



Nyarkoa Foundation

Summer, 2012

P.O. Box 80993, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708

Number 5

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth 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 largest 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 an in-country representative (Vera Nutakor) who travels to the District frequently to independently monitor the progress of our projects.

Accomplishments to Date

This newsletter marks the end of the Foundations 5th fiscal year of operation (June 30, 2012). 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 15 villages where REDEP also conducted their education programs on community and individual health, and sanitation. The village populations range from about 150 up to several hundred people (including children).

In the last newsletter we also discussed a planned project to provide an improved source of water to a high school with over 1500 resident students. A single hand pump supplied water for the entire school and it frequently broke down from heavy use. The students then had to fetch all the water for their personal use from a stream or a town, both of which are some distance away. The time and effort required naturally detracted from their school work. That has changed now

that the project has been completed. The results are shown in the series of photos that follow.

The first is from the last newsletter and shows part of a line of students carrying water from the hand pump. The next is a



Hauling water from the hand pump

new view the site with a concrete box over the borehole well that now contains a submersible electric pump.



Present view of the former pump site.

Water from the well is pumped to the tower shown in the next picture, from where it flows by gravity to various

water points around the campus. As a result, the line from the pump has been replaced by scenes such as shown in the last picture where water comes from a faucet close to where it will be used. The hand pump shown in the first photo has been installed at new borewell on the campus to provide an additional convenient water point.



The new water tower.



New water point at the girls' dormitory.

Clearly, the number of people we have served continues to grow.

Plans for the next fiscal year

The main project for the coming year will be similar to our very first project; the installation of a water system into a

health clinic. However, the clinic for this year is larger and serves more people than the first one. It also has a maternity ward and wards for patients who need treatment for a few days. The first clinic could not keep patients overnight except for children who needed to be rehydrated because of bouts with dysentery or malaria, or to treat other emergencies.

The clinic is served by a piped water system that rarely delivers water. Instead, it relies on a borehole well with a hand-pump where the staff draw water and carry it into the building in cans or buckets.

We plan to sever the connection to the piped water system and install a submersible pump in the well to replace the hand pump. The water will be pumped to a large storage tank on a tower, which we will construct, and from there it will flow by gravity into pipes in the clinic buildings and to outside stand pipes at the staff quarters. Local people will be able to draw water at other stand pipes connected to the system. That is an important additional benefit because the only other water source available to them is a nearby stream. The same contractor who did the first health clinic and the high school project will do this one, and we are confident of his work.

We also hope to obtain the hand pump that is now installed at the clinic to use at another project in the future.

In addition to the clinic, we will repair pumps at two villages where we have worked before, and three new villages with failed pumps have been identified for us to work at. We have established priorities for these, and will take care of them as funds permit. It's likely that at

least one will need to be carried over into the next fiscal year.

Why Ghana?

Some people have expressed an interest in knowing how the Foundation got started working in Ghana and why we continue.

The story began when I (Lew) decided to do volunteer work in Africa through a program sponsored by the American Jewish World Service. I was almost sent to Uganda, but there was a political storm brewing there at the time. Instead, I was sent to Ghana to help write proposals to raise funds for an organization that works to promote women's and children's rights. Shortly after I arrived in April, 2006 I was invited to attend a panel meeting where a newly published book evaluating the government and constitution of Ghana was presented. The study was sponsored by the government and the panel members were distinguished people, such as former ambassadors, religious leaders, a former university president, traditional leaders and prominent activists in the area of promoting civil rights and good government. The executive secretary of the panel gave an introductory speech that resonated with me because of the forceful way he stated that Ghana was through with dictatorships and corrupt, autocratic government. He said that Ghanaians wanted democracy and government that worked for all the people.

Before going to Ghana I had read a lot about the history of Africa and the paths various countries followed to reach independence from their colonial rulers. In 1957 Ghana became the first country

in sub-Saharan Africa to reach that goal. Its subsequent history was turbulent, but the country never experienced either a civil war or the worst excesses of repressive dictatorships that were common occurrences in many other countries. However, it wasn't until 1992 that a new constitution was adopted, leading to a national election for president and legislature. A presidential election has been held every 4 years since then and the party in power has been voted out on two occasions. In fact, in the election of 2008 the vote was razor thin and because of a logistical error, a second vote had to be held in one district that was a stronghold for the opposition. I was in Ghana when the vote was held, and on the day the results were reported there were warnings about possible riots or worse. But nothing happened! When the results were announced, the governing party accepted the loss, the opposition took over and that was the end of it. Recently the president who was elected at that time died suddenly and the vice-president was immediately sworn in as president. A new vice-president was selected as provided for in the constitution, and life went on. That would not happen in many other countries in Africa, but it works in Ghana; people have accepted the idea that the voice of the people should be the law of the land, and so Ghana is a stable democratic country.

Ghana also seems to be free of the ethnic and religious strife that affects so many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. No single ethnic or religious group is large enough to dominate the political and economic life of the country, and people seem to get along. I saw this first-hand at the book presentation I mentioned above; the opening

invocation was given by a Pastor from a Protestant church, the closing invocation was given by an Imam, and one of the panel members was a Catholic bishop. People of all religions, including traditional religions, seem to live in harmony in all of the villages where we work.

Many of the people we've met and worked with in Ghana are like Josie Sam, our student and colleague who was instrumental in getting the Foundation started. They work hard, and do the best they can with the resources they have to make the country better. Because of them and because of the general attitude of the population, I feel confident that whatever we accomplish in Ghana will have lasting value and will not be wasted in a future wave of political violence.

Conclusion

The Foundation's accomplishments depend on the contributions of our donors. All funds received are spent only on our projects in Ghana, since the Directors continue to pay all administrative and travel costs.

Donations can be sent to:

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