Hope Education Project, Ghana

Human Trafficking and Online Safety Education for Schools and Communities

The Hope Education Project is a survivor-led anti-trafficking organisation working with schools and communities across Northern Ghana. Our mission is to disrupt trafficking and exploitation by equipping children, young people, and community leaders with practical education on trafficking risks, safe migration, digital safety, and safeguarding practices that protect families and reduce vulnerability

The Hope Education Project Schools Program Overview

Purpose
The Hope Education Project is a human trafficking and online safety program for schools and communities in Ghana.

Mission
Our mission is to disrupt the flow of vulnerable Ghanaians trafficked for exploitation, both internationally and within Ghana.

How: Education
We deliver a schools-based program for junior high students (JHS1) alongside community programs for women and men in the school community. Using a blend of traditional classroom learning, participatory theatre, survivor testimony and practical learning tools, we equip participants with the knowledge and resilience to recognise and resist trafficking.

Community Program (Women & Out-of-School Girls)

- Survivor-led three-hour sessions for women and out-of-school girls in the school community.
- Covers the same topics as the schools program, with emphasis on survivor testimony and lived experience.
- Culminates with student trafficking plays performed for their sisters, mothers, and aunts.

Community Program (Men & Out-of-School Boys)

- Focused sessions for men and out-of-school boys in the school community.
- Uses lived experience to challenge harmful norms and shift attitudes toward women and children.
- Encourages men to take responsibility, support safe migration, and play an active role in prevention.

Schools Program (5 Modules)

Module 1: The Rights of Children and Understanding Human Trafficking
- Understanding children's rights and obligations.
- Introduction to the concept of exploitation and types of human trafficking.

Module 2: Traffickers, Victims & Staying Safe
- Who are the victims and who are the traffickers
- Methods used by traffickers
- The role of Three Trusted Adults
- Common strategies traffickers use to recruit and deceive

Module 3: Online Safety, Online Trafficking & Reporting
- How traffickers use the internet
- Staying safe online
- Identifying victims
- Refusal skills
- How and where to report trafficking

Module 4: Creating trafficking plays
- Students are given three basic outlines of scenarios discussed in the first three modules
- Facilitators help students to develop the plays
- Students develop their plays independently

Module 5: Play performance
- Students perform their plays to their peers in school (and later in the community modules)

