

REPORT ON A SURVEY ON CHILD RIGHTS

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ABBREVIATION USED

YHF.....	Young Heart Foundation
UNCRC.....	United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRC.....	Child Right Convention
UNICEF.....	United Nation's International Children Emergency Fund
CAR.....	Children's Right Alliance
FGM.....	Female Genital Mutilation
DCI.....	Defense for Children International
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
UG.....	University of Ghana
JHS.....	Junior High School

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background of Young Heart Foundation (YHF)

The Young Heart Foundation (YHF) was formed in 2011. It is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization based in Madina-Accra, Ghana. YHF is registered with the Registrar Generals' Department as a non-profit organization with a remit on children and women. We are recognized by the Department of Social Welfare as a social welfare organization.

YHF focuses mainly on gender issues, education, health and sanitation. The objectives of YHF are to find solutions to these challenges at the same time doing our best to advance the ideas of equality, democracy and justice. We believe that sustainable development cannot occur without good planning and an understanding of the communities we serve. And we also believe that poverty is not natural, but a product of chance and can be overcome.

Our work bridges the gap between community education; awareness and development in project planning. We deliver action-oriented plans and innovative community solutions that are responsive to the needs of communities, yet remain feasible, realistic and achievable.

Our vision is to help create a better world especially for the vulnerable and those facing poverty, through empowerment and our mission is rooted in love, equality, justice and dignity. YHF partners with people; especially widows, the vulnerable in society and those facing poverty to help them achieve their full potentials.

YHF achievements includes: construction of maternity block for the Madina New Road Polyclinic, regular health screening for residents of Madina and its environs at YHF offices, production of documentary on sanitation issues in Madina, provision of drinking water for communities in Madina New Road, assisting widows at Agona-Nkum with farming equipment and accessible market for their products, organized a blood donation exercise for the Korle-Bu Blood Bank and a health exercise for the residents of Madina on communicable and non-communicable diseases such as malaria, hypertension, hepatitis and diabetes.

1.1 Background of Project

This report is the outcome on questionnaires prepared for a study on the rights of children.

On July 6, 2015, the interns from the University of Ghana (UG-Legon) at the Young Heart Foundation (YHF) together with our supervisor, Mr. John Atopi Thompson (Coordinator-YHF) conducted a survey on issues related to Human Rights with key interest on the rights of children. The survey targeted children between the ages of 8 - 16 years. The survey lasted for four (4) days.

The survey was motivated by YHF long standing objective to form Human Right Clubs for Basic School Children in Madina and its environs. The survey was therefore conducted to provide knowledge on how far school children know their rights and their understanding on basic human rights.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Child Rights and International Organizations

The rights of children have become a significant field of study during the past decades, largely due to the adoption of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. Governments, non-governmental organizations, human right advocates, lawyers, health specialists, social workers, educators, child development experts and religious leaders from all over the world negotiated and came into a consensus to bring up a document that takes into account the importance of tradition and cultural values for the protection of harmonious development of the child. It reflects the principal legal system of the world and acknowledges the specific needs, not leaving out developing countries like Ghana.

In the earliest times, laws regarding children often stress obedience to parents. Children were generally required to work to supplement the family income and were not seen as having particular needs or rights until the 19th century when an important shift took place regarding children's right laws. Since 1924, the international standards on child rights has seen evolutions where the League of Nations adopted the Geneva

declarations on the rights of children, and established child rights as means for material, moral and spiritual development, relief and freedom from exploitation through to 1989 when the United Nations General Assembly anonymously approved the conventions on the rights of children. Since its inception in 1989 and its implementation in 1990, the convention on rights of children has been used as an important tool to ensure that government policies and programs protect children at all times.

2.1. Instances of Protection of Child Rights

Since the declaration and adoption of the child right laws, there has been several instances where the law has been put to practice and the rights of the child protected.

2.1.1 NIGER

For instance, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other human rights NGO's have used the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) to help pass a national law against child marriage in Niger (country with the highest record of child marriage in the world) and have also worked with tribal leaders to speak against the traditional practice, which deprives young girls of their childhood and basic human rights.

