

## BLOG

April 26, 2019

### CDD-Ghana visits Senior Correctional Centers in Accra

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Last week Thursday, on the last day before we went on our Easter break, I led a team from CDD-Ghana to visit the all-boys Senior Correctional Center, formerly known as the Ghana Borstal Institute ("Borstal Institute"), located in Roman Ridge, Accra, and the all-girls junior correctional centre in Osu, also in Accra. It was the first such visit since we (CDD) decided last year to adopt the two correctional centers as part of our new "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) program. The Borstal Institute is in the immediate vicinity of CDD's Accra offices, so it seemed a natural pick as a CDD CSR beneficiary. But since it takes in only boys, we decided to extend our adoption to the equivalent girls institution in Osu.

We solicited voluntary cash contributions from staff of CDD and used the proceeds to purchase various food supplies, bottled water, and nonalcoholic beverages, which we donated to each of the institutions, together with a modest cash donation. In adopting these juvenile justice centers, CDD commits, beyond supporting them periodically with material donations, to become one of their champions and advocates and ensure, thereby, that the needs and challenges facing the juvenile justice sector in Ghana are known and addressed by policymakers and the appropriate public agencies.

Our visits taught us many things about the state of juvenile justice in Ghana. From the boys' correctional center, we learned that:

- 1) The all-boys senior correctional center was established during the colonial era in 1947 and remains, to this day, the only such facility in the entire country (for boys in their mid to late teens who have been processed through the criminal justice system but do not qualify for adult prison on account of their age)
- 2) With a maximum capacity of 250, the boys' facility at Roman Ridge can take in but a fraction of the number of boys nationwide who must be placed in such facilities;

3) The overwhelming majority of boys who cannot find a place at the boys' center end up being mixed in with men in adult prison

4) The facility is truly a correctional center and currently has a GES-registered (but not GES-supported) junior secondary school, a class for non-literate boys; a vocational training workshop; and an IT center (the junior secondary school was an initiative of a former director of the center; before then the boys received no formal education while at the center)

5) SHS-eligible boys are enrolled as day students in public senior high schools in Accra

6) Boys who complete their terms of correction leave without any criminal record; the best graduates are rewarded with some modest funds for self-employment

7) The center is supported materially principally by faith-based organizations and some private individuals; government support, beyond payroll, takes the form, primarily, of GHS 1.60 per head per day for meals

7) The facility is well secured and maintained; the dormitories and associated facilities are clean and very well kept

8) The late MP for Ayawaso-Wuogon, Emmanuel Agyarko, visited them regularly and supported them materially. The boys' center, like CDD, is located in the Ayawaso-Wuogon constituency

The situation at the girls' facility in Osu was a lot more pitiful. We learned that:

1) Unlike the boys facility, which is under the Interior Ministry and ran by the Ghana Prisons Service, the girls facility is under the Department of Social Welfare (because it is a junior, not a senior, correctional center)

2) It also serves as a temporary shelter for abused girls or girls in abusive homes. In the majority of cases, the abusers are not being actively pursued

3) The facility is not gated and has no security, save a lone, unarmed watchman

4) No provision has been made for the girls to receive formal education or training while there

5) There is no infirmary on site

Our takeaway from our visits to these juvenile correctional center is manifold:

1) We lack a national commitment to juvenile justice. It is simply unacceptable that since the Borstal Institute for boys was established at the end of Second World War, no

government has seen it fit to build and resource another facility of the kind we have at Roman Ridge, Accra, in the rest of the country

- 2) At a minimum and as a start, every 2 regions must have one of these juvenile centers (or, preferably, one each for boys and girls). By all means, we must end this situation where juveniles committed to correctional institutions end up in adult prison because there is no juvenile facility to them in
- 3) The situation at the girls' home in Osu (in the areas of security, transport, health, education) needs urgent attention. Attn: MP, MCE for the area
- 4) Our political parties must give the issue of juvenile justice, including the establishment of juvenile correctional centres, the attention it deserves in their manifestos. Our politics must be about finding public solution to public problems of this kind
- 5) We must all show a great deal more compassion and caring for underprivileged children in this country