

Name of your organisation	<b>Porridge and Pens Ghana</b>
Date of TFN event which you pitched at	01/05/2024
Name of the project TFN funded	Start Up
Were you able to undertake your project as you outlined in the application?	Yes
Can you describe and/or demonstrate the specific impact that TFN funding has had against your initial objectives?	<p>Start-Up is a project we have longed to launch for a significant period. After more than a decade of dedicated work in two small Ghanaian communities within the Ashanti Region, we identified a need. There were hundreds of skilled parents whose children already benefit from Porridge and Pens, but for the parents themselves, they remained trapped in deprivation, often without bank accounts or savings. The Start-Up project was our answer to this issue, and its impact has been transformative.</p> <p>Many of our children's parents are skilled, hard-working, and resourceful but lack opportunities to start or expand a small business idea. Only a few parents have been to Senior High School, and the local area has high unemployment rates. Many of our Brightlingsea Academy students will be the first in their families to do so. This doesn't mean their parents are incapable of a more prosperous and sustainable life, and we felt our new Start-Up project could target these hardworking families.</p> <p>Last year, we were honoured to receive a substantial grant from The Funding Network, a crucial milestone that allowed us to kickstart our Start-Up project. With this support, we have already provided 15 micro business grants since May last year, and we have more in the pipeline for the coming year. We are deeply grateful to TFN for their belief in our work.</p> <p>Because of the funding, we could launch our Start-Up project within our Brightlingsea Academy community, where Porridge and Pens operates a free school for 450 of the poorest children in Kumasi. It is one of the first corporal punishment-free schools, with two free daily meals for all our children. We are also one of the region's first Disability-welcoming and neurodiversity-friendly schools.</p> <p>Because of our TFN award in 2024, we have given 15 small business grants, including weekly mentoring and monitoring from our project managers, Emmanuel and Raymond. We have seen incredible, impactful results within the community in a short time frame, with parents opening bank accounts and making weekly savings at least 50% higher than before they were given the grant.</p> <p>The impact of the funding award from TFN is best evidenced through the hard work of our beneficiaries. Meet Bernice, a familiar face in our school community. Despite working tirelessly with just a single manual sewing machine and facing financial challenges, Bernice's talent and determination as a self-taught seamstress have been evident. Her story is a testament to the</p>

