

GATEWAY



Isaac showing new volunteers around our Projects Abroad Demonstration Farm!

AKWAABA!

I hope you will all enjoy the September edition of Gateway, the official newsletter of Projects Abroad Ghana.

This month, children went back to school and our volunteers began a regular teaching schedule! Hills and Koforidua volunteers assisted to the opening ceremony of a school which is entirely taken care of by Projects Abroad.

Our other projects in Ghana – building, farming, care, sports, journalism, and Human Rights are all going well thanks to our volunteers' hard work. Keep it up!!

Rainbow Planche – Social Manager,
Projects Abroad Ghana



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INSIDE OUT: GHANA IN JUNE

Who was Kwame Nkrumah?

And why did we have a holiday to celebrate his birthday this month (September 21st)? We should pay a little tribute to this powerful leader who influenced Ghana and arguably Africa forever!

In 1909, Kwame Nkrumah was born to Madam Nyaniba in Nkroful, Gold Coast. Nkrumah graduated from the Achimota School in Accra in 1930, studied at a Roman Catholic seminary, and taught at a Catholic school in Axim. In 1935 he left Ghana for the United States, receiving a BA from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania in 1939, where he received a Bachelor of Sacred Theology in 1942. Nkrumah earned a Master of Science in Education from the University of Pennsylvania in 1942, and a Master of Arts in Philosophy the following year. While lecturing in Political Science at Lincoln he was elected president of the African Students Organization of America and Canada. As an undergraduate at Lincoln he participated in at least one student theatre production and published an essay on European government in Africa in the student newspaper, *The Lincolnian*.

During his time in the United States, Nkrumah preached at black Presbyterian Churches in Philadelphia and New York City. He read books about politics and divinity, and tutored students in philosophy.

He arrived in London in May 1945 intending to study at the LSE. After meeting with George Padmore, he helped organize the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England. Then he founded the West African National Secretariat to work for the decolonization of Africa. Nkrumah served as Vice-President of the West African Students' Union (WASU).

In Autumn of 1947, Nkrumah was invited to serve as the General Secretary to the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) under Joseph B. Danquah. This political convention was exploring paths to independence. Nkrumah accepted the position and sailed for the Gold Coast.

In February 1948, police fired on African ex-servicemen protesting the rising cost of living. The shooting spurred riots in Accra, Kumasi, and elsewhere. The government suspected the UGCC was behind the protests and arrested Nkrumah and other party leaders. Realizing their error, the British soon released the convention leaders. After his imprisonment by the colonial government, Nkrumah emerged as the leader of the youth movement in 1948.



After his release, Nkrumah hitchhiked around the country. He proclaimed that the Gold Coast needed "self-government now", and built a large power base. Cocoa farmers rallied to his cause because they disagreed with British policy to contain swollen shoot disease. He invited women to participate in the political process at a time when women's suffrage was new to Africa. The trade unions also allied with his movement. By 1949, he organized these groups into a new political party: The Convention People's Party.

The British convened a selected commission of middle class Africans to draft a new constitution that would give Ghana more self-government. Under the new constitution, only those with sufficient wage and property would be allowed to vote. Nkrumah organized a "People's Assembly" with CPP party members, youth, trade unionists, farmers, and veterans. They called for universal franchise without property qualifications, a separate house of chiefs, and self-governing status under the Statute of Westminster 1931. These amendments, known as the Constitutional Proposals of October 1949, were rejected by the colonial administration.

When the colonial administration rejected the People's Assembly's recommendations, Nkrumah organized a "Positive Action" campaign in January 1950, including civil disobedience, non-cooperation, boycotts, and strikes. The colonial administration arrested Nkrumah and many CPP supporters, and he was sentenced to three years in prison at Fort James.

Facing international protests and internal resistance, the British decided to leave the Gold Coast. Britain organized the first general election to be held under universal franchise on 5–10 February 1951. Though in jail, Nkrumah's CPP was elected by a landslide taking 34 out of 38 elected seats in the Legislative Assembly. Nkrumah was released from prison on 12 February, and summoned by the British Governor Charles Arden-Clarke, and asked to form a government on the 13th. The new Legislative Assembly met on 20 February, with Nkrumah as Leader of Government Business, and E.C. Quist as President of the Assembly. A year later, the constitution was amended to provide for a Prime Minister on 10 March 1952, and Nkrumah was elected to that post by a secret ballot in the Assembly, 45 to 31, on 21 March. He presented his "Motion of Destiny" to the Assembly, requesting independence within the British Commonwealth "as soon as the necessary constitutional arrangements are made" on 10 July 1953, and that body approved it.

As a leader of this government, Nkrumah faced many challenges: first, to learn to govern; second, to unify the four territories of the Gold Coast; third, to win his nation's complete independence from the United Kingdom. Nkrumah was successful at all three goals. Within six years of his release from prison, he was the leader of an independent nation.

At 12 a.m. on 6 March 1957, Nkrumah declared Ghana independent. He was hailed as the "Osagyefo" - which means "redeemer" in the Twi language. On 6 March 1960, Nkrumah announced plans for a new constitution which would make Ghana a republic. The draft included a provision to surrender Ghanaian sovereignty to a Union of African States. On 19, 23, and 27 April 1960 a presidential election and plebiscite on the constitution were held. The constitution was ratified and Nkrumah was elected president over J. B. Danquah, the UP candidate, 1,016,076 to 124,623.

