

Changed Stories of some participants of CDI's Girls Education Program

The names except for the schools have been abbreviated to protect their identities as some of them have transited successfully to Senior High Schools while others have completed and awaiting their results to proceed to the tertiary.

1. RA of Madina M/A -Accra

On an ordinary day, RA (born 1 December 2002) would be found in the Madina market assisting her mother to sell tomatoes. Not that Rebecca is averse to schooling, but with 5 other siblings and a single mother from Keta in the Volta Region, not much else can be done. After Centre for Development Initiatives heard about Rebecca's story from school authorities, project officers were sent (in 2018) to speak with both mother and daughter. During the visit, this is what the mother had to say:

"upon the death of my husband, things became difficult... so I had to occasionally let Rebecca help me in the market to sell so that I can feed her and the other 5 children.... In fact, even if I allow her to go to school, where do I get the money for extra classes, books etc etc. But now that you say you are here to assist; I will personally make sure Rebecca is always in school. She says she wants to become a nurse and that is exactly what I pray for her to become". RA's Mum.

After holding these discussions, CDI provided for RA's extra tuition, school bag, monthly sanitary pads and textbooks. Rebecca is happy, in JHS 3 and does not miss school now. According to Rebecca:

"after the discussions with field officers, my mother now tells me to learn. She makes sure I am comfortable enough to learn and even though I still assist her sometimes over the weekends, she would always insist I go home and learn"

Rebecca further asserts that:

"if CDI hadn't paid my extra tuition fees, it would have been impossible for me to attend: I was promoted to form 3 because the extra tuition made it possible for me to catch up on all the lessons I missed out on before CDI came in."

Rebecca likes reading motivational books as they keep her focused and inspired to get to the very top. Even though certain times the "going gets tough" RA believes CDI's presence in her life is enough for her to overcome every challenge life throws at her regarding her educational pursuits. Rebecca insists she will make CDI proud by coming out with flying colors in the BECE examinations.

2. FC of Madina M/A 2, Junior High School

Enrolled onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls' Project in 2018, FC now attends school "during that time of the month". According to Florence "*absenting myself for a minimum of five days due to my menses became norm*". Fortunately, "*CDI came along and resolved the very problem that kept me away from school most days of the term*". The story of FA begun in September, 2017 when her father decided to migrate with her to Accra from Hohoe in the Volta Region for greener pastures. Her father and daughter soon realized life in the city was not that rosy. After enrolling into Madina M/A 2 JHS, days would go by without FA showing up in school. School authorities quickly reported her plight to CDI who came to the rescue. FA have since completed JSS and is now in form 2 in one of the Senior High Schools in Accra. In the words of FA who was then in JSS 3 at the time:

"besides the extra tuition that has helped me to improve upon my performance in class and obviously being promoted to form three, the sanitary pad, textbooks and learning aids have all made it possible for me to stay in school and have a peaceful mind. My father always says that he prays CDI will continue to live long, not just for helping me but to help other families that are facing problems like ours..... we can only say thank you to CDI and God bless them for making time to come over and talk to us at home".

Born on 2nd August 2003, FA likes to learn during her leisure time and intends to become a Medical Doctor when she grows up. Centre for Development Initiatives can only hope and pray that young, brilliant and energetic Florence will become the Medical Doctor she intends to be.

3. AC of Madina M/A 2 JHS

Born on 29th April, 2002, Carol lives with her mother at Madina 3rd Gate with three other siblings. Carol's excitement cannot be hidden when she makes it clear to CDI project officers that "*at first I found it difficult to read, but now I can read*". Extra Tuition organized and paid for by CDI has made it possible for Carol to overcome her reading challenge. Enrolled in 2018 onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls' Education Project and now in Form 3, Carol is of the view that:

"CDI's support with textbooks, sanitary pads, school bag, and learning aids has brought me this far in my education.... at first, I would have to go to the market with my mother to help her sell to cater for my educational needs, but now I only go to help her over the weekends when I am done with all my school work".

AC intends to be a nurse in the future and as such reads during her leisure time. Carol maintains that CDI coming into her life has been a blessing and she can only hope and pray that CDI succeeds in its endeavors. To AC, success for CDI means success for her educational pursuits right up to the university level where she intends to pursue a course in general nursing. AC is optimistic about her future and is now in her final year in a senior secondary school in the country.

