

## From Vulnerability to Advocacy Leadership:

### ➤ How Rahima's Story Sparked Change in Yawhima Community:

**Rahima Ishaq Umar's** journey reflects one of the most powerful examples of personal transformation and systems influence under the RCA Project. Raised in difficult social and economic circumstances in Yawhima, Rahima's early life was marked by financial hardship, limited family support, teenage pregnancy, and interrupted educational aspirations. Despite these challenges, she remained determined to continue her education and pursue her dream of becoming a journalist and community advocate.



Figure 1: Rahima Ishaq Umar hosting the Medaakye Radio Show as part of the RCA Project's adolescent-led media advocacy platform. Through the programme, adolescents engage duty bearers, service providers, and community stakeholders on issues affecting their health, education, safety, and wellbeing, while strengthening youth voice, civic participation, and accountability within the city system.

Her turning point came through the RCA Project, where she was elected as an Adolescent Member of Parliament representing Yawhima and later served as Majority Leader. Through the project's leadership and adolescent journalism platforms, Rahima gained training in advocacy, storytelling, public speaking, and evidence gathering. These opportunities reignited her passion for journalism and strengthened her confidence to speak publicly on issues affecting young people within her community.

One of Rahima's most impactful advocacy efforts focused on the unsafe and deteriorating classroom structure at Yawhima African Faith Basic School. Using skills gained through the adolescent journalism platform, she documented and published a story highlighting the poor learning conditions affecting school children in the community. The story attracted attention from local authorities, including the Sunyani Municipal Assembly and political leadership, resulting in the commencement of a new three-unit classroom block for the school.

Her story became a practical demonstration of how adolescent voice, community evidence, and youth-led media engagement can influence local development action and improve community wellbeing.

Beyond advocacy, Rahima also benefited from vocational skills training in makeup artistry and wig-making, providing her with livelihood opportunities and economic support. Her leadership journey further expanded through participation in major national and international learning platforms, including the World Urban Forum in Cairo (2024), the Global Learning Forum in Ho, an exchange programme in India, and visits to the Parliament of Ghana.

In recognition of her leadership and advocacy efforts, Rahima was honoured with the Ghana Leadership Awards as the *Most Promising Young Leader of the Year (2025)*. Today, she continues to use her voice through the *Medaakye Radio Show*, adolescent advocacy platforms, and stakeholder engagements to educate, mentor,

and advocate for adolescents, particularly girls and teenage mothers within her community.

Rahima's journey reflects the transformative potential of investing in adolescent leadership, voice, and opportunity. Her experience demonstrates that when adolescents are provided with mentorship, safe platforms, and meaningful participation opportunities, they can influence systems, inspire change, and become powerful advocates within their communities.

### Key Change:

- Adolescent-led evidence and storytelling contributed directly to community development action.
- Strengthened adolescent confidence, leadership, and civic participation.
- Improved educational infrastructure through adolescent advocacy.

Increased visibility of adolescent girls and teenage mothers as leaders and changemakers



Figure 3: Before and after images of Yawhima African Faith Basic School following adolescent-led advocacy under the RCA Project. What began as evidence gathered and amplified by adolescent journalist and Adolescent MP, Rahima Ishaq Umar, contributed to stakeholder response and the construction of a new classroom block—demonstrating how adolescent voice and community advocacy can influence local development action and improve learning environments for children.