

GATEWAY

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EDITOR'S LITTLE NOTE

AKWAABA AND GREETINGS FROM GHANA! WELCOME TO THE JANUARY EDITION OF THE GATEWAY, THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR PROJECTS ABROAD GHANA!

WELCOME TO THE FIRST MONTH OF 2011!

THERE HAS BEEN AN ADDITIONAL SESSION TO OUR 2 WEEK SPECIAL PROGRAMMES AND DATES NOW ARE AS FOLLOWS;

- SUNDAY JUNE 12TH – SATURDAY JUNE 25TH 2011*
- SUNDAY JUNE 26TH – SATURDAY JULY 9TH 2011*
- SUNDAY JULY 17TH – SATURDAY JULY 30TH 2011*
- SUNDAY AUGUST 7TH – SATURDAY AUGUST 20TH 2011*

THIS WILL GIVE ALL INTERESTED TEENAGERS WISHING TO DO SOME VOLUNTEER WORK DURING SUMMER BREAK THE OPTIONS OF DATES.

INSIDE OUT: GENERAL INFO ABOUT GHANA

GOVERNMENT TO BUILD SCHOOL ON DODI ISLAND

Dodi Island (E/R), Jan 17, GNA - The government is to build a school and a clinic for the people of Dodi Island this year as a first step towards providing the island people with some basic social amenities. The District Chief Executive of Asuogyaman, Mr Johnson Ahiakpor, said this when he presented some items to the people on behalf of the President at the weekend.

The items included 10 bags of rice, two bales of second hand clothing, eight cartons of soap, some plastic washing bowls, plastic buckets, plastic plates and cups.

He said the government would also extend electricity to the area so that people who visit the Island would stay longer and appealed to community leaders of the Dodi Island to allocate land for the projects to start. The newly elected Assemblyman for the area, Mr Stephen Dzehu Avorgbedor, said the Island, which has a population of almost 600 people, half of which are children, does not have a public school. School children have to paddle a canoe for one hour across the Afram Lake daily, with its attendant risks, to attend primary school at Agyabui. Mr Avorgbedor said the children had to continue high school at Gemeni in the Volta Region and that most parents on the Island had sent their children to stay with their relations in Gemeni and

some parts of Volta region to be able to attend school.

Mr Fred Bart-Plange, Manager of Dodi Princess, the pleasure boat that is used to transport tourists to the Dodi Island, said when he took over management of the boat, he realized that when the tourists got to the Island, the youth pressured them for monetary gifts. He said such practices discouraged tourism promotion and so he got the Volta River Authority to acquire a set of cultural drums for the Dodi Island community. He encouraged them to form cultural groups and brought a choreographer to teach the groups dances from various parts of the country. Mr Bart-Plange said the cultural groups on the Island had been divided into welcoming party and those that play for the tourists as they tour the Island.

He said funds raised from the tourists who want to learn the dances are shared among the members of the group to help stop the practice of begging from tourists.

The head of the Dodi Island community, Mr Vizier K. Atsitsogbe, said for many years politicians had always visited the Island to campaign for votes and after elections they never visited them again. He expressed the community's appreciation for the gifts and said a government official had visited them for the first time and pleaded with the government to provide the Island with a clinic.

FEATURE: HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

AKOKOA'S NEW CLASSROOM BLOCK



Recently in the Akuapem Hills, building volunteers finished building a school in Akokoa. Currently, there are volunteers from the United States, Australia, Holland, Germany, France, United Kingdom and Denmark. There are about sixteen volunteers working at the building project.

Akokoa is a village on the way to Koforidua – the regional capital of the eastern region as is about fifteen kilometres from the local office in Mamfe. The village lacks most basic facilities such as water, electricity and schools. Before the school block was built by Projects Abroad volunteers, children from this village would have to walk to a nearby village to attend school. In order to get to their previous school, they would have to walk thirty to forty minutes before getting to school, regardless of weather conditions. In addition to the long journey, the children – aged five to twelve – would have to walk on the busy main road

connecting Mamfe and Koforidua. The road to the village itself is in a deplorable state. Because of these conditions, Projects Abroad volunteers helped to make the journey to school easier by building a school in the village.

The building team together with their supervisor started work on the school by digging trenches to lay the foundation of the building. The materials meant for the building the classroom block were provided by Projects Abroad and the land where the school was built was provided by the village. The bricks used for the building were moulded by volunteers, which was not a simple task! If water was not already available at the building site, volunteers would have to go to the only bore hole in the village to fetch water for mixing sand to make the bricks. They worked tirelessly in the scorching sun five days a week to make sure the two classroom blocks would be completed quickly. A local mason helped the volunteers by teaching them how to lay bricks and to plaster the classrooms. After the classrooms were completed, volunteers painted the classrooms and drew objects that will help the children to learn. Volunteers were so happy to see the completion of the classroom block, and the people of Akokoa are so grateful for the volunteers who built them a new school!