2.1.2 EGYPT

Also in Egypt, the CRC was used as a major tool in the campaign against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which led to the passing of a ministerial decree and was followed with a statement by the country's top Muslim institution against the practice.

2.1.3 IRELAND

Ireland also committed to promote children's rights when they signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) in 1992. The Children's Right Alliance (CAR) is an organization in Ireland which unites over hundred (100) members working together to promote the right of children. They used the Convention as a framework to help shape Ireland's laws, policies and services towards children so that they are protected, nurtured and empowered. These initiatives have brought children's rights to the top of the agenda of governments, institutions and individuals

2.1.4 CAMEROON

There was also a clear evidence of the CRC helping put children's right at the top of the agenda when a 19 year old Cameroonian girl, Bongbenuoh Fabiola was made an ambassador to help fight for the rights of the girl child and to campaign against violence towards women.

2.2 The Ghanaian Context

In Ghana a formal protective system has been developing since 1992. A combination of forces, including Ghana's democratic process, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1997 and the signing of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1997 prompted the development of this system which has culminated in the enactment of the Children's Act in 1998. This formal system is comprised of various institutions including Tribunals, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Child Panel, Department of Social Welfare, Foster Care systems, SOS villages, Children's Homes and Orphanages, Social Legal Centers of the Defense for Children International (DCI) and specialized probation officers and social workers.

But it should be of much interest to all that although the UNCRC have done a great job in outlining the rights and responsibility of children, these rights are not easily accessible to them by just teaching them in the various classrooms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the mode of our research study and how it was conducted to arrive at our final findings. The survey was conducted by four (4) interns from the UG-Legon at YHF, Madina New Road, Rawlings Circle.

3.1. Research Area

The research study was concentrated on basic schools within the Madina community. The participants were randomly selected from schools, on the street while others were accessed through snow balling.

3.2 Research Instrument

The survey was structured using self-administered questionnaires but in practice, data was collected using semi-structured approach by offering assistance to some of the 140 respondents. Since the survey was about children, the target group ranged between 0-17 years but our main focus was on children between 8-16 years.

Respondents were not identified by their names but rather by their sexes and ages to ensure anonymity. Respondents were also assured of confidentiality. Most of the respondents had mixed feelings about the survey, we explained and assured them that it was strictly for research purposes and their personal details would not go beyond the organization.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Size of Respondents

Below represents the findings of the survey.

In all 360 respondents were interviewed but 10 out of the total 360 respondents who were interviewed did not indicate their age. We therefore concluded our research study on 350 respondents for validity and reliability. 201 out of the total respondents were females representing 57% and 149 males representing 43%.

