

# HAPPY KIDS FOUNDATION

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ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 2019



# OUR MISSION

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IS TO ADVOCATE,  
EDUCATE AND FUNDRAISE  
FOR THE DEVELOPMENTAL  
PROGRESS OF A SMALL  
GROUP OF ORPHANED AND  
VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN  
GHANA.

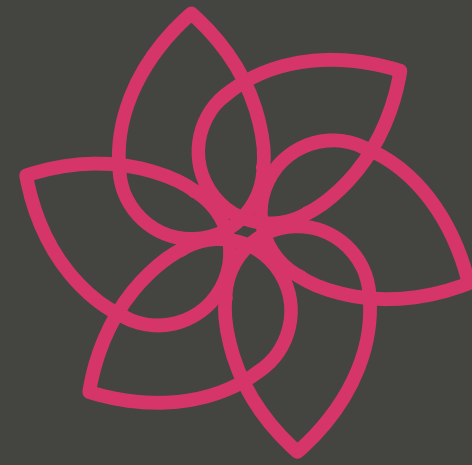
# OUR APPROACH

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CREATE  
OPPORTUNITY



EMPOWER



EDUCATE



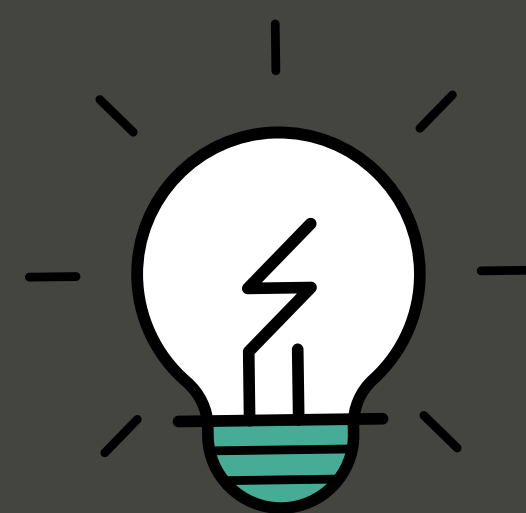
IMPACT



LOVE



INNOVATE



# STANDING TOGETHER IN COVID-19

We have been humbled to be able to continue to serve the children and community of Happy Kids during this unprecedented time – thanks to donors that continued to support us even when faced with uncertainty themselves. Before sharing our year in review with you, we felt it was important to share how our management team in Ghana and board responded. Our response was much like our mission, founded in our community. It has not been an easy transition to remote learning as our school closed, or perfect, but we are incredibly proud of how our teams have prepared, education and supported the community.



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Many of kids families were vulnerable before this crisis.

The restrictions and food shortages have created even more strain on families struggling. To support our community, our teams have been bringing food to families that need it most.

We are fully committed to our teachers and have continued to pay their salaries in full.



## HEALTH & SAFETY

Dr. Victor, (our local doctor), educated all children living in our boarding homes (43), and staff (30) about the symptoms, protocol and preventative measures against COVID-19.

For our children who have gone home to stay with their parents, we are checking in on them and educating their families about the hygienic measures they can take at home to stay healthy.



## REMOTE LEARNING

Our teachers have been working to transition learning from the class room to our boarding homes and students homes remotely.

With many homes lacking electricity or the technical resources to continue learning online, we have been developing workbooks for all our kids to continue learning.

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

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Happy Kids was founded in 1995 by Elizabeth Gbone, a woman native to Webge, Ghana. Elizabeth and her family had a dream of providing education and care for vulnerable children in their community. For the last 25 years, they have dedicated their lives to Happy Kids (and continue to do so today). Elizabeth's strength and humility paved the way for Happy Kids to evolve. It wasn't until 2010 that the US Partnership was established by Kelsey Finnegan, now President of the US Board.

Today, Happy Kids employs 30+ local Ghanaian staff, educates 200+ students and has 30+ children in our care full time. We also support 10+ children each year with Secondary School scholarships and employment support. Today, we are a team that leads with love and mutual respect. We are a team that does not give up. We educate each other and we've expanded our leadership team for diversity of thought and expertise. Most of all, we continue to uphold our commitment to a small group of hopeful children that deserve to be met with opportunity and love (including tough love).