In 1961, Nkrumah laid the first stones in the foundation of the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute created to train Ghanaian civil servants as well as promote Pan-Africanism. In 1964, all students entering college in Ghana were required to attend a two-week "ideological orientation" at the Institute. Nkrumah remarked that "trainees should be made to realize the party's ideology is religion, and should be practiced faithfully and fervently."

In 1963, Nkrumah was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize by the Soviet Union. Ghana became a charter member of the Organization of African Unity in 1963. The Gold Coast had been among the wealthiest and most socially advanced areas in Africa, with schools, railways, hospitals, social security and an advanced economy. Under Nkrumah's leadership, Ghana adopted some socialist policies and practices. Nkrumah created a welfare system, started various community programs, and established schools.

FEATURE OF THE MONTH

The Yam Festival!

*By Kwasi Acheampong
Ho & Hohoe Regional Coordinator*



The Origin of Yam Cultivation:

Yam is called “ete” in Ewe. The word literally means ‘it is swollen’. Oral history has it that a hunter on his normal hunting expedition discovered the crop in the forest. It was during the famine period but instead of taking his newly discovered tuber home, he decided to hide it in the soil for use some other time. When he later went back for it, to his dismay, the tuber had germinated and grown bigger. This was how the cultivation of yam started.

Why celebrate the Yam Festival:

The celebration of the Yam Festival by Ewes was brought down from Notse in the Republic of Togo where it is still celebrated. Yam cultivation is a very tedious job, and history has it that in those days some people who ventured into it did not live to enjoy the fruits of their labour. It was, and still is, labour intensive, energy sapping and quite hazardous, hence the proverb “Ne wonye eteti tsogbe wo dua ete la, ne egbor ma kpor etsroa ha du o”. Literally, this means if it were during the day of planting of yam that yam is eaten, the goat would never taste the peel. Diligence was therefore required and the permission and guidance of the gods of the land and the ancestors was sought during the entire period from planting through harvesting.

During the harvest time which is normally in September, the gods and ancestors are served first with the boiled and mashed yam, normally white and red-oiled, called “bakabake”, before any living being tastes it. This rite is called Dzawuwu”. After that, the rest of the mashed yam is eaten as a communal meal, a symbol of unity and reconciliation of families, clans and the entire community.

Today, we celebrate the Yam Festival:

As a thanksgiving to God and also to the gods and ancestors for a bumper harvest, and as an occasion to offer prayers for good health and prosperity for all.

To foster unity through forgiveness and reconciliation.

As an annual stocktaking event for all occupational endeavours, especially farming.

To mobilize both human and material resources of Asogli State for job and wealth creation.

To serve as an annual re-affirmation of allegiance by all chiefs and their subjects in the Asogli State to the Agbogbome stool.

REGIONAL UPDATES



Accra

There were over 35 volunteers in Accra this month.

Our Medical volunteers, about 8 of them, will not miss out at Medical Outreaches where they get to put use the skills they had

acquired at the Medical placements. They enjoy the company of the children which they often describe as lovelier than their counterpart in the West!

Quiz night is the singular most consistent social event for our volunteers so there are always all the volunteers present- they plan trips especially weekend trips and other arrangements such dinners during quiz nights.

There is currently a volunteer doing the Basketball placement, 5 are doing the Soccer placement, 3 doing the HIV/AIDS placement with 2 more arriving at the end of the month, 5 doing the General Medical placement, 5 doing the Care placement and 13 doing Human Rights.

The Basketball placement helps to train and inspire young people especially children to play basketball, and so far is going great. The Soccer placement has greatly improved with both pro-volunteers and regular volunteers assisting to develop curricula for the placement. The pro-soccer volunteers also helped to train some local coaches for the club.

The Care volunteers have adopted a day in the week where they visit a nearby village to their placement to teach children who are not fortunate to go to school for various reasons- they teach basic literacy and numeracy. The medical outreach train visits this village fortnightly to give medical attention to the children there.

This month, our Human Rights office (PAHO) hosted a suicide seminar, and volunteers produced their first Resource Development Booklet. They have started and put into place a program for re-educating trafficked children in two communities, which is going smoothly! Volunteers also worked and attended courts for various cases and even managed to free a man who had been kept in arbitrary detention for 6months!

Accra hosted the Founder's Day celebration, a public holiday, with the participation of the former heads of states of Germany and South Africa, Horst Kohler and Thabo Mbeki respectively. This year's was the 102nd Birthday of the first Prime Minister and President of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah. The day honors Dr Kwame Nkrumah whose vision led to the independence of Ghana in 1957 and the liberation of many African countries from colonial rule."

REGIONAL UPDATES

Donation



We also have one of our past volunteers around, Rosie Hunt. She was here about 5 years ago and she has been a great sponsor of Abura Literacy School. She is the one who has been fundraising for the school and also to pay the salaries of three teachers. Plans are ongoing to get the school some swings, a see-saw, merry-go-round and also to feed the kids.

