



**EMPOWER  
PLAYGROUNDS INC.**

# 2020 Annual Report





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# SEASONS OF CHANGE



A big communications issue in Ghana is references to the traditional four seasons in discussions and analogies. Americans and Europeans often talk of the challenge of Winter and the hope of Spring.

Being essentially on the equator, Ghanaian weather is not affected much by the tilting of the Earth as it circles the Sun. Temperature and hours of sunlight are the same year-around.

2020 created an example of seasons. Schools were shutdown for a full year. With no opportunity for virtual learning in rural classrooms, education for the children experienced a long, cold, dark winter. But now the schools have been reopened and both teachers and students are excited for a Spring-like new beginning.

The Empower Playgrounds Team is busy visiting the schools to help restart our programs of lanterns, science kits and feminine hygiene supplies. We are well stocked, having launched a container to Ghana early last year just before transport and borders were closed.

Most importantly, I am pleased to say that our donors continued their support in 2020 despite the difficult circumstances for many. Empower Playgrounds is in a strong position to restart our programs quickly and fully in rural Ghana. We are excited about 2021 and a return to full activity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Markham", written over a light blue rectangular background.

Ben Markham  
Board President

# MOVING FORWARD

March 6, 2020 I boarded a plane heading to Ghana with many thoughts racing through my mind. I was excited and anxious to see first hand the work that has been made possible by you, our generous donors.

As I landed in Ghana and took in my surroundings. The heat from the hot Ghanaian sun warmed my skin and the smells of bofruit and jollof rice were in the air. I was excited to get to work. I spent my first week visiting schools. Seeing the school children in their classroom blocks learning from their teachers, reading from their library books, drinking from the clean water of a well loved borehole. I saw the giant smiles on their faces and heard their laughter as they rode on the Merry-go-rounds. Visiting each new school only made my appreciation for you grow stronger. You have made so many wonderful things possible.

After I had been there for about a week everything changed. The world shut down. Schools were closed. Desks and chairs once filled with eager students were left empty. Our once constantly spinning merry-go-rounds stood still and our bright lantern lights went dark. As I sat on the plane leaving behind this incredible country much sooner than I would have liked, many thoughts were going through my mind. I looked out the window as the landscape of Ghana grew farther and farther away I was left to wonder what was going to happen and how we would deal with all these changes.

While 2020 may have knocked us off our feet for a moment, we didn't stay down for long. Our projects may have looked different with masks, social distancing, and limited gatherings, but they happened. Our team members in Ghana have been able to pick projects that were safe to do with the government regulations still in place. We have had to adapt and change some of the things we do, but EPI continues to move forward. Finding a way to keep our efforts going.

In this Annual Report I would like to show you some of the areas we have been able to make a difference in 2020. In a year of so much darkness you have brought light! Together we can make a lasting impact for the wonderful children in Ghana.

Medase,

*Amy Williams*

Amy Williams  
Executive Director





# Mission

Empower Playgrounds, Inc. enhances educational opportunities for children in deprived villages by providing renewable energy through electricity-generating playground equipment, smart LED lanterns, hands-on science kits and feminine hygiene kits.



# EPI SINCE 2008

**16**

Libraries

**21**

Classroom blocks

**23**

Sanitation projects

**56**

Homes with electricity

**997**

Reusable menstrual kits

**60**

Merry-go-rounds

**360**

Science kits

**1,920**

Lanterns

**21,500**

Students Empowered to Learn

# DOMASE

Domase is a village located 223 km (138 miles) outside of Accra. In March 2020 Brandon and Jill Wagner along with two of their children were able to see firsthand how their donations will change the lives of those in Domase village forever. The first thing that they were able to see was the new borehole in the village. Through their donation Domase was able to receive a borehole for clean water. Instead of walking to get water from a nearby muddy river they now have access to the clean water located next to the school which is in the center of their village.

It is hard to miss the new classroom block that was also built. The previous one was built 50 years ago and as of today none of their students have attended high school. The Wagner family hopes that this will change now. Something they hope will continue to facilitate that change is the access these kids will have to a library. Over 1000 books were collected by family and friends of the Wagner Family. Jill and her daughter were also able to participate in the distribution of Days for Girls feminine hygiene kits for the school girls at Domase.

While visiting Domase the Wagner family was able to install a new merry-go-round system. The system will provide power to lanterns that will give off electricity, something most of these villagers have never had. Thank you Wagner Family!





# PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

One area that we decided to pivot to during this year was helping to distribute Personal Protective Equipment. While schools had shut down for most of the year, the government allowed certain groups to go back. In the Ghanaian Education System all Grade 9 students will take the Basic Education Certificate Exam (BECE Exam). This exam will determine if they go on to high school as well as determine which high school they are accepted into. This exam is crucial to the students and their future. The government officials allowed all Grade 9 students to attend classes for a few weeks to continue to prepare for these exams.