4. DM of Madina M/A, JSS

Upon the death of DM's mother, things took a nose dive when her father disappeared leaving little Doris in the care of a frail old grandmother. The basic things of life became a luxury for DM and education became the least of her worries. Indeed, basic survival took precedence over everything else. Fortunately, the school coordinator realized young brilliant but needy DM and quickly made his recommendations to CDI. DM was then recruited onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls' Education project in 2018 when she was only in Form 1. Today, DM has completed JSS after having happily led her school cadet team to undertake the 6th March Independence Anniversary in 2018 and is now in her final year in one of the Senior High Schools. According to DM, she has since been living with her grandmother and says that:

"I couldn't buy or get anything at all for school, then CDI came along and bought me everything I need for school, even to the point of paying for me to attend extra classes to improve upon my educational performance.... now the only thing I do when I am in school is learn rather than think of all those things that I could not afford during those days".

With the assistance of the school coordinator and project officers from CDI, DM has now come to terms with the father walking out of her life. Even though she admits this, she isn't happy about that part of her life, she now understands that learning hard and attaining success would grant her the opportunity to assist those who would face similar situations in the future. In Doris' own words:

"My only prayer is that I achieve my dreams... so that I can help people who find themselves in similar situations as myself, after all, that is what CDI is doing for me right now, and one good turn deserves another".

5. SI of Madina M/A JHS

After Sekina's birth in 2002 (1st September), her mother soon realized that she could only give little Sekina the best form of education in Accra. This realization hit her when her husband assumed the thrown in Wulinsi (village in the Northern Region) as chief. With several wives and a village to rule, Sekina and her mother took second place – that is if they had a place at all! Upon their arrival in Accra and settling in Zongo Junction (Madina), it became obvious city life wasn't easy either. Providing for Sekina's educational needs soon became a source of worry. Fortunately, the Centre for Development Initiatives brought back lasting smiles to both mother and daughter when SI was enrolled onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls Education Project in 2018. In Sekina's own words:

"the sanitary pad and books I cannot describe what they have done for me, you see the truth is, neither I nor my mother would have been able to afford them."

She goes on to assert that:

"you see the extra classes you have paid for me has helped me a lot, I would have had to hawk on the street for several days to get the money, but now that it is paid for, I now use the time I would

have used hawking on the street to learn and do my assignments..... now I am always in school and not on the streets hawking.... I thank God for bringing CDI into my life and I pray God will grant you abundance so that you will continue to help others like myself”.

SI was recruited when she was in Form 2 with average absence of 7 days in a month from school. Today SI is now in form three in a Senior High School after successfully transiting from the Junior High School with only 5 absence in 4 months from school during her JSS days immediately after enrolling into the educational program compared to 7 days absence per month prior to enrollment. According to SI, such an improvement can partly be attributed to CDIs intervention as SI says:

“The only barrier that prevented me from attending school regularly was lifted, and I was able to concentrate on my studies..... The learning materials including the core subject text books made available to through the mobile Library facility with the school coordinator for the program my academic records improved tremendously.... My report cards then bear testimonies My performance has improved since last academic year”

6. BAA of Ashia Mills JHS

Enrolled onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls’ Education Project in 2016, Barbara who had scored 40%, 30%, and 33% in English Language, Mathematics and Social Studies respectively in her first term; scored 64%, 68% and 55% in the same subjects respectively in the second term. And this was only in Primary Five. Today, B in October, 2022, completed her Senior High Education having been a beneficiary of our education support including extra classes, teaching materials, menstrual hygiene and feeding support during the just ended WAECE organized for her and other beneficiaries by CDI.

BAA lost her mother early in life and has had her father to cater for her and four other siblings. Throughout her Junior and Senior High School Education, she helped her father to cater for her other siblings by hawking sachet water in the Agbogbloshie market, one of Ghana’s biggest slum areas in the nation’s capital where they reside. According to BAA, things weren’t that easy until CDI recruited her onto the program and visited her, her father and her other significant others at home in 2016 as part of evidence gathering to write her social investigation report for the consideration of management of CDI. This, BAA narrates as below:

“the project officer after discussions with my father about the composition of the interventions encouraged me to learn hard, and told me CDI was only coming in to contribute as part of efforts toward better educational performance that will enable her qualify to continue to the senior high school that could possible ensure better future prospects..... According to BAA throughout CDIs interventions, her hopes of becoming a nurse begun to come more closer and real Once my dad realized others like CDI were interested in my schooling, he became very attentive to making efforts but with some difficulties to meet my other basic needs and also made sure to enquire how

things were going with my studies.... It was very encouragingthe broken foundation was rebuilt”.