Cape Coast

For the month of September, we had a total of about 25 volunteers in the fields of Teaching, Care, Sports (football), Rugby, IT, Journalism, and Medical amongst others. Everyone seems to be doing well and there are no problems!

Read more about the donations from a past volunteer to our teaching placement Abura Literacy School !

Our medical volunteers have been enjoying their regular outreaches, which include re-bandaging wounds in a “Leprosy Village” – a place where people cured of leprosy live together.

We enjoyed the Fetu Afahye Festival which you can read more about on mytripblog.org !

REGIONAL UPDATES



Medical Outreach with our med volunteers in villages all around the Hills.

The Hills

Throughout the month we had about 30 volunteers coming and going, and 23 were there to enjoy the drum and dance session that we planned for them one quiz night around mid-September!

Teaching and Care has been doing well – we had about 5-6 volunteers this month, who did well finishing up summer school and joining the children as they went back to school at the beginning of this month.

Our Building project is doing well and busy! We have about 14 people working on the Second 2-classroom block for Wonderful Love Daycare.

We have had 4 volunteers working at the farm this month, where we are now trying to build chicken coops as well as other structures for some of the animals we are taking care of.

We have some festivals beginning next month - Odwira as well as Ohum. Keep up with mytripblog.org to read about when and where to go! We regularly update with festivals and other events all over Ghana.



Our Hills and Koforidua volunteers got together to celebrate the opening of Wonderful Love Daycare with the children!

Keep up with The Hills on our Facebook page -
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2355118946>

REGIONAL UPDATES



Enjoying the partying!

The Care and Teaching volunteers also went about doing what they do best this month; taking care of children and orphans, leading games and teaching. They also did some paintings.

The volunteers got to participate in the opening of the week-long blast of the Yam Festival celebration!!

Everything seems fine and volunteers are happy with how things are going!

Ho & Hohoe

This month saw most of the volunteers travelling back home after 1 to 3 month memorial experience of their life!

Medical volunteers did their regular Wednesday and Thursday school and community outreach. They treated normal and bad wounds and did some basic but important health education.



REGIONAL UPDATES

Donations



This month, our care volunteer Remko Duinmeijer bought some materials for his placement, Anointed Royals Daycare! He bought coloring books, exercise books and pens, and was thereto do the activities with the happy children!!



Rebecca, Emma and Kirsty have gone around to many villages and two orphanages during their stay to give out a bunch of different things!! Amongst many others: Netballs, tennis balls, bubble-making guns, coloring pencils & paper, schoolbooks, puzzle and storybooks, stickers, blackboards & chalk, clothes, plasters, mosquito repellent and first-aid kits, and sweets. These girls probably created the most consecutive smiles the Eastern Region has ever seen!

Koforidua

This month, we had about 8 volunteers working in 5 Medical, 2 Care & 1 Teaching placement.

We joined the Hills volunteers in the opening of the Wonderful Love Daycare, which was a long but good ceremony!



Read more about the many donations made by our volunteers Becci, Emma and Kirsty all around Ghana in the Donations part!

We learned to cook Jollof rice with everyone for one of our Wednesday afternoon quizzes and enjoyed the results afterwards!

All our volunteers are happy and are having a great time travelling and discovering Ghana!

Keep up with Koforidua on our Facebook page -
http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_189429624434431

REGIONAL UPDATES



*Drew in a delicate operation at medical outreach ...
distracting the kids from touching the equipment!*

Kumasi

This month has been normal but was still packed with a lot of activities. We started the month with 16 volunteers. It has been a wonderful with very hard working volunteers.

Our main Care placement at

Kumasi Children's Home where there are volunteers get better day by day as volunteers are there to make sure that at least the less fortunate ones

over there also get some attention and care. The volunteers at the home together with the teaching staff of the school at the home went on the sensitization program to bring more kids from regular family to attend the school at the Kumasi Children's Home.

In the hospitals, the Medical volunteers are doing tremendously well and Medical outreaches were held at Asuofia community, near Kumasi. The whole community welcomed them and the program was very successful. They treated illness and diseases, mostly malaria and other minor cuts. One of the outreaches was on sensitization on cleanness in our environment

Veterinary volunteers also went for outreaches and treated animals like pig's sheep, dogs and poultry. They visit the farms and render their services to these framers.

Quiz nights have been very nice and very participatory. Volunteers learn how to speak the local language thus Twi and they also wish that they could be taught every time there is quiz night. There was

another night where staff and volunteers went to the Icon Pub and it was all fun.



Stuart performing general medical checkups at Asuofia

HOST FAMILY

Mary Martha Wells

Mary spent some time living in London, Saudi Arabia, Peru, Lebanon, America and Cairo. All her children were born abroad, so she is used to meeting people from other countries

and is interested in international affairs. She runs her own gift shop near the

Projects Abroad Office.

Mary Martha's house is in the suburb of Dzorwulu (pronounced Joe-Loo) in the north of the city. Tro-tros to the main transport interchanges of Circle, 37 station and Accra (Tema Station) run past the house, taking you about 30 minutes (depending on traffic) to reach the centre of Accra.

All volunteers in Ghana live with a local family and hence gain a rich and varied experience of Ghanaian life. Respecting the family's rules and customs and explaining your own culture are key to a happy home.