For those who have been with us since the get go, you know first-hand just how far we've come (and just how far we have to go). 2019 was the year of reaching milestones that were years in the making! Most influential was obtaining our official 501c3 status. This led to a flurry of tax-deductible donation opportunities (EIN 82-2902617). The funding support in 2019 made sweeping changes that will improve the lives of our children and staff for years to come.

While this report will highlight how your support fueled sustainable progress, here's a sense of what 2019 did for Happy Kids: We used to ask, "How are we going to afford teacher salaries this month?" – and now, we ask, "What trainings and educational resources can we arm our teachers with?" We used to ask, "How can we spread our feeding budget to make our kids feel full and address nutritional deficiencies?" – and now, we ask "What proteins and fresh foods should we increase, and should we engage a local nutritionist?" The shift from survival to sustaining has happened.

Our stability is admittedly fragile, but we have arrived. Now, we prepare to progress and evolve further. The US Board remains intact and committed to working with no compensation. We do this out of love and passion. We keep our overhead low because we know how far your dollar will go. Perhaps most rewarding for us was looking back and recognizing just how far we've come as an organization. We've watched our children grow year after year. Recognizing the role that Happy Kids has played in shaping their past, present and future is remarkable.

To our donors – thank you. Our progress takes a village, and you are a part of us.

Ubuntu is a South African saying that means: I am, because we are. We cannot wait to embark on the work ahead with you. The children and local staff employed by Happy Kids are better because of your involvement. From the bottom of our hearts, Akpe KaKaKa (evermore thanks).

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US Board of Directors and Management - Cassie, Kelsey, Paul, Natalie, Christine & Christy  
Happy Kids Management Team - Elizabeth, Godsway, Emma, Knox & Stephany

# OUR REACH

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**200**

STUDENTS  
EDUCATED

**18**

FULL TIME  
TEACHERS

**8**

STUDENTS IN  
SECONDARY

**200+**

MEALS  
PROVIDED  
DAILY

**94%**

FUNDS RAISED GO DIRECTLY  
TO OUR KIDS & STAFF

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

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2019 represented a breakthrough year for fundraising and as a result, the ability to support ever increasing needs of our kids and staff. Fueled by new partners, such as Memento Mori Winery, we raised funds raised equaled \$118k, a 140% increase over prior years. Success in fundraising was timely, as our needs were quickly outpacing our capacity.

In addition to higher operating costs, Ghana also experienced inflation that drove the costs of everyday items like food and gas up, as well the salaries our staff need to support themselves and their families. Our donors enabled us to account for these needs and deliver our mission. We were able to accomplish the major initiatives bellow with approximately ~\$10,000:

- Boy's Home: We secured a new home nearby Happy Kids School with expanded space and proper facilities.
- Nursery Renovation: There is a tremendous need for nursery care in the area. The investments we made in renovating this space greatly improved the quality of care that we could provide.
- Accra Transition Home: We secured a small apartment in Accra to aid our kids transitioning to secondary school or the workplace. Most opportunities are in the rapidly growing city of Accra which is a 5-hour bus ride from Wegbe, Ghana.

With the financial support and financial discipline in 2019, we have been able to deliver on meeting our current needs and expand areas of focus. In the coming year, we look to continue to enhance our fiscal stability with a focus on long term, high impact initiatives for 2020 and beyond.