BAA goes on to say that:

“the sanitary pads, learning aids, school bag, daily lunch during school week days all came at a time my situation was dire, but of all these, I appreciate the fact that CDI came to my house to talk with us, making me understand that I always would have a family to run to when I needed educational support and other support including psychosocial support and guardians.... that to me is what changed me and I can only say thank you CDI and all your partners for opening your arms to me”

7. TA of Ayalolo 1 & 2 JHS

Enrolled onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls’ Education Project at its inception, TM now aged 18, progressed from primary 5 and completed her junior high school education in 2020 and now in her second-year learning dressmaking, after deciding to chart this career path- dressmaking. TM lives with her father and step mother in the Konkomba Market and hawks in sachet water describing those time lines in what she termed; “those days of yesterday without CDI”. Even though she occasionally hawks on the streets over the weekends, TM says her education now takes priority over everything else. TA puts it more clearly by saying:

“I didn’t have money for extra tuition, but CDI came and paid for me and I can now attend extra classes.... The exercise books, sanitary pads, textbooks and other items CDI has provided me with has made it possible for me to feed myself with the little I get without worrying about how to get myself what I am being provided with by CDI”.

As is usual with step mother and daughter relationships, there were tensions between mother and daughter. Fortunately, CDI project officers met with mother and daughter to diffuse tensions and after several visits’ peace and tranquil finally prevailed. Even though a herculean task, the diplomacy adopted by CDI program officers finally resolved every challenge that existed. On this TA had this to say:

“those days my step mother would insult me at the least provocation, but after you came and spoke with her, we now live happily together and I now feel very happy at home and comfortable doing my home work without being shouted upon it has made it possible for me to now learn at home without any problems with my step mother”.

TA is now in her third year in the Senior High Education. Her ambition is to become an administrator.

8. AS of Sowa Din Memorial 2 JHS in the Adenta Municipality of the Greater Accra Region.

Abigail was born on the 14th of February, 2004 and has six other siblings. Unfortunately, her father lost his job and things took a wrong turn for the entire family. Although he still manages to occasionally find and do menial jobs for people within the neighborhood of Maajor Last Stop, catering for his family has been a major hurdle. It was therefore full of smiles when the Centre for Development Initiatives enrolled AS onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls' Education Project in 2018. According to Mr. Segbedzie her father:

“when Abigail told me of Centre for Development Initiatives and that she had been picked for a scholarship package, I initially thought they just wanted me not to think too much as a father, but when the officers came and spoke with us, I believed what she was saying. I cannot explain what the project has done for us as a family, I can only say God brought you into our lives to save me from the disgrace and shame of not being able to educate my own daughter”

AS was recruited when she was in Form 1 in 2018, in 2020 she was in her first year in the senior high school. In the words of AS:

“My father could not provide all my textbooks, so when CDI provided us with textbooks, I quickly made good use of them the sanitary pad I could not afford is now been provided... exercise books, note books and school bag has reduced the financial burden on my father, the truth is my father did not even have the money.... what I am trying to say is, CDI has helped to make my schooling more comfortable and possible”.

9. AA of Sowa Din Memorial 2 JHS

Abigail resides in Sailem (School Junction) with her aunty. Suffice it to say that the relationship between niece and aunt is not that cozy. Abigail being the 5th born of her parents was more than glad when her aunty reached out for her to come and join her in Accra from Aburi. For the greater part however, Abigail was made to cater for the needs of her aunt's children rather than attend school. Absenting herself from school became the new normal. When Abigail was finally enrolled onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls' Education Project in 2018, things begun to improve especially after several talks with her aunty. Today, Abigail is regular in class and prepares to sit for her final examination (BECE). Abigail narrates that;

“Besides the school bag keeping my books tidy; sanitary pads (which I couldn't afford by the way) to keep me in school during my menses; exercise, note books and text books to help me with my studies; I think I am particularly grateful to Centre for Development Initiatives for speaking to my Aunty and making it possible for me to always be in school, without this I probably wouldn't be here preparing for my BECE”.