The house is a 10 minute drive from the Projects Abroad office, so it is in a perfect location to attend the weekly quiz that is held there! The house is also about a 20 minute drive by taxi to Oxford Street in Osu. Accra, Ghana's capital city, is situated on the coast and is both large and busy. There are numerous places to visit such as museums, markets and nearby beaches. The nightlife, especially at weekends, is very lively, with numerous restaurants playing live music and staying open late into the night.

Mary hosts a maximum of five volunteers in her spacious and well-furnished home. The bedrooms each contain a bed, a fan and a wardrobe and volunteers will also have their own private bathroom and toilet. The house also has a pretty garden and a terrace area where dinner is served each evening! She has now installed a fast wi-fi for the volunteers to use.

Meals are a mixture of local and western foods, with plenty of variety. Mary lived for some time in England (London) and in other countries and therefore is familiar with Western food. She appreciates that some people have particular tastes and can easily cater for different needs and diets. If there is anything else that you want, all you have to do is ask!

Mary Martha is a lovely woman. She will make all volunteers feel completely at home and enjoys the cultural exchange that the experience brings. She is keen to become involved with the volunteers and regularly inviting them to go to church with her each Sunday.

She is used to volunteers going out in the evenings, but likes to know when you will be back. Volunteers should try not to get back too late during the week.



People You will Meet ...

Mary Martha Wells
Akua (1984), her housemaid
Abiba (1979), her sister
Samuel (2000), her nephew

You will get the contact information about your host family once your project is confirmed!

PROJECT UPDATE

The “Projects Abroad Village”

The area around Mampong-Nkwata previously known as Akokoa is now being referred to as the “Projects Abroad Village” by locals because of our involvement there in many different projects! This month, we have teaching and care at the Wonderful Love Daycare, farming nearby, and have begun building there again to support the growing numbers at the school.



Working on the second 2-classroom block, and our farming site is behind those trees!

This month we were able to celebrate the official opening of Wonderful Love Daycare just in time for the back-to-school period! We gathered the children from the surrounding communities already attending the school as well as the children who were in our summer school program to join in the happy float, followed by a ceremony.

This school, which began around March of this year with 20 children, was meant for the small Ewe-speaking community of Akokoa (in the Eastern Region, where most speak Twi). Projects Abroad was first involved when we decided to give this community a school of their own – before, the children who could go to school would have to walk miles to another village, and many could not even afford schooling.

Our Building project began with a 2-classroom block and an office, which left the people of Akokoa ecstatic and very welcoming. As this finished, we found two teachers to hire who began quickly! From that point on the number of students has not stopped growing, and the children who were before seen during school hours strutting around curiously with nothing to do are getting an education through this establishment. We are now helping 66 children now that we have started the nursery!



The happy float to the surrounding villages - led by the dancing women of Akokoa!

We always had Teaching and Care here, and although sometimes challenging due to the children's lack of English skills, they remain adorable and willing to learn!

For National Volunteer Week back in April, we built a water reservoir which allowed the school as well as the village access to water for various necessities. Then during the summer, we used our big number of volunteers to help build small toilets for the school. A donation also allowed us to start



Before, children used to be standing around everywhere ... Now more and more are in uniforms and going to school!!

getting uniforms for the children, something that was very special to them!



Modelling the uniforms!

We moved our farming to that area to start over with bigger land and that is so far going very successfully, and our volunteers have enjoyed working and doing outreach in Teaching children how to grow crops and donating vegetables and animals!

Finally, we have now moved our Building project back to Akoko to add a 2-classroom block for the ever-growing number of children at Wonderful Love Daycare! Of course, we will update you when these are finished!

OUTREACH OF THE MONTH



5 of our volunteers painted at the Rose of Sharon Nursery at Akropong, in the Hills. The school previously met regularly in the corridor of a building, and we were able to give them a fresh start in a garage room – we cleaned up the space, removed what was inside and painted it with drawings and the alphabet!

Dirty Day in the Hills!

Near the beginning of the month, some of our Akuapem Hills volunteers were able to do a painting outreach in a school at Akropong!



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WHAT'S GOING ON



Cooking Lessons in Kof-Town!

This month, we decided to give some volunteers something to take home with them – how to make Jollof rice! This spicy, tomato-flavored rice is sure to land on your plate at some point during your stay and it's generally liked and remembered by all volunteers!

We all got together for quiz at the office this time rather than the usual “207 junction” spot and had Micky teach us how to make Jollof Rice.

Here's the recipe we used! We added sausages for some meat, although usually Jollof is served with grilled chicken.

Ingredients:

- Tomatoes
- Onions
- Carrots
- Green peppers
- Garlic
- Chili Peppers
- Nutmeg & curry flavoring
- Chicken broth or Maggi cubes
- Oil
- Rice



Micky, our Assistant Regional Coordinator, likes blending!

Cooking:

- Cut up all the vegetables into small pieces
- Fry half of the onions in oil in a large pot
- Blend the tomatoes, and after the garlic and rest of the onions
- Add the rest of the vegetables to the pot, as well as the garlic & onion mix; stir occasionally for about 10 minutes
- Add the rice and leave to cook for 45 minutes, stirring from time to time.
- The rice is ready to eat when the rice is cooked and has a nice, orangey-red color. Enjoy!