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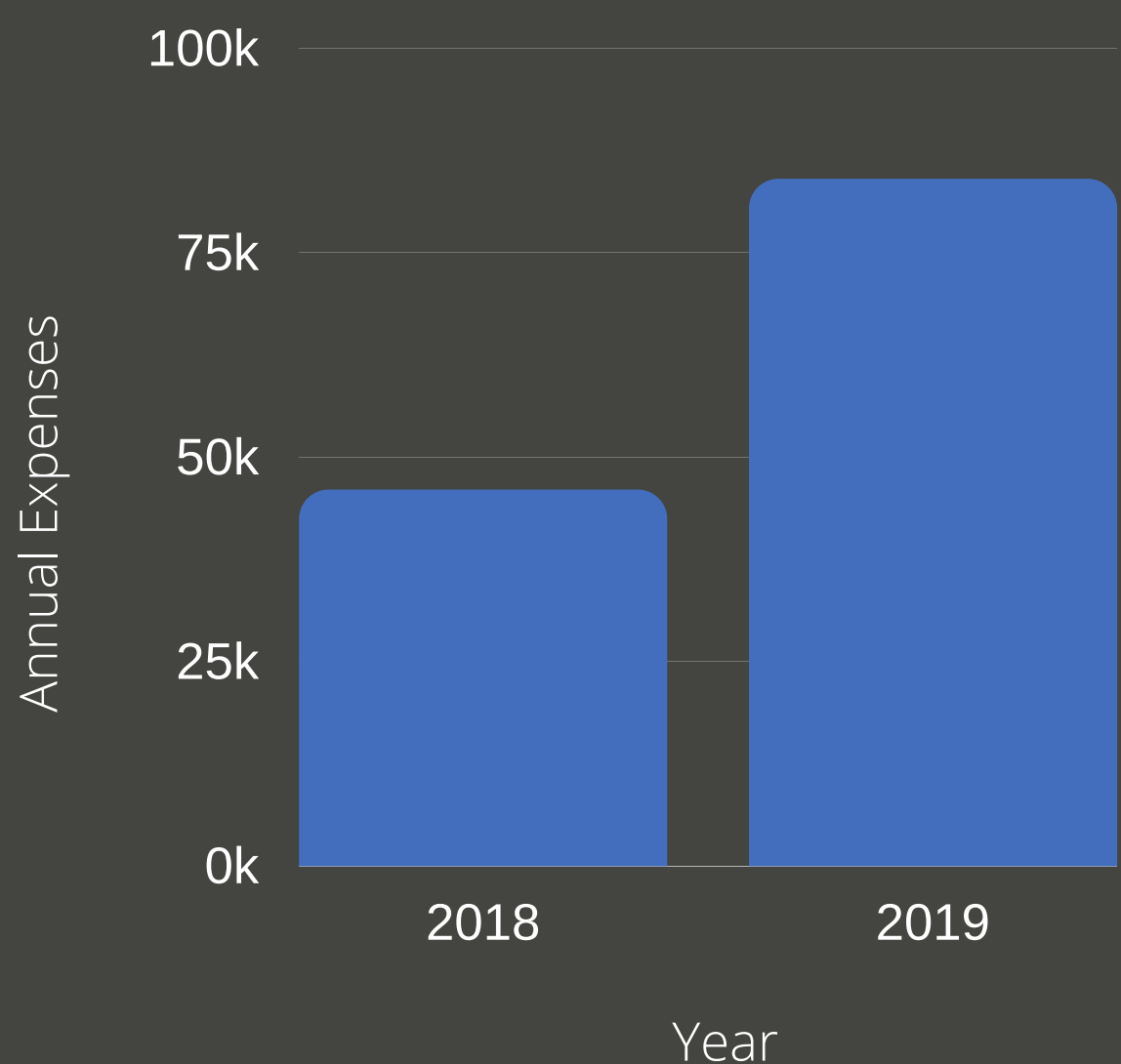
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Paul Needels, Director of Finance

# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## FIGURE 1. ANNUAL EXPENSES

*Our spend has massive leverage in Hohoe, Ghana in supporting our local staff, food and boarding, the education of over 200 children and our ongoing programs.*

*To better meet the needs of our children, we addressed some deficiencies in our core programs. Accordingly, total expenses grew by 83% in the past year with the enhanced programs such secondary school, boarding home renovations, greater investment in nutrition and welcoming new staff. This was only possible because of increased donations. Our monthly operating budget (food, salaries, rent, etc.) remains at approximately \$5k. We continue to be sensitive to keeping our expenses in check to ensure a strong fiscal footing.*



*Our first full fiscal year recognized as a 501c(3) began in 2018*



## 100%

Our Board in the United States volunteer their time, which means that every dollar donated has a greater impact.



## 5 CEDI

Your dollar goes far. Every US dollar you donate translates to approximately 5 cedis in Ghana.



