



Nyarkoa Foundation

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P.O Box 80993, Fairbanks, AK 99708

Nyarkoa.org

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Welcome to the ninth newsletter of the Nyarkoa Foundation, a non-profit corporation whose mission is to help bring sustainable water supplies to villages in rural Ghana. The Foundation works by funding projects through the Rural Education and Development Programme (REDEP) a non-profit, non-government organization in Ghana that shares our objectives. AMEFS Eng. Ltd., a Ghanaian firm that sells and repairs hand-pumps, handles all repairs and installations. We also train the women in the pump caretakers (now 'technicians') program that was described in Newsletters 7 and 8, which can be downloaded from our web page at <nyarkoa.org>.

The symbol in the banner above is called 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 everyday items. Its name in the Akan language means "chain" or "link of a chain." It symbolizes brotherhood and cooperation between people. We have adopted this symbol as the logo of the Nyarkoa Foundation because those ideas represent our views and objectives.

Current Status of our Program

In calendar year 2015 we added three villages to our program to repair and maintain pumps, and one more was added in 2016. The number of villages we work with is now up to 18, with an estimated population of over 5000

people. Combined with our projects to mechanize the water supply systems for two high schools of 1500 students each plus faculty, and two health clinics that serve many more people than reside in our villages, it is clear that we are reaching a substantial number of people.

The projects at the high schools and health clinics have been sustainable without our help. They collect funds for maintenance and repairs through student fees and from salaried staff and have required little support from REDEP.

Meanwhile, we are seeing progress toward sustainability in the villages as well. As noted in earlier newsletters, we have been making regular quarterly visits to the villages since we first trained women as pump technicians. The purpose has been to support those women, offer refresher training as needed, and look for positive changes that can be attributed to their influence. We have seen that pumps are being maintained, pump areas are clean and drained, children no longer play at pumps and rules have been established for pump access in most villages. In addition, we are particularly happy to report that 13 of the 18 villages we work with are saving regularly for future pump repairs.

We believe that there are three main reasons for them saving. First, training the women to maintain the pumps and giving them that responsibility helps

keep the topic of caring for the pumps active in the villages. In addition, the training program emphasized the health benefits of drinking clean water and through the trainees that is now more widely recognized among the people. Second, the quarterly visits to the villages by REDEP and AMEFS demonstrate our continued interest in helping them solve problems regarding water issues as they arise. Also, instruction about the importance of clean water and community sanitation to good health is a part of every visit. Third, the regular visits seem to encourage more involvement of community leadership in the overall program.

Five of the villages are not saving, but one has a well that has never produced enough water to be useful. However, we have continued to visit them regularly, and the government is now looking for a site to drill another well for them. The village has strong leadership and we think our advice and instruction will be useful to them when the new well is completed.

Another village that has not been saving is now facing a crisis because their hand pump has failed from over-use and should be replaced by an electric pump in the well that pumps water to a storage tank on the surface. Unfortunately, the projected cost for that system is far greater than we can afford. They will have to find the bulk of the funds themselves, but we will help if we can.

The remaining 3 villages have yet to organize to save, but we continue to make short visits to them regularly in the hope that they will do so in the future. These villages illustrate an important continuing challenge to developing

sustainable village water programs in small villages, because organization requires setting up rules for the use of their pump(s). That includes rules about paying to draw water and then saving the money for future pump repairs that are certain to be needed. Each village makes its own rules through its WATSAN (Water & Sanitation) committee. The committees were to have been created when the government drilled the wells and installed the pumps. However, most of the committees in the villages in our program ceased to function before the Foundation existed and there was no money available to repair the pumps when we began. As a result, most of the people were drawing water from streams, puddles or shallow wells that are often unsafe.