VOLUNTEER CORNER

My Place in the Sun

Frances Black
Journalism/Care Volunteer, 5 months
UK

You know you're happy when you don't mind being woken up at 5am every morning by the daily, minute-long gong for church, succeeded by the noisy arousal of an entire farm of animals including roosters, chickens and goats, who just love hanging around right outside your door. You know you're happy when you discover that you honestly wouldn't trade the frustrating, never-ending, seemingly ineffective process that is hand-washing your clothes, for the comforting hum of a washing machine. And you know you're happy when you'll wear the same 15 items of clothing for almost half a year and not give a damn.



I spent five months in Ghana, from two sunny months gloriously baking in Cape Coast, to three cooling it off in the Akuapem Hills, and they by far comprise the five happiest months of my life. A blissful whirlwind of new friends, loud tro-tro rides and orange dust, the months cruised by peacefully and happily, content with the new life I had found in Ghana. My experience was not only defined by my volunteer work, but also by the incredible cultural exchange and social experience that was my lifestyle in Ghana.

For the first two months of my trip I worked as a Journalist for Central Press Newspaper, a small, year-old paper based in Cape Coast. As I aspire to be a Journalist, the experience was absolutely invaluable, and I tried to savor every moment of it. In England it's



Reporting in action!

difficult to get truly worthwhile work experience at newspapers without first having contacts in the industry, so my time at Central Press was really well appreciated. I really jumped in the deep end, going to different stories every day, be it a conference by a charity stopping open defecation, or a local school play; everyday was different and interesting, and the working hours were never too strenuous. I will never forget this first opportunity to really practice my writing in a very relaxed and flexible environment. Kwamina, the editor, seemed to have a lot of trust in my, as-of-then, unproven writing skills, and really left me free to do my own thing, encouraging all the volunteers to come up with ideas for stories. I even got a chance to use the formatting software for the newspaper, arranging and creating the entire layout for one issue of the newspaper. Other highlights of Journalism included going to the village of Moree to write a story about access to toilets and clean water, which without a doubt opened my eyes, and visiting one of Ghana's well-known coffin maker's, where coffins are designed according to the deceased's profession. We saw a coffin for a cocoa farmer made in the shape of a cocoa plant, which was such a different sight to see. Overall I

would say that the Journalism experience was well worth it, as it gave me a real insight into what it is like to be constantly following and writing stories, and it was brilliant for practicing my writing style in a non-pressurized atmosphere. Hopefully the experience will help me stand out to future employers when trying to enter the Journalism industry, as it shows enthusiasm and hard-work, as well as the willingness to be a little adventurous. Almost everybody that I met while working as a Journalist was extremely kind and polite, and were generally interested in what had brought us volunteers to their home country.



Doing a journalism story for access to clean water in the village of Moree

For the three months that followed my stay at Central Press I lived in the Akuapem Hills, which offered a much different setting to Cape Coast. While Cape Coast was swelteringly hot and humid, the Hills were in the mountains, meaning that the days were cooler, and the evenings even more so. This was incredibly lucky as the house I stayed in had no electricity or running water, so a fan would not have been available no matter how hot it was. In the Hills I worked at Mount Zion Orphanage for two months, and then I helped with the Projects Abroad Building project for two weeks. Working at the orphanage was really lovely and the children were extremely sweet and lovable. It was reassuring to see that kids are the same everywhere – they fight, they laugh, and they are extremely creative and full of energy. I would try to bring in coloring for them to do every day, and arts and crafts, as the orphanage lacked the resources for these kinds of activities. I would also help them with their maths and writing, along with the teachers; however I felt that my main role within the orphanage was simply to play with the children and make sure that they were having fun. I introduced a few games to them, such as What's the time Mr. Wolf?, Tag/It, One Potato Two Potato, This Little Piggy Went to Market etc. which they loved!



The energetic children of Mount Zion!

It was really wonderful to reopen a bundle of forgotten memories from my childhood, of games, songs and activities, and to recreate the joy that they had given to me, for these children in such a different environment. Once again, it truly brought home the notion that children are the same everywhere; they just need love, attention and care. Although it would be impossible to say that I changed the world by any stretch of the imagination, I do feel like I made a small but

significant impact on the children's day-to-day lives by making sure they had fun and were entertained, and were made to feel valued. Being the only volunteer at Mount Zion for most of my stay there, it was a fantastic opportunity to really get to know the children individually, and meant that I had to be very hands-on from the beginning.

Following my work at Mount Zion, I then moved to the Projects Abroad Building project in the area, where I helped for just over two weeks, after which my family joined me in Ghana for a short holiday. The Building project was really great fun, as I could spend time with the other volunteers during the daytime, and learning some of the building techniques was a real eye-opener, as I have barely ever done D.I.Y. I discovered, among other things,

that I am pretty gifted at plastering! Although I was only working on the building site for two weeks, it was satisfying to see the progress as the days went by, and I can imagine for some of the volunteers who had been working in the school for several months, the project would have a profound meaning to them, and be a source of a great sense of achievement.

