



# Nyarkoa Foundation

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Welcome to the seventh newsletter of the Nyarkoa Foundation, a non-profit corporation whose mission is to help in the development of rural Ghana through projects that improve the lives of the rural poor. The Foundation works by funding projects through the Rural Education and Development Programme (REDEP) a non-profit, non-government organization in Ghana that shares its objectives.

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 dominant 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, cooperation and a sense of responsibility between people. We have adopted this symbol as the logo of the Nyarkoa Foundation because those ideas represent our views and objectives.

## **LATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **High School Water Project**

In the past, we have improved the water systems in two health clinics and a high school that serves over 1500 students. Last year we received a request from another high school with a similar problem; that is, a student body of over 1500 students, plus resident faculty, and no reliable water sources. As in the other high school and the health clinics, we

installed a submersible electric pump in a borehole on the campus that pumps water to a tank on a tower that was constructed as part of the project. From there, the water flows by gravity to points where it is used. These types of installation are reliable and the users have funds to maintain them so they are sustainable.

### **Pump Caretakers Training Program**

It has often been suggested in the literature on rural water supply in Africa that women will need to become involved in the management of village water supply if hand pumps are to be kept operational. The argument for this is that women are responsible for family water supplies. They do the work to collect water and bring it home, a job that can involve hours each day. So they have the incentive to keep a local pump working even if the men of the community are not interested

Last year we initiated a joint project with REDEP and AMEFS Eng. LTD (the company that does our pump repair work) to train women from 14 villages to maintain the pumps that we have repaired in other projects. The objectives of the training program are to keep the pumps operating and to help the women take responsibility for managing the financial and operational aspects of their village water supply. Their status is enhanced because they have practical

knowledge of the pump and a tool kit with which to maintain it.



**Pump Repair Tool Kit**

The program started with a 3-day workshop (described in the last newsletter) during which the women were taught the basics of pump maintenance, and then assembled and disassembled pumps. They learned the costs of the pumps and spare parts, and the need for the community to save so they can pay for repairs. In addition, they received instruction on the health benefits of using clean water from a deep well instead of water from surface sources.

We support the women we trained by visiting the villages about every 3 months to check on the pumps, help with minor repairs, and give refresher training. We also talk to the community leaders and others about the program in general, but also to learn if the information that the trainees brought back with them has had any effect on the attitude of other people in the villages regarding water issues.

We have made three visits to all the communities since the training session, each of which requires about 3 days to complete. The results have been mainly

positive, although there are still problems to be addressed. We found that



**Refresher Training**

the pump areas were generally being kept clean; pumps were locked to keep children from playing with them, and to control access so that new rules about collecting funds for water use could be enforced.



**Locked Pump**

Apparently, learning the costs involved in pump repair has had a significant effect in most of the villages. Money is now being collected, but not all of the

bankbooks we have inspected showed that funds had been deposited in a bank account.



**Bankbook**

There are a few communities that are doing little because their leadership is simply not interested, but others have surprised us with their increased awareness of issues of water and health. In addition, we have noted that women are becoming more active and taking the initiative to make improvements on their own. Given the obstacles of tradition, poverty and lack of experience that are the norm among women in these communities, we think that we are seeing people on the path to changing behavior in ways that will lead them to sustainable supplies of clean water.



**Pump Caretakers With Training Manual**

We will continue to regularly visit the villages. Technicians from AMEFS Eng. accompany REDEP staff on alternate visits, which helps to convince the people that we are serious about helping them to help themselves. That is important both for this program and for a new program we plan to start this year, which aims to help communities learn how to solve the problems of poor community sanitation.

## **NEW PROJECTS**

### **Improving Community Sanitation**

Increases in the populations of cities in the developing world have continuously outpaced the funds available to expand sewage treatment facilities. As a result, most of the money for improving sanitation is directed to the cities, and rural areas are left to fend for themselves. Further, after sanitation facilities are built in rural communities, the same type of neglect that affects pumps often occurs. The communities are not able to organize to clean and maintain the facilities and they quickly fall into disuse. For that reason, the government of Ghana no longer builds community latrines, so open defecation is left as the most common alternative. A recent article in the *New York Times* noted that in India, efforts to improve child nutrition are essentially negated by the spread of dysentery and other illnesses that spread by the practice of open defecation. A similar situation must exist in other areas where open defecation is prevalent.

The people in the communities where we work are aware of the need for sanitation facilities. We have been asked for help, but realized that we couldn't expect

facilities we built to be cared for better than those the government built. However, now there appears to be a way that we can help. It involves a program called Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).

CLTS was introduced in Bangladesh in 2000, and spread quickly from there. It aims to eliminate open defecation in rural communities by persuading the people to solve the problem themselves. The program offers instruction and encouragement, but no material help. That is in keeping with the idea that the villages must be able to carry the improvements they make forward on their own. They can choose to invest in community facilities, opt for family latrines, or some other arrangement.

CLTS has had success in Ghana where there are groups that promote and teach this approach. REDEP has already organized a workshop on CLTS for its staff so they are familiar with the program.

The main barrier to success to CLTS programs is that they require frequent visits to the communities to become familiar with the leadership and win the confidence of the people. However, that is exactly what REDEP has done through the visits related to the pump caretakers program. The two programs share the goal of initiating changes in behavior that lead to sustainable improvements in the health and environment of the people in the rural communities that we serve.

This year, we plan to introduce CLTS as a pilot program in two or three communities in the pump caretakers project. REDEP will need to spend more time at those villages and a CLTS resource person to their time when they make their regular visits. However, we think there is real potential for the combined programs to make significant improvements in the lives of the people, and we are anxious to try.

### **Other New Efforts This Year**

Two villages with broken pumps have asked to join our program and we will add them this year. We'll do our usual educational programs for them, open bank accounts for their savings, and we'll train two women in pump maintenance as we did in the other villages. The villages will also be visited quarterly and receive the same additional training as those already in the pump caretaker program.

Our colleague Josie Sam recently conducted a survey of the water and sanitation needs of elementary schools in the District at the request of the local Environmental Health Department. As expected, many need assistance, and we believe that we can help by equipping them to collect rainwater. Some schools already do that, but many cannot. All that is required are corrugated roofs with gutters on the edges to collect the water, and a tank for storage. Beginning next year we plan to look for small water projects like that to do as our funding permits.

The Nyarkoa Foundation is a 501c((3) not-for-profit corporation. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed under the Internal Revenue Income Tax Code.

Contributions can be sent to the Nyarkoa Foundation at PO Box 80993, Fairbanks AK, 99708, or 333 East 43<sup>rd</sup> Street #505, New York, NY, 10017. Please visit our web site at <Nyarkoa.org>, where our earlier newsletters can be downloaded.