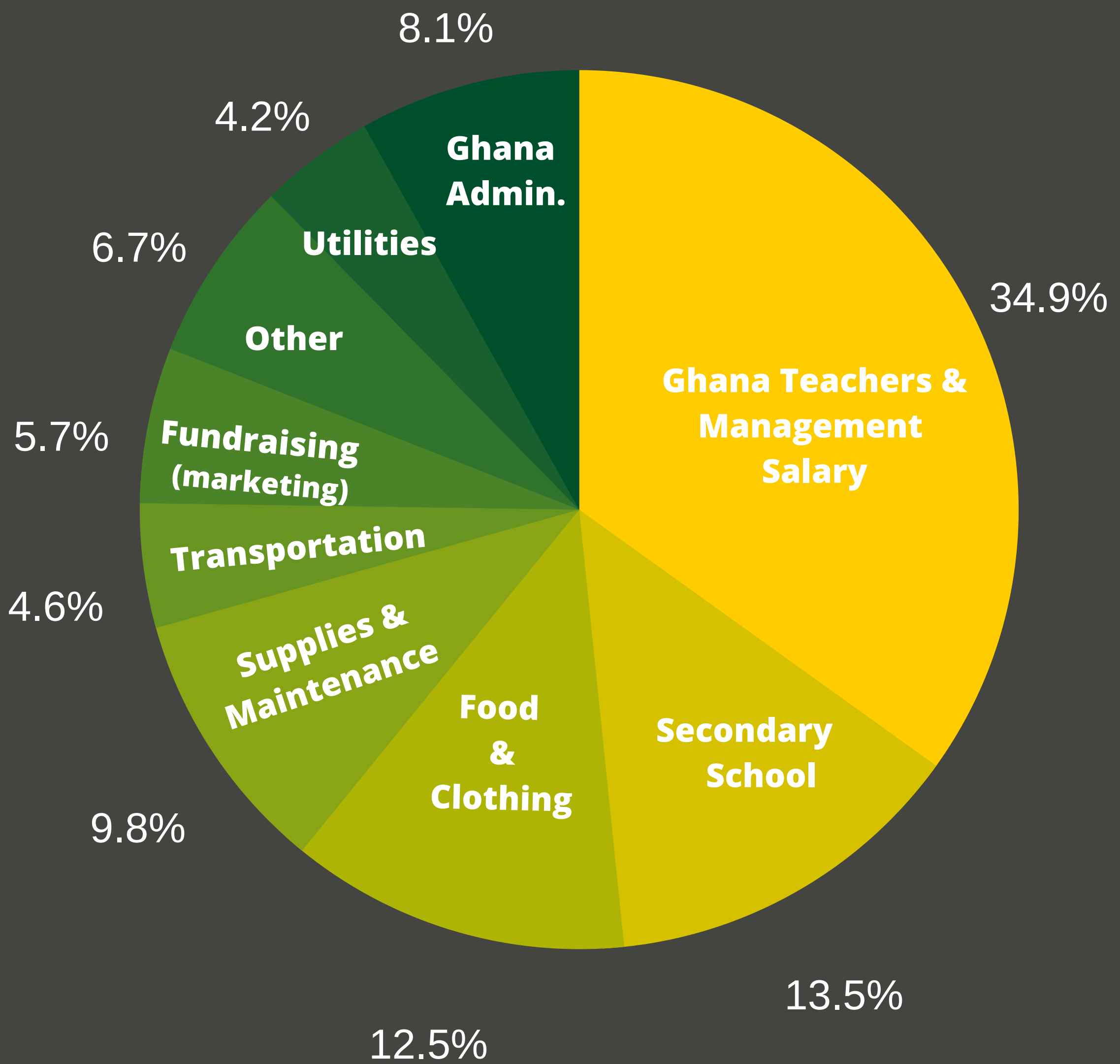
## 28%

Much of our basic expenses depend on recurring donations such as child or classroom sponsorship and are critical for providing essential care and education.



# PROGRAM FUNDING

2019



ANNUAL PROGRAM SPENDING

# A LOOK AT EDUCATION IN GHANA

**25%**  
YOUTH  
UNEMPLOYMENT

**60%**  
OF THE  
POPULATION IS  
UNDER 25

**28%**  
OF CHILDREN LIVE  
IN POVERTY



Ghana has a large and growing population of youth set to enter the workforce. While the Ministry of Education is implementing new reforms to increase enrollment of pre-k, primary and secondary school, accessibility still remains a barrier for many families - especially for girls. One additional year of education can result in a 20% increase in earnings. With high unemployment rates facing children post graduation, a quality and holistic education is critical to bring new generations out of poverty.