All in all, my stay in Ghana was without a doubt, hands-down, the best thing I have ever done. Comparing myself to who I was before is a strange but comforting feeling, knowing that I have benefitted from the experience in so many ways. Learning to live in a culture and society that is extremely different from your own is simply breath-taking, especially a culture that is entrenched in such friendliness and generosity, where after only a week there, I felt like I had lived there indefinitely for a whole lifetime. I am just so glad that I took the plunge and took this trip, as I will certainly never look back on it as time wasted.



'Rocking' the caves in the Volta region

If you want to make an alumni contribution to the newsletter – what your time was like, what it meant to you or what you are up to now, just send it on to rainbowplanche@projects-abroad.org !

A Birthday in Ghana

*Guendalina Anzolin
Human Rights Volunteer
1 month
Italy*

Last Tuesday I spent my 21st birthday in Ghana. The day before I was a bit sad, it would be my first Birthday far from my family and my friends. My Birthday started at midnight when my house-mates came into my room with a little cake and candles singing 'Happy Birthday' Guen! I spent all the following morning and some hours of the afternoon in the Royal Seed Home Orphanage. It was amazing having my Birthday with "my kids", I had bought some biscuits for them the day before and, as anytime you give to them something, they were so happy. Vincentia, the "bossiest" girl ever (just 9 years old) helped me to put all the kids in a big line to give them out. The last hours of my Birthday we spent in Kokrobite. Kokrobite is a very nice place not far from Kasoa along the beach with an amazing Italian restaurant and an incredible and peaceful atmosphere. We had a fabulous dinner in this restaurant ending with an orange and chocolate cake and then we went on the beach where a Ghanaian friend called Sammi and his friends had prepared a drumming and dancing show for us "OBRUNI" (the term used for 'foreigner'). For sure, it was one of the best Birthdays ever, dancing on the beach with my lovely house-mates and my Ghanaian friend's surrounded by an Ocean and bonfire background.

Thank you Ghana! Meda ase!





Insegnando in Ghana ... Ho imparato Tanto!

*Roberta Zenere
Teaching volunteer, 1 month
Italy*

Dopo tre anni di lunga attesa, finalmente, quest'anno sono riuscita a tornare in Ghana. La mia prima esperienza in questo meraviglioso paese africano è avvenuta nell'estate del 2008, partecipando, sempre con Projects Abroad, ad una Missione Umanitaria per due settimane.

Quest'estate ho deciso di allungare i tempi e rimanere in Ghana quattro settimane (avrei comunque voluto trattenermi molto di più!) e sperimentare un altro tipo di progetto: ho quindi optato per un progetto di Insegnamento.

La mia giornata iniziava con un viaggio in tro-tro (piccoli autobus privati) di circa 40 minuti. Vivevo a Koforidua, ma ogni giorno mi spostavo nelle Akuapem Hills per svolgere la mia attività di volontariato. Ricordo con molta simpatia i miei trasferimenti mattutini: adoravo guardare dal finestrino del tro-tro la

vita che si svolgeva nei villaggi e mi piaceva conversare con le persone ghanesi che mi chiedevano da dove venivo, cosa stavo facendo in Ghana, se mi piaceva il loro paese, quando sarei tornata...

Arrivavo a scuola con circa mezz'ora di anticipo rispetto all'inizio delle lezioni, ma molti dei bambini erano già presenti. Il loro primo compito della giornata era quello di pulire la scuola: spazzare polvere e sabbia dalle aule, allineare i banchi e le sedie, fare rifornimento di acqua da bere nel corso della mattinata e raccogliere le cartacce in giardino.

Prima di iniziare l'attività scolastica i bambini si radunavano nel cortile della scuola, raggrupparsi in fila indiana a seconda della classe di appartenenza, per la cosiddetta "Morning assembly". Tutti assieme cantavano l'inno nazionale ghanese e recitavano "The Pledge", una sorta di giuramento di fedeltà verso la loro madrepatria e, dopo aver salutato maestri ed amici, ognuno si dirigeva verso la propria classe. Ho lavorato in due scuole differenti e questi "riti" erano comuni ad entrambe.

Nelle prime due settimane ho insegnato presso la "Saforo D/A Primary School". I bambini, di età compresa tra i 6 e i 16 anni, erano raggruppati in 6 classi. Mi erano state assegnate varie materie: inglese, scienze, arte e narrativa, ed ogni mattina mi veniva comunicato in che classe e cosa insegnare. In prevalenza, ho insegnato inglese ed arte, spesso affiancata da un'altra volontaria (giapponese). Trattandosi di una scuola estiva non c'era molta rigidità sul programma da seguire: potevamo attenerci agli argomenti suggeriti dal libro di testo o svolgere qualche altra attività che comportava una maggiore interazione e partecipazione attiva dei bambini, ad esempio facendo loro domande, chiamandoli alla lavagna o facendoli scrivere, disegnare e colorare...

Nelle ultime due settimane, invece, ho lavorato presso la scuola materna "Wonderful Love Daycare". Si trattava di una scuola interamente costruita dai volontari di Projects Abroad per sopperire alla mancanza di una scuola in una zona delle Akuapem Hills. Ho insegnato inglese e matematica. I bambini erano più piccoli, (dai 3 ai 9 anni), quindi gli argomenti molto più semplici: imparare l'alfabeto, contare, raggruppare oggetti...