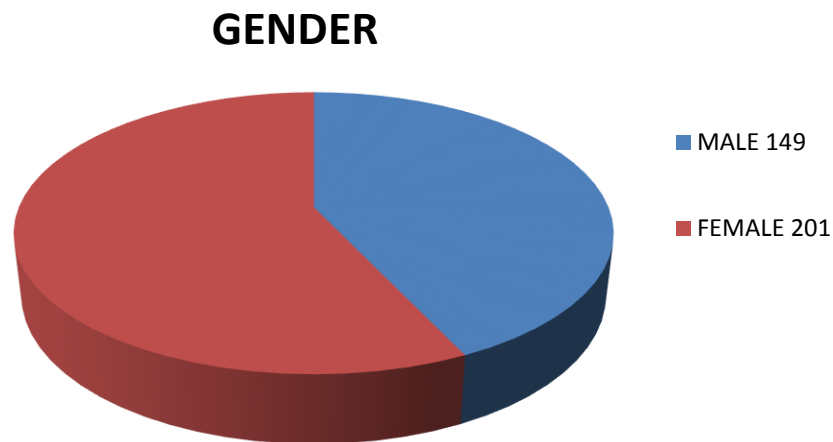


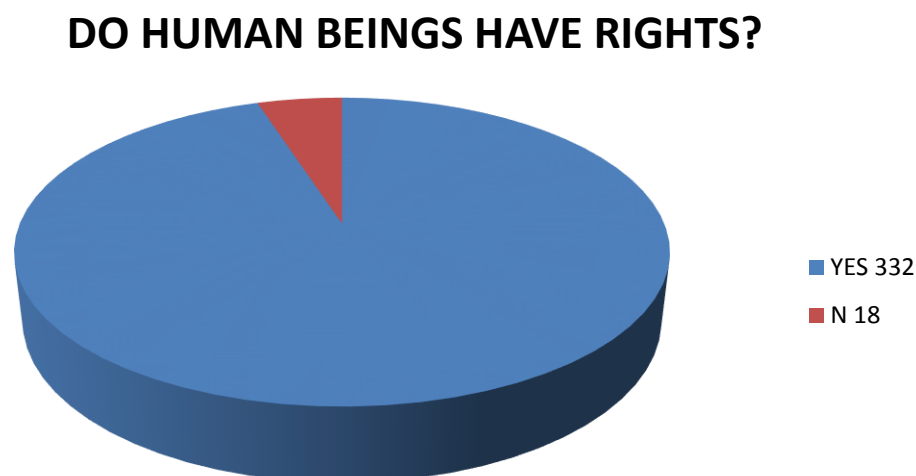
Figure 4.1. Distribution of respondents (Source: Field Survey, July 2015)

4.2 RESULTS FROM SURVEY

4.2.1. *Do Human Beings have Rights?*

When respondents were asked if they knew human beings have rights, 332 out of 350 were able to answer "YES", representing 95% Of the total respondents and 5% answered "NO".

Figure 4.2: Do human beings have rights



Most of the respondents knew human beings have right but had no idea what they are. Some *gave interesting answers such as human rights are right being free from abuse, are the things that you feel free to do and human have the right to.* For instance a female upper primary student of 9 years old defined human right as '*human right are human hands*'.

Another female respondent aged 14 in Junior High School defined human right as *'the infrigemendon advantage of individuals'*

Also, a Junior High School graduate defined right as *'the right we own to do something when we choose to it.'*

Some of them also gave accurate answers such as, *"human rights are the fundamental rights given to any citizen as stated in the constitution"*, another is *"human rights are the freedom and advantages one is allowed to enjoy under the constitution of Ghana"*.

This implies that, as small as the number of children who do not know they have rights; might seem it calls for global concern. For instance, if the total number of children globally is 2.2 billion and 18million of such children do not know that they have right which is quite alarming.

From the above illustration, it is evident that, most of the students find it difficult in identifying what human rights entails. Only 21% of them were able to answer correctly. Students who were unable to explain human rights, or who did not know that know human beings have right were sure children have rights. 90% of the respondents were aware children have right and 80% were able to mention at least one of the right children have. For instance, some of the children listed right to live, right to join any association of their own, right to quality health care and right to be free from hunger.

Figure 4.3 what are human rights?



55% of the respondents claimed they know a document in which children rights are stipulated but only 26% were able to mention at least one of the document correctly. Some of the participants mentioned the *fox and the grapes*, *Aki Ola maths*, *Religious and Moral text book*, *the Holy Bible*, *the Quran*, *the 2000 government assome* of the documents in which the rights are written.