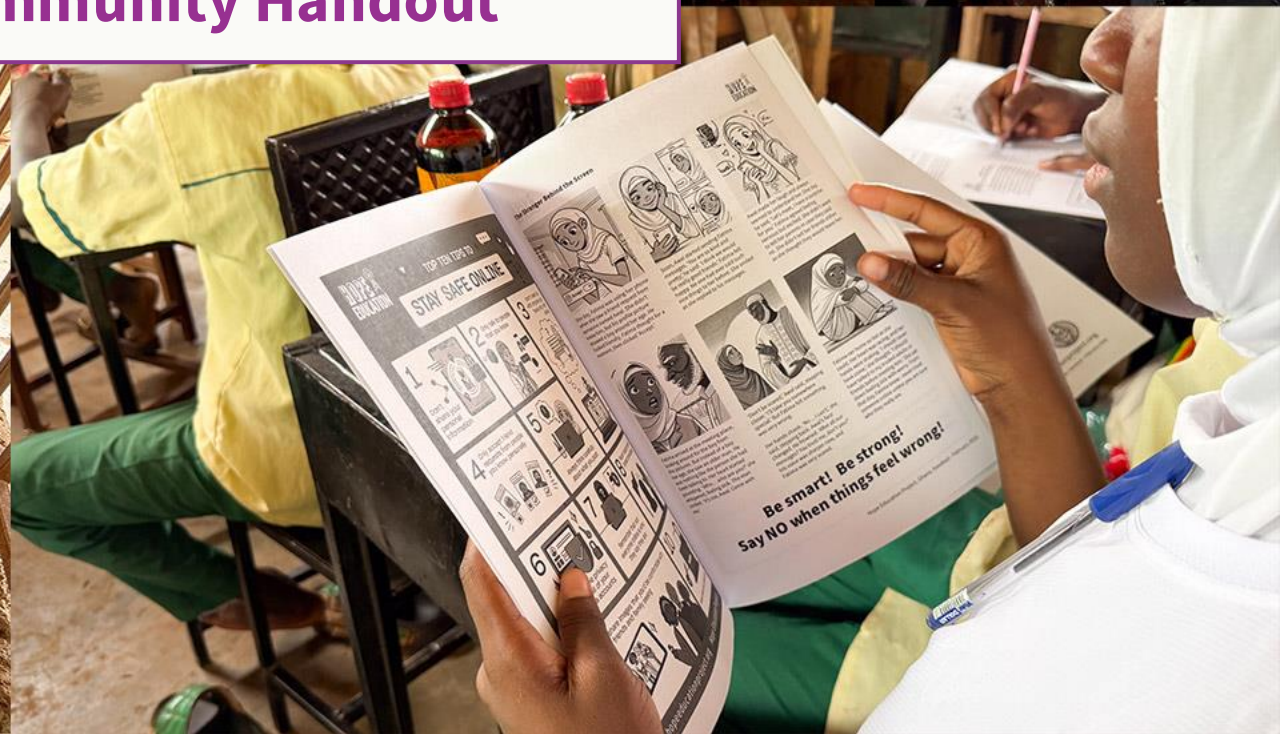
Student Advocacy

Students advocate within their compounds and wider communities. After the plays, each student receives a comprehensive, culturally sensitive handout booklet with cartoons, stories and word games that reinforce all the learning from the programme. These booklets are an effective advocacy tool in students' homes. In our pilot, students reported sharing their booklets with at least three people, including parents, siblings and neighbours, and said the materials were well received across all ages and often sparked open conversations about trafficking and online safety.

Student Programme Ambassadors

At the end of the programme, we select two to four volunteer students to become Student Ambassadors. Before we leave each school, we run a short training session with them and their Teacher Patron, who sits in on all HEP sessions. Our ambassadors help keep the learning active by supporting termly safety reminders and encouraging new students to understand trusted adults, online risks and the warning signs of trafficking. We also link ambassadors across partner schools through a simple HEP Club network so they continue learning together and carrying the message into the next school year and beyond.

The Schools & Community Handout



THE HEP SLOGAN

Be smart! Be strong! Say NO when things feel wrong!

HEP TRAINING-THE-TRAINERS MODEL (WITHIN EXISTING NGO programs)

What this model is

This strand of HEP embeds our human trafficking and digital-safety education directly into the training cycles of partner NGOs who already convene women and girls for other skills-based programs. This may include shea-butter production groups, vocational training, WASH activities, savings groups, income-generation cohorts, or structured empowerment programs such as our partnership with WEE-North's skills and empowerment program for young women (funded by Global Affairs Canada).

How it works in practice

– The partner NGO already brings together consistent groups of women or adolescent girls.
– HEP trains their frontline facilitators, field officers, or community coaches to deliver our core modules confidently and accurately.
– We provide the curriculum, teaching aids, facilitation guidance, and digital-safety content adapted to the local context and literacy levels.
– Trainers then integrate short modules into their routine programme sessions, meaning no duplication of mobilisation effort and no additional burden on participants.

Why NGOs value this approach

– It adds a high-impact safeguarding component to programs that are otherwise focused only on livelihoods.
– It strengthens frontline workers' confidence to recognise trafficking risks, online exploitation, and unsafe migration patterns within their groups.
– It ensures the learning reaches hard-to-access young women who are outside the school system but routinely engaged in NGO activities.
– It is low-cost, scalable, and easy to embed in long-term NGO programming.