La principale difficoltà che ho incontrato in queste due settimane è stata nell'interazione con i bambini: comunicare con loro era complicato perché non conoscevano l'inglese... a volte facevo loro qualche domanda e anziché una risposta, mi sentivo ripetere la domanda! Dopo qualche giorno, però, le cose hanno iniziato a migliorare e la mia più grande



soddisfazione è stata quando, non so come, sono riuscita a far ridere "i miei alunni" durante la lezione. Inoltre, per conquistare la simpatia dei bambini ho provato ad insegnare loro alcuni balletti e qualche canzoncina (in italiano) e ho cercato di puntare molto sulla gestualità per farmi capire meglio nelle spiegazioni. In ogni caso, potevo sempre contare sulla presenza di un maestro ghanese che interveniva, con traduzioni dall'inglese al twi, quando i bambini sembravano non capire.

Ciò che mi ha maggiormente colpito in questa seconda scuola è stato incontrare bambini di 8-9 anni che, non essendo mai stati a scuola prima d'ora, non sapevano né leggere, né scrivere. Allo stesso tempo, però, mi sono resa conto di quanto quei bambini fossero "degli adulti in miniatura", se guardati sotto altri punti di vista. Per esempio, molti di loro si arrangiano negli spostamenti casa-scuola (e viceversa) e sanno gestirsi le monetine che i genitori lasciano loro la mattina per comprarsi il cibo durante l'intervallo dalle signore che vendono riso, caramelle e biscotti vicino alla scuola.

Oltre alla partecipazione al progetto di Insegnamento, ho svolto qualche attività nell'ambito di una Missione Umanitaria. Due o tre pomeriggi la settimana, andavo in un orfanotrofo a Tinkong Apawu...e trascorrevi qualche ora con i dieci bambini che vivevano lì, giocando a calcio o a rincorrendoli, disegnando o cantando. A volte andavo assieme a loro a prendere l'acqua (che usavano per lavarsi e cucinare) nel villaggio vicino all'orfanotrofo...quindi ho provato anche la sensazione di trasportare un secchio pieno d'acqua sulla mia testa!

Inoltre, nelle settimane trascorse in Ghana ho anche avuto la possibilità di stringere amicizia con qualche persona del posto. Ho conosciuto una ragazza, Priniscilla, che una domenica mi ha chiesto di andare in chiesa con lei e poi mi ha invitata a casa sua a mangiare fufu (un piatto tipico ghanese). A volte, nel pomeriggio, andavamo in città assieme: è stato bellissimo passeggiare con lei perché mi ha portato in posti che, da sola, non sarei mai riuscita a scoprire!

Infine, ho anche avuto del tempo per qualche viaggio nei week-end: Boti Falls, Beeds Market, Wood Market, Kumasi, Volta Region...il Ghana merita veramente di essere esplorato!

In conclusione di questo breve resoconto, posso semplicemente dire che ormai sono tornata in Italia da una settimana e sento che il Ghana mi manca già tantissimo: quattro settimane sono passate veramente in fretta. Mi manca il Fan-Ice, mi manca la gente che mi chiama "Obroni" quando cammino per strada, mi mancano i viaggi in tro-tro e, soprattutto, mi mancano i bambini che mi chiamano "Madame Roberta" e mi chiedono di prenderli in braccio o cantare qualche canzone.

Ora la domanda che circola nella mia mente è "Quando potrò ritornare??".

If you want to make an alumni contribution to the newsletter – what your time was like, what it meant to you or what you are up to now, just send it on to rainbowplanche@projects-abroad.org !

ABOUT YOUR STAFF

Farming and Building in the Hills



Isaac getting ready to harvest corn

Here are the supervisors for the farming and building projects! They make sure everything goes smoothly for your projects and experience

Isaac Ohene Asare – Farming Coordinator

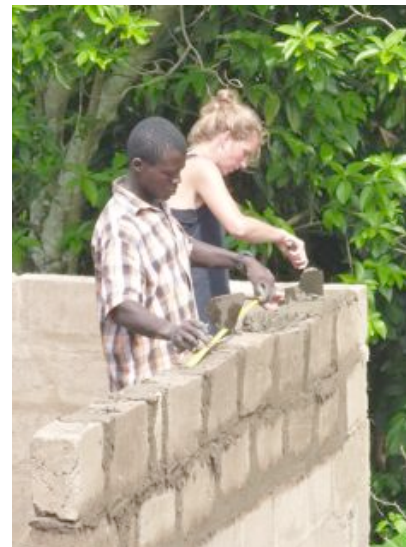
Isaac has worked with Projects Abroad since 2006. He supervises the farming volunteers, decides which crops to plant, takes care of the crops and animals, organizes outreaches, and visits for children to learn about the values of farming. On those occasions, the team donates to some of the needy schools.

In his free time, Isaac also works as a taxi driver, spends time with his family and watches football matches. His favorite Ghanaian dish is rice and kontomre stew!