9 HOST FAMILY

REBECCA ODONKOR

Mrs. Odonkor has been hosting volunteers since 2001 and will quickly make volunteers feel like part of the family. Mrs. Odonkor is a retired secondary school teacher who now works part time at the pensioners' office.

Also living at the house is Mary (1997) who is a family relation and helps Mrs. Odonkor to do things around the house when she is not at school.

Mrs. Odonkor's house is located in South La (a part of Labadi) near the centre of Accra. The house is just a few minutes' walk from the main Accra-Tema road. From here it is a simple 10-minute journey by either tro-tro or 'line' taxi (a cab/taxi shared with other passengers with a fixed fare) to a westernised part of Accra called Oxford Street, Osu.

The accommodation is close to Labadi Beach, the Labadi Beach Hotel and La Palm Royal Beach Hotel which are very popular recreation sites. Labadi is a 20-minute ride to both Accra Central and Circle (these places are the busiest parts of Accra). Accra is a coastal settlement and also the capital city of Ghana. It is both busy and highly-populated, with numerous places to visit such as museums, markets/malls, cinemas and beaches.

Mrs. Odonkor hosts a maximum of two volunteers in a block next to the main house. The volunteer's room, normally shared with another volunteer, will have a bed and a fan. The volunteers also share their own bathroom.

Meals will be taken in the main house and will be a mixture of local and western foods. The family is keen for volunteers to try their local dishes, but they appreciate the need for variety.

Mrs. Odonkor is used to volunteers socialising and going out in the evenings and will leave the gate open for you, but she also appreciates knowing what time you will be home.

For security reasons the family ask that volunteers do not invite guests into the home without first requesting their permission.

9 PROJECT

DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF



The Demonstration School for the Deaf is a home to over 300 students, many of whom live on-site.

The Deaf & Blind Department was established in 1979, and currently supports 11 students with varying visual and audio impairments. As well as teaching basic academic subjects, there is also a strong emphasis on teaching basic life skills such as bathing, cooking and cleaning, so the students can learn to be more independent. Students also have the opportunity to learn vocational skills such as weaving and hairdressing.

The School is located on the outskirts of Mampong, in the Akuapem Hills of the Eastern Region. Volunteers will normally be staying within a short taxi-ride of the School.

The working day starts at 08:00 with breakfast. There is a snack break at

mid-morning and the day finishes with lunch at 14:00.

The work schedule is flexible to a degree for volunteers as they will decide with their supervisor which activities they would like to be involved in and at what times.

In the Deaf & Blind Centre, as the students' needs are very specific, all activities are conducted one-on-one and each student has an individualised educational programme.

Activities can range from assisting with basic academic subjects and helping with arts and crafts, to supervising the vocational skills training such as weaving, cooking and hairdressing.

It is important that volunteers show the initiative and enthusiasm to immerse their selves into the job and spend their time productively. Their role is essentially as an extra pair of hands, and where children are involved, the more help that is available the better!

We strongly encourage volunteers to sit together with their supervisor on their first day to discuss how they will spend their time, and if there is any specific area of interest.

By meeting once a week, we are sure that volunteers will be able to plan activities together and be sure to let us know if there are any materials they need.

DONATIONS

BOLA RAY AND FAMILY DONATES TO SOS VILLAGE



Host of Drive Time on Joy FM, Kwabena Anokye Adisi popularly known as Bola Ray together with his family has donated assorted items valued at GHc 3,000 to the SOS Village in Tema Sunday.

The donation was made under the Bola Ray Foundation, an initiative of Bola Ray and his wife, Dorcas, with the sole aim of giving back to society.

Items donated include bales of cloths, bags of rice, cartons of biscuits, oil and milk and drinks and an undisclosed amount of money.



Bola speaking at the presentation ceremony said the donation is a dream made a reality and

that his family has been harbouring this desire for some time now.

He gave the assurance that this will not be the end promising more of such donations in the future.

Village Director of the SOS Village, Isaac Kojo Ackon, who received the items lauded the kind gesture saying this will go a long way in helping the Village continue fulfilling its aim of shaping the children's future so that they can contribute to the development of their communities and the country.

He said the SOS Villages in Tema, Kumasi, Asiakwa and Tamale, have enhanced the lives of about 137 youths over its 36 years of existence in the country and hopes reach more in the years to come.

These people, he said, are now contributing their quota in diverse ways to their communities and national development.

Bola Ray and his wife were joined by other renowned personalities that included actor John Dumelo, actress Yvonne Nelson, boxer Joshua Clottey and Super Moring Show host Kojo Opong Nkrumah who donated the items to the village.

They danced with the kids, took pictures with them and signed autographs for some of them.