What HEP delivers

– A structured TOT package covering human trafficking, coercion, online safety, safe migration, assertiveness, and rights-based decision-making.
– Ongoing coaching for the NGO's facilitators to maintain fidelity to the curriculum.
– Monitoring, evaluation, and simple reporting tools so partners can evidence learning outcomes.
–Survivor-led testimony to exponentially increase impact.

Why this is a core HEP programmatic area

This model allows HEP to expand rapidly across existing community structures, reaching women and girls who would never sit in a classroom-style environment. It also strengthens the safeguarding foundation of partner NGOs, reduces duplication, and builds long-term local capacity to deliver accurate anti-trafficking education without dependence on external staff.

COMBINIED SCHOOLS/COMMUNITY/TRAIN-THE-TRAINERS PROGRAM IMPACT

- **Build resilience** across schools, households and community groups by embedding trafficking and online-safety awareness into formal school sessions, community outreach, and partner-NGO training programs.

- **Strengthen girls' confidence and agency** through HEP's school modules, OSG sessions, and TOT-enabled NGO groups, ensuring even hard-to-reach girls receive accurate prevention information.

- **Foster youth leadership** by supporting Student Ambassadors who reinforce learning among peers and sustain prevention messaging as they move through JHS2 and JHS3.

- **Empower women and out-of-school girls** through survivor-led discussions, safe-migration learning, and digital-safety skills integrated into NGO livelihood programs.

- **Engage men as protective actors** to reduce vulnerability in families and reinforce community-level safeguarding.

- **Expand local safeguarding** capacity by training teachers, NGO facilitators, field officers, Human Rights Club patrons and CLMRS monitors to recognise risks, respond safely, and deliver prevention content long after the project ends.

COMBINIED SCHOOLS/COMMUNITY/TRAIN-THE-TRAINERS PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- **Students gain practical knowledge and confidence** to recognise trafficking risks, stay safe online and support peers.
- **Women and out-of-school girls increase their awareness and agency**, recognising coercion earlier and making safer decisions about migration, work and relationships.
- **Men deepen their understanding of unsafe migration routes and exploitation dynamics**, strengthening their role in protecting children and family members.
- **Student Ambassadors reinforce learning among younger cohorts**, sustaining awareness as students progress through school.
- **Local facilitators and NGO trainers are equipped to co-deliver future sessions**, embedding prevention capacity across schools, community groups, cooperatives and women's livelihood programmes.
- **A safer, more informed community ecosystem emerges**, with stronger links between schools, households, community groups and cooperatives involved in youth development.
- **Foundations are laid for scalable future phases**, including expansion into additional schools and new NGO partner programmes.

ABOUT THE FOUNDER

HEP Founder Angus Thomas began his anti-trafficking work in Dubai in 2019 after a chance encounter with a young Nigerian woman trafficked for sexual exploitation to the UAE by notorious Nigerian trafficker Christy Gold. He went on to repatriate Nigerian and Kenyan victims and uncover multiple trafficking networks. In 2023 he received a NAPTIP award for his services to anti-trafficking and co-produced a film with Dr. Fatima Waziri-Azi that has been viewed more than 3.5 million times. Recognising that rescue alone could not solve the problem, Angus founded the Hope Education Project in Ghana to disrupt trafficking at its source through schools and community education.

2019
First rescue of a Nigerian sex trafficking survivor in Dubai.

2020
Founded Stop Trafficking Africa (formerly the Send Them Home Campaign) to fund rescue and repatriation.
Collaborated with NAPTIP to expose five trafficking rings.
Rescued and repatriated Nigerian and Kenyan victims trafficked to Dubai.

2022
Partnered with SOTIN, Nigeria.
Secured international media coverage (BBC, Financial Times, The Economist).
Established academic partnership with Montclair State University.

