

Proposal Narrative

Gender-based violence is any form of violence or abuse directed to any person on the basis of their sex or gender. According to the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), worldwide an estimated one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime. Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates one in five women worldwide will become a victim of rape or attempted rape. Victims of this type of violence can suffer sexual and reproductive health consequences, including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and even death. Gender-based violence can affect the female psychologically, cognitively, and inter-personally. In some areas of Ghana, women and children are often forced to walk alone in the darkness of the night to relieve themselves, which threatens their safety to being assaulted, harassed and/or raped.

Inspired by the UN World Toilet Day on November 19, my Chamber of Peace Project entails a two-tiered solution; I plan to address the issue of gender-based violence awareness and personal safety within the community, as well as build a toilet facility to enhance the security and privacy of women and girls. To combat this issue, I plan to organize and facilitate weekly workshops about personal safety, hygiene and health focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights, demonstrate self-defense techniques, coordinate a one-day sanitation community-service project, build the toilet facility and celebrate the grand-opening of the facility. This project will be carried out in an extremely poverty-ridden village in the Eastern Region of Ghana, West Africa called Akroprong, Akuapim.

Violence against women and children in Ghana is widespread. One in every three women is affected by family violence. Over 109,784 cases of gender-based violence have been recorded in Ghana's capital city of Accra within the last decade. In Ghana, there is a special police unit for reporting any form of abuse called as DOVVSU (Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit). CHRAJ (Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice) is also doing a commendable job in settling many issues of domestic violence. The issue arises when these services are not available to everyone in Ghana. Many villages and towns lack resources to seek help in addressing abuse of any form, therefore, they continue to suffer in silence. Education plays a major role in gender-based violence, and I intend to address this deficit.

There are three levels of gender-based violence. These are the home or family level, the community level, and the state level. My peace project will be addressing the community level of gender-based violence where physical, psychological, and sexual violence occur. Within the general community this type of violence entails battery, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and intimidation; these attacks are related to increased poverty.

Since health services are among the first places victims of abuse seek assistance, providing available resources to reproductive health services is a critical entry point for violence-related information and assistance. I will provide information to both women and girls about their rights, including their right to freedom from abuse. With my experience and skills in counseling, I will be facilitating counseling sessions and support to assist survivors of gender-based violence. Some of the funds requested will be used to

purchase pamphlets about personal safety, surviving abuse, personal hygiene, teen-pregnancy, STDs, living with HIV/AIDS and many more. I will also conduct weekly group counseling sessions so the women and girls in the community can learn from each other on how to survive gender-based violence by providing one another with support and advice. I will encourage each person participating in the workshop to tell her story by having a poetry and crafts day in order to provide comfort and allow participants to make posters of their goals and understanding of personal safety.

Because this project will be carried out in the remote village of Akropong, Akuapim, away from the city, I will be lodging in the village until the project is over. I have family members in Ghana willing to help with this project. I have estimated eight weeks for this project to be done. I plan on gathering everyone in the community to have a one-day community service project about keeping their environment clean. We will spend the day cleaning the village, and properly disposing of it.

The second part of my project is to build a toilet facility for the community. There will be three stalls for males and three for females. Some men in the community have agreed to volunteer to help build the facility in exchange to be fed breakfast and lunch on each workday. I will have food catered Monday through Friday. Materials for the building have already been estimated and will be purchased once I arrive in Ghana. To sustain this project, a few women in the community have already volunteered to keep the facilities clean. Chemicals will be used to treat the waste in the facility since it is not a water-operated toilet. I have partnered with a Ghanaian based tissue paper company in sponsoring the village with free tissue paper for a year.

The aim of my Chambers of Peace Project is to bring awareness to the community by educating them and also by having a facility where women and children can enjoy their privacy and not be ashamed for having to defecate in public, or after painfully holding their bladder and bowels all day. Not having the facility available invades on human safety and dignity. Women and girls will benefit the most from this project, in large part because they require facilities to manage menstrual hygiene. Some short and long-term goals I hope to achieve from this project include: implementing and sustaining a cleaner environment, completing the building of the toilet facility, providing access to support and advocacy services, and seeing a decrease in cases of gender-based violence.

Although toilets cannot completely eradicate gender-based violence, it can play a substantial role in protecting women. The most obvious way is through access. By being within proximity to the home and established support networks, women and girls will feel less vulnerable when relieving themselves, and due to my proposed educational workshop, feel more empowered to call for help if needed, in turn giving them the peace of mind to a basic human right. The Chambers of Peace Project is designed in effort to empower and equip women and children of Akropong, Akuapim in a way that promotes peace. With the help and funding of Projects for Peace, this initiative will set out to combat gender-based violence, an issue faced by women and children of our world.