	<p>resilience and determination of our beneficiaries.</p> <p>Before joining our Start-Up Scheme last year, Bernice didn't have a bank account, health insurance card, or savings, and she lived next to open sewage with her children. Despite many barriers, Bernice proved herself as a talented and motivated self-taught seamstress over the years.</p> <p>Bernice's living conditions were more difficult for her two children, who had to walk a long way to access running water and the small squat toilets in the left-hand side photo. When we asked Bernice what she wanted to achieve with a small business grant, her first answer was, "A better place to live."</p> <p>After a careful selection process which makes up our Start-Up entry scheme, Bernice was selected as the first beneficiary from the Brightlingsea Academy community. Her business model was simple: to start a fashion and sewing service with an industrial machine from an accessible shop with passing trade.</p> <p>Bernice has started her own business in just a few short months. She operates from a container shop with an industrial sewing machine, shopfront, proper working station, and a large selection of materials for her customers to browse.</p> <p>Bernice can work 80% faster with her new industrial sewing machine, so her customer base has grown significantly.</p> <p>After nearly two months of expansive trade, Bernice took on two local apprentices!</p> <p>Her business growth has been drastic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On average, 25 customers per week, compared to two previously. Bernice puts the new success rate down to her shop being in a busy area within the school village. Lots more people pass by, and she can generate much more trade.</li> <li>- Bernice can make an average of 200 Ghana cedi of savings per week, saving up in her new savings account and gearing up to move to a better home.</li> </ul> <p>We ask all our Start-Up beneficiaries to 'give back' to the local community through employment or apprenticeship opportunities when their small business takes off. It was fantastic to see Bernice offer two opportunities so quickly. This is especially important in the school community, which has a high unemployment rate for young people who could never afford higher education costs.</p> <p>Emmanuel is our Project Manager at the Brightlingsea Academy. He carefully works with all our Start-Up small businesses in the rural school community.</p>
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	<p>He works weekly with our small business owners to monitor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Profits, loss, and savings</li> <li>2) Small business workshops each month tailored to our awardee's targets.</li> <li>3) Weekly 1-1 small business mentoring.</li> <li>4) Equipment checks</li> </ol> <p>Esther is another beneficiary of our Start-Up Scheme.</p> <p>Esther also has two children at Brightlingsea Academy. For many years, she worked from an outside space within her home, preparing fried doughnuts to sell to people who passed by her house. Esther's working space was limited to the outside, with a tiny inside living area. Without electricity or access to proper cooking equipment, she would cook in hot pots of oil with her children running around her.</p> <p>After a devastating car crash recently and being born deaf, Esther has struggled to pay for her two children.</p> <p>Over the past few months, we have been working with Esther after we awarded her a place on Start-Up. One of Esther's dreams was to purchase an oven to bake pastries and meat pies to sell. She has already proven herself a determined and skilled baker, so Esther was the perfect person to take a place with us.</p> <p>Esther now sells meat pies, cakes, bread, and homemade drinks on a far larger scale. She has turned her tiny £2 weekly profit into £40 monthly. It is still very early for her business, and we expect this figure to grow and grow. Esther's smile has transformed alongside her increasing profits. Her small family is a lot happier with full tummies in the evenings.</p> <p>Esther can now cook from a small shop and sell it outside, which is a much safer and more effective way to attract customers.</p> <p>Esther stays to sell within the school village, while her mother has started to support her venture and takes products to the nearby Kumasi central market to sell early in the morning.</p> <p>Alongside Esther, we have many other early success stories; here are a few of our recent small business owners and their ventures, which we carefully track.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A small takeaway business</li> <li>- A convenience goods trading business</li> <li>- A chemist</li> <li>- A tailor</li> <li>- Two new seamstresses</li> <li>- A smoked fish seller</li> <li>- A catfish farmer!</li> </ul>
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	<p>I would love to bottle up the happiness experienced at the Girl Power Project, the vibrant energy radiating from our Girl Power Centre each day, and the joy reflected in every student's smile from the Brightlingsea Academy – our rural school in Kumasi. This combination reveals the immense worth of every donation made to the children under the care of Porridge and Pens.</p> <p>Despite being a tiny charity from a coastal town in Essex called Brightlingsea, our dedicated little team works daily with our partners in Ghana to feed, educate, and shelter 500 children. We have a truly incredible impact, of which I am very proud.</p> <p>We believe every child in Ghana should have a chance to achieve happiness and financial security in their later life, and this all starts with access to quality education.</p> <p>Our work continues to be delivered through two long-standing projects: The Girl Power Project and The Brightlingsea Academy. Our work in Ghana brings incredible joy and has a profound impact.</p> <p>Start-Up is now part of the Porridge and Pens story, and we can't wait to see what next year brings to our small business owners.</p> <p>Thank you so very much for your belief in our work.</p>
What portion of the project did TFN fund?	100%
How many direct beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	100
How many indirect beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	400
Were you able to leverage further funding as a result of TFN support?	Yes
If yes, how much were you able to raise and from whom?	A trust who saw me present at the TFN event sent a further donation which was fantastic!
Did you receive any pro-bono support, volunteer offers or introductions as a result of the event?	No
If yes, please can you provide details of the support you received?	-
How important was TFN funding in helping you achieve your objectives?	We wouldn't have been able to achieve our objectives without TFN funding
Has the training you received from TFN better prepared you in pitching your organisation to potential funders?	Yes
Has TFN increased your capacity to raise further funds?	Yes
Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of the project?	Please see them included above

Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any other significant changes?	No
Do you have any other comments or feedback on the experience of the TFN process?	Thank you so very much for giving us such an incredible opportunity, not only to raise money but to raise our profile as a small charity. It was a truly once in a lifetime experience for myself, as the founder and also for many, many beneficiaries who will benefit from the funding for many years to come.