



Nyarkoa Foundation

Summer, 2011

P.O. Box 80993, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708

Number 4

Introduction

Welcome to the fourth newsletter of the Nyarkoa Foundation, a non-profit corporation chartered in the State of Alaska. Our mission is to assist in the development of rural Ghana through projects that improve the lives of the rural poor.

The symbol in the banner above is an "Adinkra" symbol. It is one of many ideographs (pictures that represent ideas) that are used by the Akan (the dominant ethnic group in Ghana) in their art and as decorations on buildings and everyday items. The name of the symbol in the Akan language means "chain" and it symbolizes unity, brotherhood, and a sense of responsibility and cooperation between people. We have adopted this symbol as our logo because that idea represents our views and objectives.

Since its incorporation in January, 2007, the Foundation has been working on projects to improve access to clean water and provide education on health and sanitation to villages in the Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam District of the Central Region of Ghana, about 50 miles west of Accra, the capital. Our partner is a local non-government organization (NGO) called the Rural Education and Development Programme (REDEP). The executive director of REDEP, James Addo, the Board of Directors and a corps of volunteers have roots in the District through personal history and family

associations or current employment. All are familiar with the particular problems and needs of the people of the District. The Foundation also has two in-country representatives (Vera Thompson-Mensah and Beatrice Torto) who travel to the District to independently monitor our projects.

Accomplishments to Date

This newsletter marks the end of the Foundations 4th fiscal year of operation (June 30, 2011). During that time, because of the generosity of our donors we have been able to provide a steady source of clean water to a health clinic and repaired or replaced broken pumps in 12 villages where REDEP also conducted their education programs on community and individual health, and



Children Hauling Water

sanitation. The village populations range from about 150 up to several hundred people (including children). As always, it is important to remember that repairing village pumps also saves women and children from having to make long, tiring trips to collect unsafe water from streams or ponds.

During the trip to Ghana in the summer of 2011, we accompanied REDEP staff to 9 of the 12 villages where we have worked. The purpose was to assess our progress, see whether the villages were taking the lessons we teach about health and sanitation seriously, look for ways to help the villages improve their organization, and learn what we can do to improve what we do.

Villages in the District are relatively isolated and each has its own problems, style of organization and leadership, and relationships among its people. As a result, we didn't expect the results of our efforts to be the same in all the villages, and they were not. At each village we



Village Meeting

held a public meeting that included the chief, members of the village water and

sanitation (WATSAN) committee and others. We checked bankbooks to see if they were saving for future pump repairs (one was doing well, most were saving something, and two were not saving). We asked if the WATSAN committees were doing their jobs of reinforcing the messages about health, the importance of clean water and of village sanitation as they should (most were, a few were not), and we wanted to learn how the people viewed our efforts in general. The results will help REDEP add to the message and address some of the shortcomings we found as they revisit the villages in the coming months. It's clear that our work is appreciated and the only downside is that people want our help in other ways that are beyond our means or aren't practical.

Plans for the next Fiscal Year

During the trip we visited four new project sites. Three are villages with pumps in need of repair that we plan to fix. The fourth is similar to our first project to supply a water system to a health clinic, but this site a residential high school with over 1500 students and only one hand pump to supply water for them. Some students bring water from a town some distance away but most get water for all their personal needs (laundry, bathing, etc.) from that pump. Obviously, the pump is heavily used and breaks down often, so many students have to walk to the town or get water from a local stream. There is a deep borehole at the school that is awaiting a hand pump, but we plan to install a submersible electric pump in it instead and move the water into a raised storage tank from where it can flow by gravity through pipes to the school kitchen and the boys and girls dormitories. This will

be far more convenient and reliable than a second hand pump and will save the



Girls at Mando High School carrying water from pump.

students the considerable time they now must spend to collect water. We have arranged for the same contractor who did the health clinic project to do this one, and we are confident of his work.

We will also revisit a project that we did last year in which we installed a pump in a hand-dug well. The well was dug by a contractor who left the job unfinished. We completed the well and installed the pump but learned during our visit this year that the poor quality of the water in the well makes it unusable for drinking and cooking. However, there is a small, open, shallow well at the village with better quality water. In the coming year we will try to upgrade this well so that it can be a permanent source of good water for the village.

Finally, we are planning to try an experiment to encourage people who must get their water from a river, pond or other surface sources to use chlorine

to purify it for drinking and cooking. This has been tried in other places for many years, but it has been found that after a short time, people stop treating the water they bring home, either because they run out of chlorine and can't replace it, or simply forget to use it. However, recent research has suggested that providing a way for people to add chlorine to the water at the source when it is collected leads to much more consistent use of the chlorine. We want to introduce that approach into the District where there are many villages that have no well so the people will need to rely on surface water sources for some time into the future. Providing a convenient and inexpensive way for people in those villages to purify their drinking and cooking water would be of real value. The chlorination products are not expensive and the plan is to supply them, along with a suitable dispensing method, to a village where the leadership will be sure to supervise the procedure. We will need permission from the local health officials before proceeding, but hope to be able to start the project soon and expand it to more villages in the future.

Working with REDEP

The partnership between REDEP and the Foundation has benefited both groups. The knowledge and experience of REDEP's staff has helped guide the Foundation's work since we began, and we have been able to assist in raising funds for REDEP's projects and offering ideas that have helped move their work in new directions. None of the Foundation's funds are involved in REDEP's projects.

REDEP aims to educate the rural people of the District about personal and community health and sanitation, and environmental conservation. It works in many of the elementary and junior high schools by organizing after-school clubs where students are taught about these subjects and learn how to become peer educators for other students and to make presentations to the general public. There are outreach programs into the community to encourage reforestation using the 25,000 seedlings that REDEP's school clubs prepare each year to be planted in groves to prevent erosion, reclaim land, make windbreaks and create woodlots for people who make charcoal. The trees grow quickly and wood can be harvested within 2-3 years for making charcoal.

REDEP also sponsors a variety of school academic activities, started a program of students planting vegetable gardens, and leads the students in monthly exercises



School Vegetable Garden Site Preparation

to clean the streets and roads in their communities. Currently it is helping people in the villages to develop

economic activities including growing vegetables and making soap, palm oil, and other products to sell at markets, and implementing a relatively new approach to teach people how to improve village sanitation using local materials and initiatives.



Students at 6:30 AM on a school day after a one-hour clean up exercise.

REDEP is continuing to expand and draw support from the community and the local government, as the value of its programs is recognized.

Conclusion

The Foundation's accomplishments depend on the contributions of our donors. All donations are spent only on projects in Ghana, since the Directors pay all administrative and travel costs. The Foundation is a 501c(3) non-profit so donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Donations can be sent to:

Nyarkoa Foundation
c/o Lewis Shapiro
P.O. Box 80993
Fairbanks, AK 99708

or:

c/o Barry Shapiro
333 E. 43rd St
New York, NY 10017