Abigail aspires to be a teacher so that she can give back to society in her own little way by training and nurturing students. She is now very confident that with CDI's support her dream can be realized. In her own words:

“with CDI by my side, I can now become the teacher I have always wanted to be. When I become a teacher, I will help students who face similar situations as I am in currently, I believe that is the only way I can pay back CDI”.

10. AM of Sowa Din Memorial 2 JHS

Mavor was born on 6th June, 2005 in Agbosome in the Volta Region. As fate would have it, she was invited by her aunt to come live with her in Little Roses (Botwe). Upon Mavor's arrival in Accra, her aunty was very happy with her industrious nature when it came to house chores at home and selling items in her shop. But when it came to issues of educating AM, tempers flared. According to AM:

“even after selling in my aunt's shop and running errands for her, my aunty would still tell me she doesn't have money for my education, even if she had to provide me with certain items for fear of others talking about how she treated me, then she would have to insult me for weeks”.

On the 31st of October, 2018, AM was enrolled onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls' Education Project. She was immediately provided with learning materials, a school bag, sanitary pad per month, exercise and note 3 books. When asked what these items meant to her, AM said;

“sometimes my mother in the village would have to find a way of sneaking some school items to me (which wasn't regular because she doesn't work), but with all that I have been provided by Centre for Development Initiatives, my mind is now peaceful and when I am in class it is very easy to concentrate”

AM goes on to thank CDI and maintains that initially her performance wasn't that great. But now she is proudly promoted to form 2 and sees herself coming out with flying colors when she finally takes her BECE. AM intends to work for any of the security agencies (Ghana Armed Forces or Police Service), when asked why, she asserts:

“I believe in that position I can fight for the rights of those who are being maltreated like myself, and that is why I want to work for the security agencies”.

11. MA of Sowa Din Memorial 2 JHS

Mary was born on 28th January, 2005, but ironically does not know her mother. Her mother walked out of the marriage relationship with her father a long time ago. As though this was not enough a predicament for Mary, her father left her with an Aunty. MA's Aunty has openly vowed she would have nothing to do with Mary's education. Rather amazingly, the same aunty has no problems with MA if she helps in selling her products and runs errands at home (Little Roses, Botwe). Mary insists Centre for Development Initiative's Project Officers must not visit her at home since it will

generate into all forms of abuse (verbal and even physical). MA's sister and father are in the know of her status as a CDI participant, but not her aunty. With tears rolling down, MA puts it this t bluntly;

“the sanitary pad has helped me a lot, when I require one during my menses, my aunty will ask me to go to my dad, my dad will equally ask me to go to my sister (sometimes my sister gives me one or two, most times I don't get at all), so the sanitary pad for me has been a blessing”.

She further explains that:

“The exercise books and other learning materials have turned things around for me academically: I borrow the textbooks and story books to learn and afterwards I bring them back. What would I have done without CDI? For my aunty says she has no hand in my education. I know I am in Form 2 today because of CDI's assistance and I will be forever grateful”.

Mary fighting to hold back tears, says she wants to be an architect in the future. This to her will give her a lot of money to be able to take care of her father, sister and people like her who need help to stay in school.

12. HL of Sowa Din Memorial 2 JHS

HL's parents back in 2018 couldn't hide their pride and joy when their daughter was enrolled onto the Exclusive Vulnerable Girls' Education Project. The fact is that, even though both parents lived in the village, HL was sent to live with her sister here in Accra (Nanakrom Estates) to attend school. Unfortunately, attending to her sister's shop became the order of the day and school soon became relegated. So, when HL was enrolled onto the project, both parents breathed a sigh of relief. The project to both parents has fulfilled their dreams of Hannah completing her JHS and possibly making it all the way to the university. Whilst HL takes her mock exams in Form 3, she has this to say;

“The school bag helped to keep my books clean.... with the learning materials I am able to learn ahead of the class, and most often it helps me in my research.... As for the sanitary pad, my parents couldn't afford it neither could I, so it helps me a lot during my menses”.

After home visits to talk with Hannah's sister by Centre for Development Initiatives Project Officers, she now allows Hannah to study after school and do her homework. HL following her enrollment into the program became regular in school and only attends to her sister's shop during the weekends. Accordingly, HL says that;

“Those days without CDI would have meant my sister insulting me for abandoning her shop and going to school, but today, following the enrollment and the subsequent provision of learning materials, home and school visits by the program officers, she completely understands that I need to go to school and be a better person for her and the entire family.... So now I am regular in school and I trust I will pass my BECE with distinction”.