

## 18th August 2011 TAMALE CHARITIES TEACHING TRADE AND SKILLS

By: Ryan Millward

**Charities in the north are undertaking action that will help provide vulnerable women in the area with skills for the future, such as dressmaking, tie-die and hairdressing.**

Youth Home Cultural Group and COLWOD both aim to provide education and training to groups such as the youth and women so that they can turn their backs on problems such as poverty and crime and face up to achieving economic income for the future.

The Youth Home Cultural Group in Tamale was founded in 1984 and aims to teach dressmaking skills to young people. The charity is arranged with the youth and runs courses to a handful of enthusiastic young people. Master of Tailors, Alhassan M Hafiz, told us: "This Youth Home Cultural Group reduces unemployment and stops issues such as prostitution." The 32 year old added: "We offer sewing, dress making, measurements; the support is not there so we provide education and skills for the future."



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The courses that the group teaches remain very professional with 3 years of teaching to provide students with a high level of sewing skills whilst others take courses that vary between 3-6 months to learn skills such as tie-die, smock weaving and the making of traditional drums. The courses are free for people to undertake and there remains a queue of young people all waiting to replace the current students when they finish.

Adul-Rahaman Mohammed, the director of the Youth Home Cultural Group, said: "We provide learning for the future so that if the girls studying dress making marry, they can use their skilled training to take care of family and provide money."

Certainly it seems that the young girls learning trades from the group appreciate this rare opportunity that has fallen to them. Amadu Shirifa, a 20 year old who is currently learning dress making, told us: "I can now make my own clothes to secure money for food and because of this, many of my friends have an interest in the course." She added: "I think my life will change through these skills."

Another student, 19 year old Mohammed Mujuna, said: "Before I found my life very hard, now I can make clothing

for myself which saves money I can use for food." "I want to continue to make a living through this trade."



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Abul- Rahaman Mohammed

The Youth Home Cultural Group are evidently providing a priceless experience for some young girls in Tamale, who are all using the opportunity to increase their quality of life. However, the group are not the only charity in Tamale that are helping people learn new skills for trade. Charity group COLWOD are also providing vulnerable women with a chance to 'achieve economic independence'.

The charity, founded in 1995, aims to give women skills such as sewing, tie-die and hairdressing so that they can use them to provide trade. COLWOD goes out to meet people around the area to teach for free. Mary, a worker at the charity, said: "Men are head of the family, therefore women have to work alongside to provide for families and fight poverty. We train these women to be more equipped."

The course is similar to the youth group with 2-3 years of training needed to learn professional sewing and 3 months to teach skills such as Batik and Hairdressing. COLWOD is the center for the women's economic independence and by teaching these trades, just like the Youth Home Cultural Group, they hope to give women a new chance in life and rid them of issues such as poverty and prostitution.

Whilst these two groups are currently helping immensely battle these such problems, further support and sponsorship will be needed to maintain the charity's good work. The Youth Home Cultural Group used to be supported by the Danish government, but now remain independent and lacking new support. Director of the group Abdul-Rahaman Mohammed expressed: "We struggle to get support. If we get support we can continue but currently we have to turn people away because of the lack of equipment."



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Young girls from youth group

COLWOD also remain cash strapped as they rely solely on support and sponsorship to buy the material that is used at the center. COLWOD worker Mary said: "We import everything from Tema, Accra. Therefore this costs a lot of money to buy the material and then pay for transport."

It seems there is a thirst for new support by the charities in Tamale that are helping to improve the lives of women in the town. With this, a new lease of life will be brought into the two organisations and more people can be helped.

It can only be hoped that new sponsors and support comes forward as to help these charities carry on in their quest to provide education and skills to women in the community. Either way, Youth Home Cultural Group and COLWOD can remain proud and with their heads held high; in a place where many women could live in poverty and turn to crime and prostitution, they are supplying fresh and exciting courses for women to go out and learn new skills and trade. It can only be hoped that they continue their good work in the future.



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