

# A YEAR IN GHANA

## SUMMARY REPORT 2011

Plan is helping provide better drinking water and sanitation



### About Ghana

Children and young people form the majority of Ghana. Agriculture is the predominant way people earn a living. Plan has been working in Ghana since 1992. We currently work with families in more than 250 communities.

### Problems affecting the children of Ghana

- Parents are indifferent towards education and there is low morale among teachers. Many schools and buildings are dilapidated, and materials are scarce
- Inadequate immunisation against common diseases, long distances to basic health facilities and little access to safe water and sanitation.
- In many rural areas, adults do not realise children have the right to basic entitlements such as a decent education, healthcare and safety.



Boy writing on blackboard during maths lesson.

## PLAN'S PRIORITIES IN GHANA

### 1 Quality education

- Ensuring communities play an active role in improving schools, teachers' skills and provide scholarships for needy children

### 2 Better health

- Plan is encouraging malaria control, immunisation against other diseases, and community involvement in managing local healthcare
- Greater awareness and treatment of HIV and AIDS
- Helping provide better drinking water and sanitation

### 3 Food security

- Offering savings and loans services to mothers so they can earn more and provide more food and better diets for their children
- Training on health issues
- Helping farmers improve their agricultural techniques

### 4 Awareness about children's rights

- Promoting awareness of children's rights through media, children's clubs and government.
- Supporting universal birth registration and social services for vulnerable children

By being a child sponsor, you have directly supported projects like the ones below. Your ongoing support sustains our long-term development work which impacts the lives of children, their families and communities for generations to come.

Together we are making an invaluable difference to the lives of people in Ghana.

To learn more about Plan's work in Ghana visit:

[www.plan.org.au/ourwork/ourwork/westafrica/ghana](http://www.plan.org.au/ourwork/ourwork/westafrica/ghana)



Girl pumps water from well.

## CASE STUDY: DANGER IN THE WATER

Most children love the water. But what happens when their love of swimming outdoors causes serious illness?

It's a dilemma that's long faced rural communities in Ghana. Many children in Ghana spend the best part of their days along the river banks, swimming, bathing or helping their parents by fetching water or fishing. Yet along the River Dayi and the Volta Lake, the chance of becoming infected with bilharzia (a parasitic worm infection also known as schistosomiasis) – is worryingly high.

### Symptoms and cure

Bilharzia is a serious infection. The main symptom is blood in the urine. For children, this loss of blood can lead to anaemia, tiredness and poor performance in school, as well as overall ill health.

Plan has collaborated with the Ghana Health Service and two local NGOs, working in the 25 communities along river banks where bilharzia is endemic. The aim was simple: to stamp the illness out.

So far, nearly 7,000 people have been treated with praziquantel, an effective anti-bilharzia medicine.

### Changing behaviour

Drug treatments are important, but they have to be backed up with behavioural change. So Plan has trained community health volunteers and teachers to raise local people's awareness of the dangers. We are also supporting a range of fun but informative activities for kids to get the message through.

For example, groups of children took part in drama and role-plays in schools and other public places. Their performances highlighted the dangers. Children's clubs in some communities have taken tougher action, reporting any child found swimming or washing in river water to the authorities. In all, 18 school health clubs were trained about bilharzia infection.

"Swimming in the river was fun, but we did not know that the river was the source of bilharzia," says 15-year-old Naomi. "We have stopped swimming in the river and would encourage our friends to also stop swimming in the river."

"We are happy that our education and the mass treatment have reduced the number of children infected by the disease in our community," says 16-year-old Faustina. "Our education will continue to ensure that the disease is brought under control."

Health education in the wider community has culminated in new bylaws deterring people from swimming, defecating or urinating in the river or lake.

At Plan, we know from experience that it's only when lots of different organisations and groups get together that success of this sort is possible. And partnership has been a very important element in the project's success. Plan has worked with the Ghana Health Service (who provided the drugs), the Ghana Education Service, and local communities and organisations.

### Next steps

Together, we plan to step this project up. There are more communities along the Volta and rivers that are not covered, and more funds are needed to pay for drugs and health education.

That's not all. Most of the affected communities rely on river and lake water for drinking because they lack any other reliable source. Plan is now negotiating with the Ghana Water Company, Volta Regional Co-ordinating Council, Hohoe Municipal Assembly, District Water and Sanitation Agency and other organisations to try to draw up a plan to provide safe drinking water for these communities, and stamp out bilharzia for good.

Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy reasons.

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## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2010

- Helped 14,400 people, including children, to improve their knowledge of HIV and AIDS in discussion groups
- Held training sessions on children's rights in the juvenile justice system for policy makers and administrators. 172 attended.
- Trained and equipped over 1,000 community health volunteers, who can now advise on basic issues like hygiene, diarrhoea and malaria prevention



Children receiving medication against bilharzia.