories to friends, and our Drama Club performed a skit showing why reading matters. Staff shared stories about books that have shaped their lives. These moments encouraged every child to pick up a book and keep exploring—the first step to a lifetime of curiosity and growth.



World Day for Cultural Diversity

On May 21st, we marked World Day for Cultural Diversity with vibrant traditional outfits, dancing, and a sense of togetherness. Our Managing Director reminded us that our unique backgrounds make us special, but unity is our strength. At PANKO, "I am not alone" isn't just our name—it's our promise: to always celebrate diversity, build connections, and ensure no child walks alone. These celebrations sow seeds of lifelong acceptance and community spirit.



World Environment Day

World Environment Day at our center was all about action and awareness. Kids learned about the dangers of rubber waste and helped clean our environment, showing care for the planet and building habits that protect it for years to come. By involving children now, we're growing future guardians of our earth.



Adventures That Inspire

On June 21st, our beneficiaries set out for the Upper East Region—an adventure packed with learning and fun. Exploring the Paga Crocodile Pond, Pikworo Slave Camp, and Sirigu Pottery & Art Center gave our children new perspectives and lasting memories. Trips like these fuel curiosity and ambition, equipping children with the experiences they need to grow into informed, open-minded adults. A big thank you to funders, supporters, and the incredible guides—we couldn't have done it without you!



Thank you for being part of our journey at PANKO Youth Center. Together, we're creating brighter futures for these incredible children and young people. Your support and engagement mean the world to us. As we move forward, we invite you to continue supporting our mission and celebrating these milestones with us.

Let's keep making a difference, one step at a time. From all of us at PANKO, thank you, and see you in the next chapter!

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