We have tried to reorganize the committees in villages where needed, but it has proved to be difficult. The requirement to set rules and collect money often causes conflicts in these small communities, so some committee members resign rather than continue to argue with their neighbors. In addition, committee membership changes as people move from the villages or can no longer serve for other reasons. However, these challenges are typical of community-based projects that seek to change attitudes and promote sustainability, and we continue to work with residents to address them.

Comments on the Future

As we noted, we believe that the main elements of any success we have had are the training of the women as pump technicians, and the quarterly visits to the villages. These built on the relationships established during our nearly continuous presence among

contact with the villages since our program began nine years ago. However, the quarterly visits are time consuming and expensive, and we are approaching the limit of the number of visits that we can make in any year.

The last four villages that we added had approached REDEP and asked to join our program. REDEP conducted village meetings on health and organizational issues for them, and helped them to open bank accounts. Their pumps were then repaired and all are currently saving. Photographs of one of the community meetings and a gathering after the successful repair of the pump in one of the villages are shown below.



Community Meeting Scene

It is difficult to turn down villages that ask to join our program knowing that they will have to begin paying for water and saving for future pump repairs. However, as discussed below, we are reaching the limit of the number of villages that we can visit and support on our quarterly tours. It may soon be time to stop trying to work with the villages that have made little or no effort to organize and save. That would only minimally reduce the costs of the village tours, but would give us more time to help other communities that are trying to

help themselves. Those decisions will be made as situations arise in the future.



Celebration for a newly repaired pump

Pilot Program of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS)

We are piloting a new program called Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) in two villages this year. The history and approach of the CLTS program are described on the web site (www.communityledtotalsanitation.org). The purpose of the program is to end open defecation in rural communities and minimize or eliminate the health problems associated with that practice. CLTS relies on educating the people on the direct effects of open-defecation in transmitting diseases throughout the community. However, it emphasizes what people can do for themselves by improving their personal sanitation habits, constructing family latrines and bath areas, and controlling where solid waste is disposed of around the community. It aims to change people's attitudes toward the practice of open defecation and requires that they commit to that objective before the program starts. Success depends mainly on the village leadership and the efforts of men

and women of the community who volunteer to lead the work.

Our CLTS program began in May 2016 when REDEP visited the villages individually and described the program to the people. Clearly, a program such as this could not be done if the people were not willing to participate, but both communities agreed to do so. An inspection tour of each village was then made to point out problems and discuss specific areas that needed improvements. Next, each village identified a team of 10 volunteers (five each men and women) to become the leaders of the effort to move toward the goal of making the village “open defecation free.” REDEP then organized a one-day workshop for the volunteer leaders to teach them how to be effective in that role. The program is now continuing under their leadership with the support of the village leaders. REDEP makes periodic visits to assess progress. They will continue to do that over the next several months as the villages decide how to implement the program. We will determine whether we can expand the program to other villages based on the progress we observe.

Conducting a CLTS program clearly requires a degree of sensitivity by the implementers to avoid exposing the participants to ridicule or embarrassment about their sanitation practices. However, REDEP staff was previously trained in how to conduct a CLTS program and REDEP and the Foundation have gained the trust of the people in the villages through long association with them. That relationship makes it possible for us to work with them on this project.

Plans for the coming year

We will continue the quarterly visits to the villages and monitor the progress of the CLTS pilot programs through the year. We also plan to conduct a second workshop to train women as pump technicians. The first workshop was held in October 2013 when there were only 14 villages in the program. The pump caretakers from the 4 new villages have received some training when they were visited during the quarterly tours, but they would benefit from the complete workshop. In addition, some of the pump technicians in the remaining villages have left or been unable to continue in that role for various reasons. The workshop will also train the replacements for women who are no longer active.

The workshop will be a significant item in the budget for next year so we do not anticipate being able to expand our program to more villages during that time.

CONCLUSION

The Foundation’s work depends on the contributions of our donors. Funds received are spent only on projects in Ghana; the Directors pay all travel and administrative costs.

Donations can be sent to the Nyarkoa Foundation:

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