Famous Kwasi Agbo – Building Coordinator

Kwasi has also worked with Projects Abroad since 2006. He supervises the building projects and volunteers, gets the supplies, teaches them skills and helps decide which building projects our team of building volunteers take on.

In his free time, he goes to visit his family at his hometown in the Volta region, Agbozumbé. His favorite Ghanaian meal is fufu with palm nut soup!



Kwame working with another volunteer on building a classroom block!

If you want to 'meet' the rest of our Ghana staff, just go to <http://www.projects-abroad.org/about-us/overseas-staff/#ghana> !!

MISCELLANEOUS

Once in a while I like to publish the work of our journalism volunteers in Cape Coast! Make sure you read this great article describing the Tamale Fetish Market!

Black Magic, Witchcraft and Mystery at Tamale Fetish Market

By Saul Sebag-Montefiore

On the surface Tamale Market is like any other dotted around Ghana, buzzing with life, commerce, vivid sights, colors and smells. However, there is a small section of the market buried deep in the vast maze of incredible cloth and food stalls that opens a window to a dark, ancient world shrouded in mystery.

The fetish section of the large central market is tucked away in a small muddy corner of the market, comprising of just a few small stalls selling a large variety of weird animal artifacts. Scraps of tiger, leopard, snake and crocodile skin, horses tails, dried chameleons, lizards, turtles, vultures and shriveled monkey heads, imported from Burkino Faso, sit eerily in the stalls like a series of dark secrets that no-one wishes to whisper. The reason this section of market is such an incredible and unique place to visit is because it is a living relic of ancient superstition, black magic and voodoo witchcraft that used to be so prevalent in Ghanaian society and religion. Stalls like these are becoming a rarity in Ghana as the majority of people begin to finally accept that paracetamol tablets are more effective for curing a headache than running through a series of fires, entirely naked while swallowing dog eyes and waving a decapitated chicken above your head. However, there are still local people who



cautiously sidle up to these dark, mystical stalls and purchase a piece of exotic animal to be used for traditional medical purposes.

Mohammed Kwesie, a shopkeeper from one of the fetish stalls explained, 'local people come here and buy ingredients that they use in their own recipes to make herbal remedies to cure a variety of illnesses; headaches, malaria, stomach bugs, body pains, skin disease and many other things. For example: to cure a headache some people use Ayigali, which is a black powdery substance. You use water and rub the block of Ayigali against a rock to create a watery paste that you rub onto your head and your headache will disappear within minutes.

Ayigali is also used by many to clean the eyes and they spread the watery black paste onto their eyeball leaving vision clean and clear.' Mohammed Kwesie looked at me strangely when I asked him whether it actually worked before stating, 'Yes it works!'

A customer at one of the stalls came up and quietly bought a chameleon and a monkey head. He refused to give his name but explained, 'monkey and chameleon is a Muslim medicine that cures anything. I personally prepare my remedy by crushing it into powder, burning it before either rubbing it into the skin or consuming it with food or tea. I use it to cure hand pain and



Black Magic, Witchcraft and Mystery at Tamale Fetish Market [Continued]

stomach upsets and it only takes minutes to relieve the pain. I have been using it for 15 years and it works, certainly.'

Although, this customer was happy there are also many conflicting views on the subject of whether the herbal remedies actually work. A middle-aged woman who was passing through the market stated, 'I do not believe in this medicine, how can a crushed monkey head cure a headache? It does not work. I'll never use it myself.'

The substances in these stores are not just used for medicines but are also used for much darker purposes, such as cursing. There was hardly anyone in the market who was willing to talk about this sensitive subject that is treated with extreme trepidation. However, one shopkeeper explained, 'cursing is a way of putting bad luck and encouraging harm to befall upon a person who has wronged you –

there are many different spells and methods of cursing so I could not tell you how people do it but generally the procedure involves crushing and burning the substance, to release the spirits and chanting and praying to invoke the deity to bring bad luck to the victim of the curse.'

Whether one believes in curses or not, there is an incredibly sinister, threatening and dangerous undertone to the uses of the substances in the fetish market. It is obvious to see why there is such fear and secrecy surrounding the subject because only a select few have the knowledge to carry out the mysterious rituals and even fewer are willing to talk about it. However, to experience this incredible place of secrecy and mystery transports you to an ancient African world of magic and witchcraft that still lives in a small corner of Tamale Market – a sight that you will see nowhere else on the planet.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Here's just a recap of the social networking we do so that you can be best updated!!



Hills: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2355118946>

Kumasi: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2330126047>

Accra: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2581495079>

Ho: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=24364808701>

Cape Coast: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2450760029>

Koforidua: http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_189429624434431

Upcoming Human Rights volunteers, please check out what's up on the

PAHRO link: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=113609401994015>

We've started tweeting from Ghana !

Follow the latest news and events at:

http://twitter.com/Proj_AbroadGH/



We also have a lot of fun articles on our Projects Abroad blogging site! Everyone is free to contribute, and it's a great way to get a little taste of what you'll experience in Ghana, or in any other Projects Abroad Destination!

<http://www.mytripblog.org/pg/groups/2915/Ghana>

If you would like one of the pictures from our newsletter, blog or facebook in full resolution just email the request to rainbowplanche@projects-abroad.org!