2023
Received NAPTIP Award for services to anti-trafficking.
Co-produced film with NAPTIP DG Dr. Fatima Waziri-Azi (3.5m+ views).
Launched London exhibition, opened by Dr. Waziri-Azi.
Conducted focus groups with students in Ghana (research pulsing into Nov 2025).
Registered Hope Education Project (HEP) as an NPO in Ghana.
Collaborated on 6-month investigation into Christy Gold with ICIJ (syndicated by Reuters)

2024
Developed program curriculum.
Partnered with University of Texas at Arlington, Norsaac (Tamale), and Act for Change (Accra).
Secured IRB (Navrongo) approval for pilot research project.
Gained permission from Ghana Education Service to deliver program in schools.

2025
Implemented pilot in three GES junior high schools (JHS1 level).
Launched SOMA Pilot (sisterhood empowerment program in Tamale).
Partnered with WEE-North to deliver anti-trafficking modules in their empowerment program.
Formalised partnership with Washington University Brown School.

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STOP TRAFFICKING AFRICA

HEP PROJECT TEAM

Angus Thomas – Project Lead

Angus Thomas is the Founder and Executive Chairman of the Hope Education Project and leads the design and creation of the program's curriculum. He is responsible for the day-to-day running of HEP in Ghana and internationally, ensuring the effective delivery of both school and community programs.

Mariama Adam – Projects Manager

Mariama Adam is the Programs Manager of the Hope Education Project in Tamale. She co-facilitated the pilot program, leading its co-creation with schools and communities, and continues to oversee curriculum delivery and evaluation. With extensive experience in education and community development, including roles at Camfed Ghana and Theatre for Social Change, she has led projects on youth empowerment, gender equality, and SRHR. Fluent in English, Dagbani, and Twi, Mariama is a skilled communicator and a passionate advocate for women and young people in Northern Ghana.

Wunzooya – Survivor Advocate

Wunzooya is a survivor advocate with the Hope Education Project in Tamale, Ghana. Trafficked to Saudi Arabia in 2014, she now uses her lived experience to raise awareness, deliver survivor testimony, and support vulnerable women and girls in her community.

Shaban Alhassan – Facilitator

Shaban is an experienced community facilitator who has worked on numerous education and empowerment programs across Northern Ghana. With the Hope Education Project, he helps deliver school and community sessions, bringing energy, trust, and local insight to the team's work.

HEP Project Team

The Hope Education Project is led by a dedicated local team based in Tamale, Northern Ghana. Every member of the team has been actively involved in both the HEP pilot in schools and the SOMA pilot with out-of-school girls, bringing together lived experience, professional expertise, and deep community trust. In future program partnerships, the HEP team will serve as the training and oversight body, equipping local trainers to deliver the program in schools and communities while ensuring quality, fidelity, and cultural relevance.

HEP works with volunteers recruited from the local community with backgrounds in development work and a strong interest in safeguarding and education interested in building their CV's.

We consult with local community leaders and other stakeholders, including the Ghana Education Service, during the program adaptation stage to ensure the curriculum is culturally relevant and age-appropriate to the recipients. In adapting the HEP program, the team liaises with local representatives, community leaders, and cooperative members to incorporate their insights, strengthen community ownership and align delivery with local priorities and practices.

HEP RESEARCH TEAM

Maryam Rafieifar, PhD - Researcher

Maryam Rafieifar, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work. Her research focuses on trauma, resilience, and access to supportive resources among underserved children and families, particularly in immigrant communities. She has collaborated with the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and local nonprofits, bringing both national and international perspective. Maryam contributes her expertise in child welfare, migration, and community-based research to the Hope Education Project. Maryam is the lead author on HEP's first research paper examining students' knowledge and understanding of human trafficking in Ghana, and she is currently leading three additional research papers for HEP.

