

First Step Academy

Pomadze, Ghana

Founders:

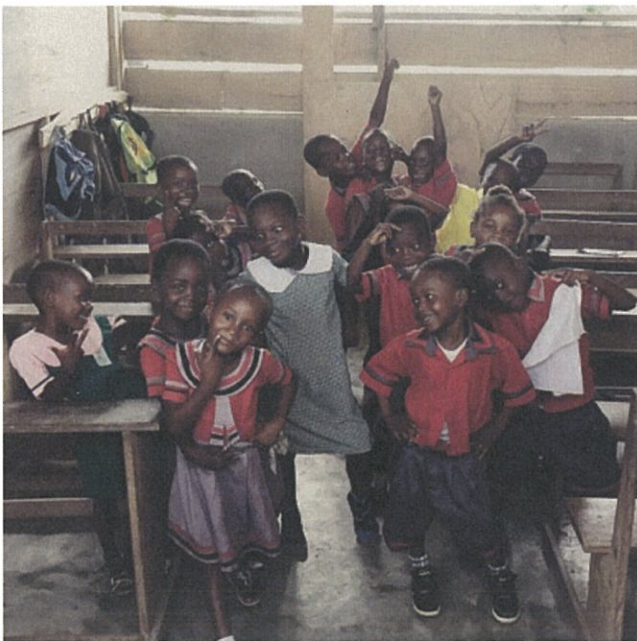
Stephen Addo

Amy Brinkley



Despite Ghana's good standing on the international stage and a continued growth of a middle class, economic stalls have threatened Ghana's poorest and has made children and young girls vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, which include labor and sex trafficking. Right now, Challenging Heights, a lead anti-slavery organization in Ghana reports that there are 49,000 children working on Lake Volta alone and 21,000 of them are in hazardous, life-threatening labor. It is also estimated that more than half of the children working on Lake Volta have been trafficked there. The government admittedly lacks the resources necessary to combat the force of the child slavery industry in Ghana and relies heavily on the work on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to rescue and rehabilitate children who are found to be working as child slaves.

My friend, Stephen Addo, works for one such organization as a community advocate and lead rescue coordinator. In fact, recently he returned from Lake Volta where his team rescued 15 children from forced child slavery. I've known Stephen since 2011 and in that time, he has been a colleague, a friend, and now a brother. In 2015, Stephen and I started pooling our money together to build a school in Pomadze, a source community for child trafficking. Additionally, incidences of school dropout are high among young girls as a result of pregnancy and child marriage.



In our vision, the school in Pomadze will serve as a kind of "community lighthouse" where children would receive a standards-based education in a safe environment and families would be empowered and educated themselves about the importance of their child's education. Because Stephen is known in Pomadze and the surrounding communities for his work identifying, rescuing, and monitoring children in forced labor, the school has grown into a haven for vulnerable children under Stephen's watchful eye.

What began as a one-room classroom with dusty floors has blossomed into a school that now enrolls approximately 115 children ages 3-10 and employs 6 full-time staff members. The vision statement of First Step Academy is taken from Jesus' words in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Through education, it is our desire to be a lighthouse where children can pursue their educational dreams, discover their God-given talents, and shine a light to others.

1st Step Academy
P.O Box 413
Winneba
19th September 2017

Letter for Appreciation

I would like to thank Almighty God for his wonderful love and grace in our lives. He has been so merciful to me and the people around me. I know my sister Amy has said a lot about my childhood experience and my relationship with her. For that reason I wouldn't want to talk much about all the abuse, disappointments, starving, suffering etc. I never thought of being able to complete even basic school, not to talk of having degrees, but God has sent wonderful people into my life and through them he makes a way when it seems there is no way.

I was overwhelmed when I received Minister Chaunceia Mayfield's message of choosing First Step Academy as the recipient of the 2017 Luncheon Community Service Initiative. The children, their families, and I are in short of words to describe how happy and appreciative we are for receiving this donation. First step Academy would like to thank Strengthen Thy Sister for their generous donation towards the success of our school. As the word of God says, "From the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise." I believe every blessing these little children receive shall become a very thankful praise in their mouth.

As a leader of the school, who is steering this great mission with passion, I promise you that the donation will be used effectively to achieve its intended purposes, to glorify the good work of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Thank you once again for being part of building a lighthouse where vulnerable children can come and shine their lights. It is my prayer that this partnership will be an everlasting one.

Yours Faithfully,

Stephen Addo