# EDUCATION OVERVIEW

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Our purpose is to advocate, educate and fundraise for the developmental of 200 vulnerable and orphaned children. We take a holistic approach to our education programs, focusing on providing our kids with well trained teachers, while also creating a safe and healthy environment of learning and inspiration. Happy Kids provides education to children from nursery through junior high on site, located on two campuses that are a short walk away. One campus houses our Nursery School, caring for upwards of 100 children, ages 3-6. The second campus, is the Primary and Junior High School (JHS) with approximately 100 students, ages 6 and up.

As our students grow and reach junior high level, they participate in an in-depth JHS student prep program. These courses are extra curricular to their general studies and have been designed to prepare students to matriculate on with understanding of the appropriate path to take to reach their goals in senior high school and beyond, providing exposure and guidance to real world employment opportunities. We aim to prep students for their futures by giving them the tools they need to consider career options and how to get there, teaching self sustaining skills, encouraging positive attitudes towards education, impressing respect for one another, self-discipline, punctuality, supporting active learning, problem-solving and self expression.

For some of our students, the next step is Senior High School (SHS). In Ghana, some SHS is paid for by the government however not all tuitions are covered. All SHS requires funds for either tuition, uniforms, textbooks, supplies, housing and/or transportation. Our focus has been developing secondary program that addresses the needs of vulnerable children in our care, providing both financial support for eligible students along with guidance for both school selection, housing and support along the way throughout their studies. We strive to guide our children in their journey through pre-primary, primary and junior secondary with qualified teachers, up to date curriculum textbooks and a supportive learning environment.

Historically, our school has often struggled with limited resources, infrastructure and personnel training. Over the past two years, we have focused on improving infrastructure and strengthening the core of the school by partnering with a local Ghanaian education expert for guidance and training, refining organizational structure, designing policy for accountability, offering professional development opportunities to the staff, implementing discipline policies and growing our academic programs.



Christine Joseph, Director of Education

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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# SECONDARY SCHOOL

Continued education is the bridge for skilled employment that breaks the cycle of poverty, yet with less than 35% of children in rural Ghana gaining access to Secondary School, Happy Kids is not alone in struggling to provide proper resources for continuing education. To date, Happy Kids has supported 15 children to go to Secondary School at some of the top Secondary schools in Ghana, and has a goal of providing secondary school tuition for all Happy Kids children who cannot afford this next critical step on their own.



## Bless Dzisievor

Bless is in school at Aburi Secondary Technical School, studying General Language Arts. She aspires to be a journalist and is active in her school's Football and athletic programs.



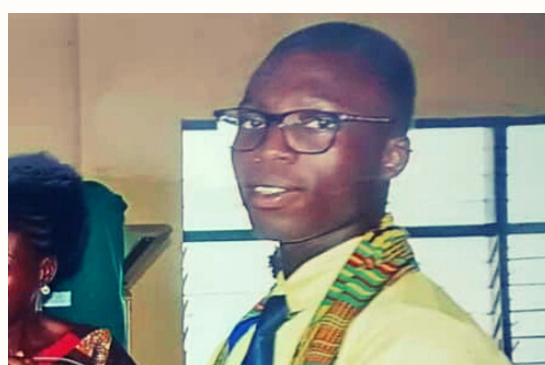
## Davis Belewsi

Belewsi is a natural leader and helps care for the younger children in the house. He will graduate from ATTC driving school this year, preparing him to work as a local taxi driver.



## George

George has just started secondary school at Apostle Sarfo School of Arts & Sciences. He is eager to begin his studies and participate in the school's soccer program.



## Benson

Benson is studying at St. Johns Grammar School in Accra and dreams of being an economist. He studies hard and is at the top of his class.



## Evans Klu

Evans is studying at Tema Technical Institute in Tema, which is the primary industrial hub of Ghana. With a dream of becoming an automotive engineer, Evans is pursuing motor vehicle engineering.



## Moda Kumaga & Forgive Glah

Happy Kids graduates Moda & Forgive started a 3-year program at Imperial College of Arts in Accra, where they are pursuing their passion in design and fashion in studying pattern drafting, English, science, garment construction, math, and entrepreneurship.



## Solomon Bilidam

Solomon started his second year at Abuakwa State College Kyebi, where he continued to thrive in mathematics, science, and business management. He is currently a business student and is discovering a number of different fields he can enter when he graduates, such as banking.