Our Team in Ghana was able to visit these schools and saw that they were in desperate need of some protective equipment to keep the children safe from COVID-19 by helping to stop the spread of germs. The Roberts Family Foundation as well as a company called CareCrates helped fund these projects. The donations from these two groups made it possible for us to purchase the needed supplies for students in 31 different schools. We were able to give out hand sanitizer, hand soap, a hand washing station, face masks and face shields. Because of these donations students were able to stay in school and complete the study period for their exams.







# OBOSONO & AFRANSUA DEDEWA BOREHOLES

As lockdowns lifted we started asking ourselves what else we could do. How could we continue to help those in need and yet stay safe? There are so many needs in Ghana that go unmet and we hated the thought of losing a year of helping our students. One aspect we thought essential was getting villages access to clean water. Our team in Ghana was able to work with the villages and those who dug the boreholes to social distance and keep everyone safe during the construction process.

The results were joyous celebrations for those living in Obosono and Afransua Dedewa Villages. In a year that brought unwelcome change, these boreholes were a highlight of good things to come. As you can see the villagers came to line up with their buckets that would now be filled with clean water.

The Roberts Family Foundation was essential in making this happen. Their commitment to obtaining clean water for villages has blessed the lives of hundreds of families in these two villages.

# DAYS FOR GIRLS KITS

In January 2020 our founder, Ben Markham, had the idea to send over a shipping container full of items to Ghana. This was an inspired idea on so many levels that we did not foresee as 2020 continued to surprise us all. We sent many different items in that container, including over 3,000 Days for Girls Kits. With regular distribution of the kits, this amount would last us for roughly 2 years.

Days for Girls Kits are distributed to each one of our 60 schools. Even though school was not in session for many girls, we were able to still reach out to them. Our team in Ghana was able to work with the Head Masters and Mistresses of each school to figure out a way that the kits could be safely distributed. This consisted of smaller meetings with the girls and facemasks being worn. Overall we were successful in distributing 163 Days for Girls kits in 2020.







# EPI STAFF



**Amy Williams**  
Executive Director



**Isaac Darko-Mensah**  
Ghana Country Director



**George Thompson**  
Ghana  
Projects Director



**Richard Koomson**  
Ghana  
Program Director



**Peace Yeri**  
Ghana  
Education Specialist

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Ben Markham**

Board President & Founder  
Retired ExxonMobil  
Executive



**Betsy Eckton**

EdD Educational  
Adjunct Professor, BYU



**Jeff Markham**

MD  
Senior Teleradiologist  
at 6Radiology



**Wes Marriott**

Entrepreneur/  
Consultant



**Angie Trego**

PhD Mechanical Engineering  
Trego Engineering President



**Jaron Dunford**

Solutions Consultant  
Workday



**Larry Allred**

Entrepreneur and Consultant  
Retired

# 2020 PARTNERSHIPS





# GET INVOLVED IN 2021

## Run a Bookdrive

Donate books or volunteer as a book donation leader. Lead your community or school in donating 1000 books to help add libraries to our schools in Ghana!



## Spread the Word



@empowerplaygrounds



[goo.gl/BCohp3](https://goo.gl/BCohp3)



## Sponsor a Project

Sponsor one of our main projects highlighted in this report and support the children in Ghana.



For more information contact us at: [info@empowerplaygrounds.org](mailto:info@empowerplaygrounds.org)  
or visit us at [empowerplaygrounds.org](https://empowerplaygrounds.org)



# PLAY FOR LIGHT

Come join us for lunch as we share the impact you are making in the lives of those in rural Ghana.



**Thursday October 7, 2021 - 12:00pm**

Location: TBD - Look for more information coming soon.

# FINANCIALS

## Donation Breakdown



- 2% Investments & Corporate
- 3% Nonprofits
- 40% Foundations
- 55% Individuals

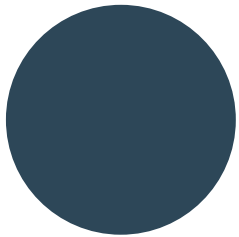
2020

REVENUE

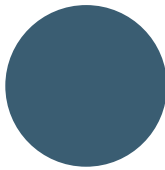
\$297,989.46

## Program Expenses

70% Ghana Operations



20% Administrative\*



10% Fundraising



\*Please note that the administrative costs for our programs are covered by our founder. That makes it possible for 100% of your donations to go to our projects in Africa. We want your money to be spent where it is needed the most, helping the children.