They advised the kids to take their education seriously and aim higher in everything they do.

Preceding the donation was a tour of the village.

VOLUNTEERS' CORNER

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCAL PERSONS TRAINING

“Spread the love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbour... Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier, Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”

Nell Pierce and Rohan Barraclough

Report of HR Focal Persons Training in Tema, New Town, Monday 10th January 2010

I. PERSONS PRESENT

Projects Abroad People Present: Nell Pierce; Rohan Barraclough; Eben

Others Present: Two representatives from DOVVSU

Enoch Mensah

Radio Station Press Representative

Audience: Representatives from various businesses and organizations in the area. Approximately 30 people. About ¾ were male.

II. ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

1. Arrival and Registration at approximately 10am
2. Introduction by Enoch Mensah
3. Purpose of Gathering (Projects Abroad)
4. 1st Presentation: General Human Rights (Projects Abroad)
5. Questions and Answers: Hypothetical Problems on Nii and Ama
6. Second Presentation: DOVVSU on Domestic Violence
7. Questions and Answers: Domestic Violence questions for DOVVSU
8. Closing Remarks (Enoch Mensah)
9. Group Photo and Departure at approximately 12pm

III. EVALUATION OF FIRST PRESENTATION (GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS)

The audience seemed reasonably engaged. When greeted they responded with a greeting, and when thanked for their attendance they replied that we were welcome.

We (Rohan and Nell) gave a presentation that outlined

- what a right is
- what human rights are
- a list of the 'core' human rights
- the relationship between rights and responsibilities and the non absolute nature of human rights
- who to contact in cases of human rights abuse

At Eben's suggestion we made an effort to speak slowly and clearly. The presentation seemed well received. Later on in the day, however, the audience members said that they preferred to communicate and be addressed in Twi. This suggests that the audience may not have completely understood our English presentation on basic human rights.

At the end of the presentation the audience members were given copies for their personal reference.

IV. EVALUATION OF HYPOTHETICAL PROBLEMS

The hypothetical problems were effective in sparking discussion.

The DOVVSU representatives were particularly helpful in engaging the participants in debate over the rights issues raised – particularly as they spoke Twi. At the request of the audience, much of the discussion was conducted in Twi, with the DOVVSU representatives translating. Although the audience preferred to communicate in Twi, one member of the group read aloud the English hypothetical problem, which suggested that he at least had a strong grasp of written English.

Questions raised during the discussion of the hypothetical scenarios included:

- Whether domestic violence should be reported after only one incident (there was a feeling that one incident alone did not constitute reportable domestic violence – the DOVVSU representative was useful in authoritatively refuting this contention).
- Whether domestic violence could be justified by the failure or 'misbehaviour' of the woman.
- Whether domestic violence was permitted if a woman was working in her husband's business and failed to make enough money.

- Whether children have the responsibility of earning money for the family to support itself (DOVVSU clarified that it is the parents' responsibility to financially support the family when the child is still young enough to be attending junior school).
- Whether older female children should work rather than the male child if the male child is still young enough to attend junior school.

V. EVALUATION OF SECOND PRESENTATION (DOVVSU)

It is difficult to comment thoroughly on the second presentation as it was almost entirely in Twi (which we do not speak). Eben did, however, act as translator for us. The audience seemed very involved and the discussion became quite vocal and heated at times. The audience responded particularly positively to 'role play' demonstrations.

VI. EVALUATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The audience were highly engaged at this point. They were particularly vocal about issues of alleged police corruption and asked detailed questions about the appropriate course of action for highly specific fact scenarios. Questions raised included:

- Whether defilement can be justified by young girls dressing provocatively; how communities can address the problem of young girls dressing inappropriately (it was suggested that this was an issue for parents to address)
- The relationship between severity of crimes and the punishment applied
- The process of arrest and trial
- The issue of police corruption (there had been an incident in the community where a police officer was alleged to have defiled a young girl, and the community members were angry that he had got off 'scott free'. DOVVSU were defensive on this issue and argued that if it had been conclusively proven that the police officer was guilty, then he would have been justly punished.)
- The issue that there was a culture of young girls (age 7 – 12) frequenting drinking spots that stayed open until 1am or later, and offering sexual services (there was debate on the role of parents in preventing this behaviour).
- The fact that the change from traditional community structures to more individualist communities made it less socially acceptable to report human rights abuses by third parties. There was discussion of a gradual change back to a more communal social structure.
- The merits of marriage rather than cohabitation (the former was suggested by DOVVSU as being less likely to result in domestic violence.)

- The issue of parental control and school attendance.

DOVVSU were also required to answer a number of specific questions relating to parental disputes; marital infidelity and resulting children etc... Their answer was usually that DOVVSU should be contacted to help resolve the issue

There was also discussion of the nature of DOVVSU. DOVVSU made it clear that it offers a free service, but that the department was limited by underfunding. DOVVSU also made it clear that their organization does not aim to incarcerate offenders, but to reach reconciliation through counselling.