# TRANSITION HOUSE

As our children grew older, we noticed a gap between students graduating from Happy Kids and entering the real world. They needed further guidance, resources and structure. We wanted to provide them with a stepping stone to a successful future. With limited options in our small village, we looked to the nation's capital. Accra is home to many top secondary schools, universities and employment opportunities. We decided to rent a home in Accra for a select number of qualified students and graduates.

Our transition home currently houses two of our secondary school students as they complete their studies. We will be adding two graduates this year, providing housing as they adjust to their new jobs and get a head start on their future.

"Education is a  
human right with  
immense power to  
transform"

UN Secretary  
General Kofi Annan



# NEW BOYS HOUSE

This year was one of growth for Happy Kids - including our investment in infrastructure. We made the exciting progress of securing a new house for our growing boys for the next 5 years, giving them the much needed space to learn, play and grow. While appropriate properties can be difficult to find, our new boys house is just a short walk from the school. This investment also enables us to better serve our growing nursery program, which with a few updates was able to be converted into classrooms.

A new home also comes with new costs. We have hired an additional house parent to provide guidance, structure and care along with new ongoing costs like utilities. The ability to secure this property for the next few years, provide clean water and support the ongoing costs was made possible with the generous support of Memento winery.



# NURSERY

Great progress has been made in our Nursery Department, which has significantly evolved over the past year. Historically, classes were taught on the outdoor covered patio of the old boys' dorm, with limited space for the kids to play and learn. With a little paint and cleaning, the bedrooms were transformed into bright classroom that inspire learning.

Another exciting change is the addition of new toys. We sourced locally made, educational toys including colorful wooden puzzles and blocks and for some of our little students; these toys were the first they've ever seen and played with. Additionally, we collected crayons, markers, coloring books, dry erase boards and chalk from generous donors and supplied the nursery department with those much needed early childhood education resources.

This was also the first time Happy Kids Foundation had been able to send a few teachers, including one nursery teacher, to an education conference which offered professional development workshops. Opportunities like that are only now possible and we hope to continue offering our teaching staff continuing education and guidance.





# NEW PLAYGROUND



"Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity."

Kay Redfield Jamison



# FUNDRAISER HIGHLIGHTS



An intimate dinner and beer pairing hosted by Captain Fatty's Brewery & prepared by Chef CoCo La Forge, who worked with local partners like Fold, Shalob and Farm Cart Organics in Santa Barbara.

Some of our youngest supporters organized a shoe drive for Happy Kids to collect much needed footwear for our kiddos!



Steven Kent Winery released the Second Annual Happy Kids Wine, The label is designed by Michael Ayitey, a 12 yr old HK boy who loves to sing, dance and play uno.

Our first annual Holiday Party gathered 200+ donors in Hermosa Beach, CA. Hosts Jeff Kernochan and Synneve Andrena opened their home as the venue. Donors for auctions, food, beverages, and a team of volunteers made this possible.



*\$50,000  
Charity Challenge*

*Submit a photo/image representing our #rememberolive motto*

*No limit to entries*

*Finalist will be announced March 31st!*

*Required for submission:  
#mementomorivinery  
#rememberolive  
#rememberolive  
@mementomorivinery  
@hayes\_drumwright*

*TAG YOUR CHAMP*

In 2019 we received Happy Kids' largest donation ever from Memento Mori. This incredibly generous donation enabled us to secure new housing for our boys, make critical investments in our kids and plan for the future.

# GHANA MANAGEMENT TEAM

ELIZABETH  
GBONE,  
FOUNDER



GODSWAY AGYABO,  
PROGRAM  
DIRECTOR



STEPHANY  
ABRA BOATEN,  
DIRECTOR CONTINUED  
EDUCATION



EMMANUEL  
GBONE, SPECIAL  
PROJECTS MANAGER



KNOX  
ODUMAH,  
DIRECTOR



# US BOARD

CASSIE  
ROSENGREN,  
VICE PRESIDENT



KELSEY  
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NATALIE  
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COMMS &  
PARTNERSHIPS



PAUL NEEDELS,  
FINANCE  
DIRECTOR



CHRISTINE  
JOSEPH, EDUCATION  
DIRECTOR



CHRISTY MAHAR,  
FUND DEVELOPMENT  
DIRECTOR



**WE HAVE YET TO  
REACH OUR  
FULL POTENTIAL**

[www.happykidsfund.org](http://www.happykidsfund.org)

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