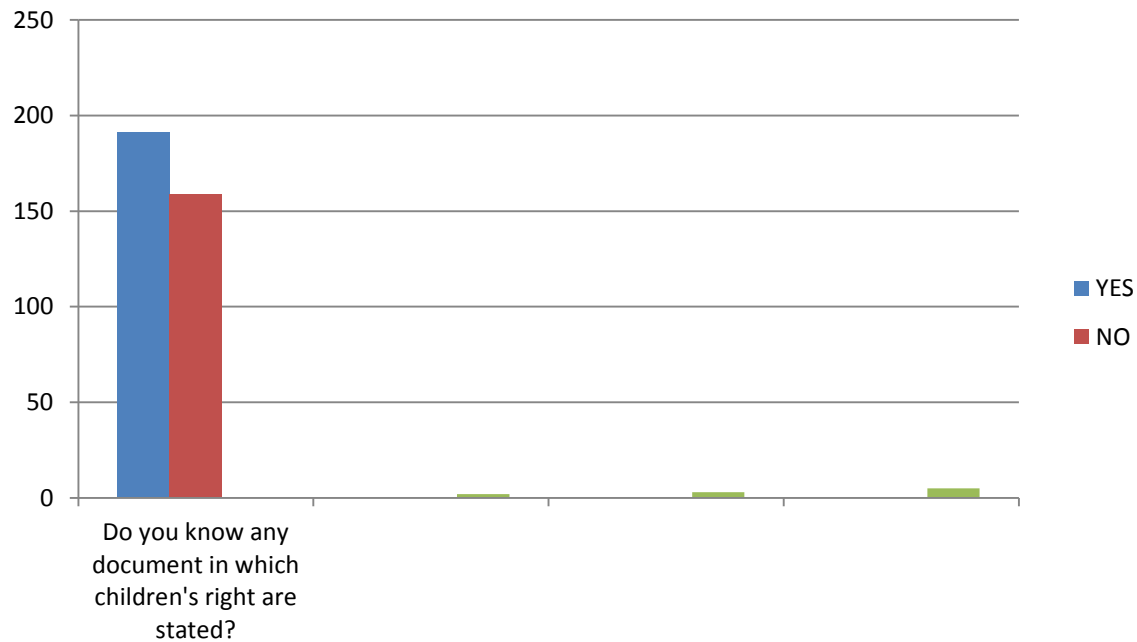


Figure 4.4 Do you know any document(s) in which children's right are stated?

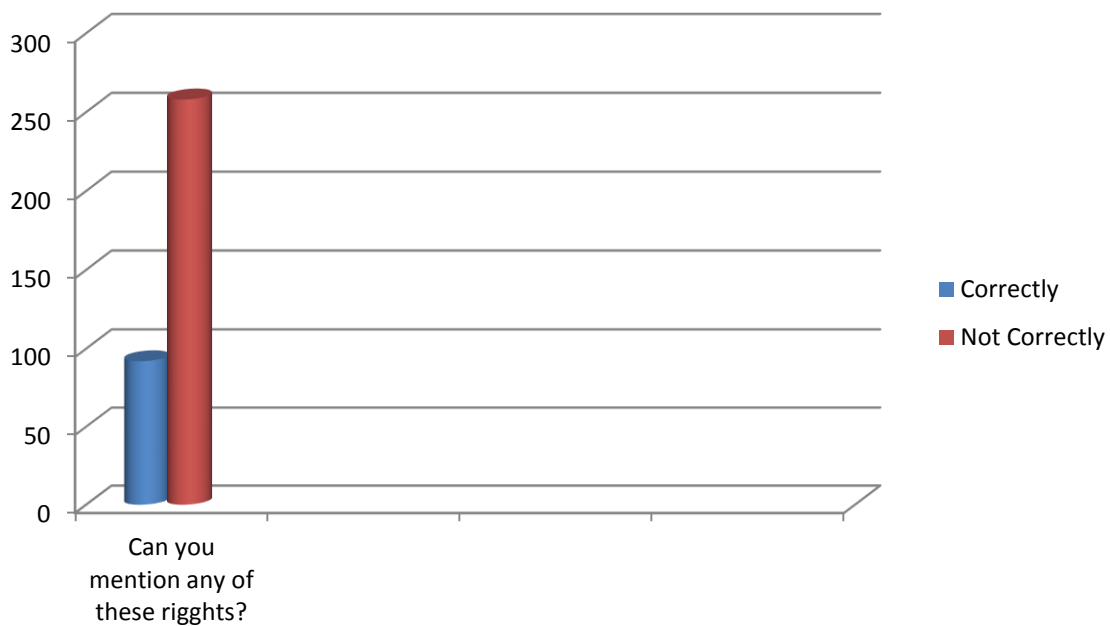


Figure 4.5 Can you mention any of these documents?