VII. GENERAL COMMENTS

This project was certainly interesting for the Projects Abroad volunteers. It was a unique experience to learn about Ghanaian culture and communities, and the general level of awareness of human rights.

It is more difficult to measure the effectiveness of the presentation for the community members present. There did seem to be an initial lack of understanding of human rights among the community members present, and the audience seemed to have a real willingness to learn about human rights and the nuances of the law relating to marriage, children and domestic relationships.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Having the DOVVSU representatives really improved the engagement of audience members. We would highly recommend that they, or another similar organization, were present at the next meeting. As role-play was well received, perhaps this could be incorporated into future presentations. Incorporating some basic Twi phrases into the presentation could perhaps have increased audience enthusiasm initially. Additional copies of presentation and hypothetical scenarios to give to DOVVSU were also required.

A CITY IN GHANA



Kumasi is the capital city of the Ashanti region, a very important and historical centre for Ghana. Tradition is held very high in Kumasi and blends very well with modernity. There is a wide range of attractions in Kumasi.

The Manhyia Palace, the seat of the King of Ashanti and members of the royal family, is situated in the northern part of the city. The Palace has a courtyard and a courtroom where matters dealing with the constitution and customs are deliberated upon the traditional council. Visitors can get a good insight into traditional African democracy, which is still very present in the customs of the people when they visit the courtyard. The meetings are open to the public.



Lake Bosumtwi, the largest natural lake in Ghana, is about 32 kilometres southeast of Kumasi. The Ashantis believe that the souls of their dead come to the lake to say goodbye to god called Twi. One theory says that the huge meteorite formed the lake. Another says that it is the crater of an extinct volcano.

Kumasi - Another View

The ancient capital of the Ashanti kingdom, Kumasi is still the heart of Ashanti country and the site of West Africa's largest cultural centre, the palace of the Ashanti king. To add to the appeal, it's surrounded by rolling green hills and has a vast central market as vibrant as any in Africa.



The city's major attraction is the National Cultural Centre, a 10 minute walk west of the market. The sprawling complex encompasses a fascinating museum of Ashanti history, a popular library, an excellent crafts shop and an exhibition hall. Classes in traditional dance and drumming are available. One of the centre's more interesting exhibits is the fake golden stool used to trick the British, who'd heard that the real Golden Stool held the strength of the Ashanti Empire and demanded it be brought to them. It was decades

before they discovered the ruse. The real stool is kept at Manhyia Palace and is brought out only on special occasions. It's so sacred that not even the king is allowed to sit on it, and it's never allowed to touch the ground. There's a photo of it in the museum.



If you're looking to escape the heat, one option is to head next door to the zoological gardens, with its lovely gardens and somewhat depressing zoo - picture caged chimps toying with broken beer bottles. Watch your step, as crocodiles and porcupines roam freely. Half a kilometre to the west, the Anokye Sword sticks out of the ground exactly where - according to legend - the Golden Stool descended from the heavens to mark the beginning of the Ashanti people. Legend has it that if the sword is ever pulled out, the Ashanti kingdom will disappear.



Manhyia Palace, better known as Asantehene's Palace, is the palace of the highest Ashanti ruler. Ashanti kings have never lived in luxury, and visitors are often surprised by how sparse and unpretentious the palace is. The current king lives in a more recent palace directly behind the old one, and if you bring a gift and enquire politely, you may be able to meet him. You might also try to arrive on the Adaye Festival - there are two every 42 days - when the king's subjects come to pay him homage.

In the villages around Kumasi, artisans specialize in crafts such as goldsmiths, wood carving, cloth printing and weaving. Bonwire is the place to go for kente cloth, Pankrono is best for pottery, Ahwiasa for woodcarving and Ntonso for adinkra cloth. Private taxis and tro-tro are the best ways to reach any of the craft villages.



Though it's over 250km north-west of the capital, Kumasi is Ghana's second largest traffic hub, so you'll have no trouble getting there and away. There are several flights per week to Accra and Tamale, as well as buses, trains, taxis and tro-tro.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Guys!

Don't forget to join our official Facebook Group for our entire placement Regions:
[Hills](#), [Kumasi](#), [Ho](#), [Cape Coast](#), [Accra](#), [PAHRO](#)

Read our [Country Blogs](#).

Am sure you will meet some past, current and upcoming volunteers there, to share ideas and tips!

Upcoming Human Rights volunteers, please check out what's up on the PAHRO link.
It's time to NETWORK!!!

SOME IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Kotoka International Airport (Info. Desk)
Tel: 00233302776171

Police
Tel: 191

Fire Service
Tel: 192