Mitra Naseh PhD – Researcher

Mitra Naseh is a forced migration scholar and Assistant Professor at the Brown School, Washington University in St. Louis, where she directs the Forced Migration Initiative. She is the co-author of Best Practices in Social Work with Refugees and Immigrants (Columbia University Press, 2019). Her research focuses on the social and economic integration of displaced populations, with field experience across the Middle East, South Asia, and the U.S. Mitra brings deep expertise in refugee protection and community-led interventions to her collaboration with the Hope Education Project.

HEP's first research paper, "Youth Experiences and Understandings of Human Trafficking in Ghana," is under peer review and pending publication (see Appendix for link)

Our Research Projects

The Hope Education Project works in partnership with Dr. Maryam Rafieifar at the University of Texas at Arlington and Dr. Mitra Naseh at the Washington University Brown School. Using surveys, focus groups, and classroom observations, our research assesses students' and community members' knowledge of trafficking, online safety, and safe migration before and after programme delivery. The findings guide programme development, adaptation, and ongoing innovation.

We currently have four research projects underway – three focused on human trafficking in Ghana and one examining the survival strategies of women trafficked to the UAE from Nigeria and Uganda. Our first paper, which explores children's understanding of human trafficking in Ghana, is scheduled for publication in a peer-reviewed journal in Q2, 2026.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOMENT

The Hope Education Project is a young NGO in the early stages of development, with two successful projects completed to date: the HEP schools and community pilot in Tamale and the SOMA pilot for out-of-school girls. Until January 2024 the initiative was self-funded by its founder after which HEP secured its first grant to deliver the pilot project in early 2025. HEP is now actively seeking foundation and government funding and is in discussions with partners in Ghana and Uganda to pursue joint applications and collaborative human trafficking education projects. Registration as a UK charity in October 2025 will further strengthen HEP by unlocking Gift Aid tax benefits and mobilising a strong volunteer base to support fundraising and advocacy.

Hope Education Project Structure

Ghana – NPO
Registered 2023, 3rd year of operation
3 trustees
Focus: program delivery & grant management

UK – Registered Charity
Registered October 2025
5 trustees
Focus: fundraising to cover HEP overhead (small donations, private giving)
volunteers, events, collaborations

USA – 501(c)(3)
Registered 2022
5 trustees
Currently dormant

Ghana Advisory Panel

Dr. Thomas Yeboah - Research Fellow at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), specialist in rural development, migration, and child labour. His research includes trafficking in persons in Ghana and the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups.

Dr Bernard Koomson - Ghanaian Research Fellow at the University of Warwick, UK specialising in child and youth studies, human trafficking, migration, and digital rights. His work uses participatory, rights-based approaches to examine how inequality shapes young people's vulnerability and agency.

Tina Salvage - Former Head of Data and AI at STOP THE TRAFFIK, where she led the development of the Traffik Analysis Hub, the world's largest human trafficking intelligence database. Brings 30+ years of financial services and data governance expertise, applying AI and financial crime methods to disrupt trafficking networks and inform prevention.

Sara Pownall - Migration and human trafficking expert with 30 years' experience, including roles with the UK Government, IOM, and ICMPD. Based in West Africa, she advises on project design, monitoring, and evaluation.

Ophelia Allotey - Advocate for gender equity, SRHR, and menstrual justice. Provides paralegal support to survivors of gender-based violence and has reached 1,000+ young people with reproductive health education.

Mwiza Marriam - Ugandan activist and founder of Overseas Workers Voices Uganda (OWVU). Recognised by the Obama Foundation (2022) and featured in the BBC documentary Death in Dubai (2025). Leads campaigns for justice for migrant workers and trafficking survivors.

APPENDIX

Hope Education Project website

Stop Trafficking Africa website

HEP Research: Youth Experiences and Understandings of Human Trafficking in Ghana

HEP Safeguarding Policy 2025

HEP pre-pilot update video

Dark Side of Dubai (English version)

Post -pilot dissemination discussion

Community event sample (private playlist)

Post-pilot focus groups (private playlist)

(click images for links)