Most of the respondents knew that rights are written in books but do not know where exactly these rights are written. This diagram therefore shows that when given the total

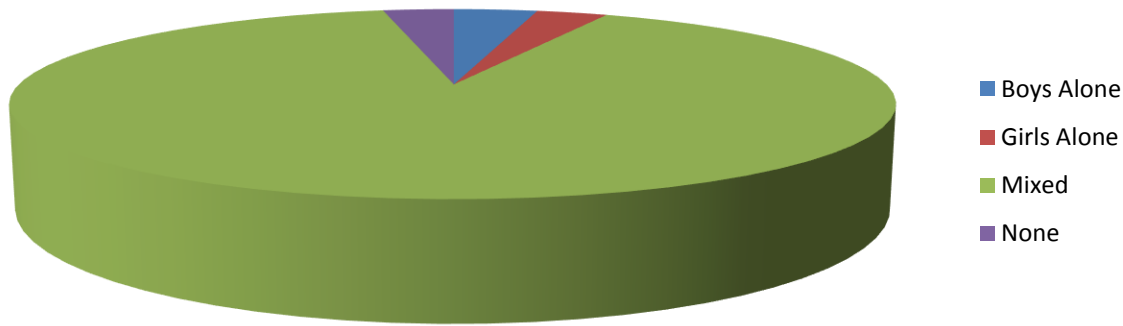
population of student in Ghana only a hand full of them will be able to mention correctly the documents in their right are stated. These documents should therefore be made available to students.

When respondents were asked whether or not they know each right comes with a corresponding responsibility, 87% answered correctly and gave an example of their responsibility when they have the right to education. 18% of the participants responded 'NO' when asked if they think their friends know they have rights while 82% said 'YES', out of which 85% of the respondents knew most of their friends can state at least one of their rights and its corresponding responsibilities. Only 22 respondents out of the total 350 representing 6% who disagreed with putting children in group and educate them about their rights, this shows that 94% of the participants wanted groups be formed to educate children on their rights.

3% of the total respondents wanted the groups to be girls alone, 3% do not know how the groups should be formed and 4% wanted the group to be boys alone, some respondents gave reasons why it should be boys alone and this includes, "*the boys will be watching the girls too much, even in the mosque the boys are separated from the girls*". 90% wish the group could consist of both sexes and some gave reasons why it should be so. Some of these reasons include, "*I think I will advise them to form the group with boys and girls (mixed). Because when boys and girls learn together they turned to understand their rights very well, both boys and girls deserve to know their rights*".

Figure 4.6 how do you think the groups are formed?

How The Groups should Be Formed



4.3 OBSERVATION

During the survey, our main observation was that most of the students find it difficult in understanding the English language and could not read the questions on the questionnaire at the first glance but when the researchers helped by reading and explaining to them, they were able to answer the question. Spelling was also a major barrier. Most of the respondents had a fair idea about what human right entails but were not able to put it on paper because of spelling mistakes. Some who were able to write it did not get it correct because of spelling mistakes. An example of such response includes; human right is a human that have the abitry to do some thing, right to shtter, coming to school pontually, Human right is the volation of the right and freedom of an organization and the right to Aducation.

Also the respondents from the private schools performed better in answering the questions than those from the public schools. Some of the teachers were not comfortable with the administration of the questionnaires in their schools for the fear of poor performance of students. Some also think they have to groom the students before we administer the questionnaires. Another barrier is the myth societies have about researchers. Some of the onlooker's and the parents of the respondents were not comfortable with their wards answering the questions for the fear of researchers disclosing the information of their kids to the public.

4.4 Human Right Clubs

On this note, the human right clubs will represent a powerful inspiration and a tool for children and young people themselves to influence their own situations and to be involved in implementing their own rights.

4.5 Suggestion and Conclusion

The survey suggests that most student of school going age do not know their right and its corresponding responsibility so the group or clubs on children right should be formed as soon as possible to help the children learn about their rights. We hope that the various patrons put in place will perform their duties and honor their responsibilities to make the clubs effective.

REFERENCE

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The African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Children

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