

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Ghana

April 2011
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EDITOR'S LITTLE NOTE

AKWAABA AND GREETINGS FROM GHANA! WELCOME TO THE APRIL EDITION OF GATEWAY, THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR PROJECTS ABROAD GHANA!

THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL SESSION TO OUR "TWO WEEK SPECIAL" PROGRAMMES. AND DATES NOW ARE AS FOLLOWS;

- ***SUNDAY JUNE 12TH – SATURDAY JUNE 25TH 2011***
- ***SUNDAY JUNE 26TH – SATURDAY JULY 9TH 2011***
- ***SUNDAY JULY 17TH – SATURDAY JULY 30TH 2011***
- ***SUNDAY AUGUST 7TH – SATURDAY AUGUST 20TH 2011***

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEENAGERS WHO WISH TO DO SOME VOLUNTEER WORK THIS SUMMER!

THIS MONTH HAS BEEN BUSY WITH NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK, AN EVENT ORGANIZED IN THE UNITED STATES BY Hands On Network AND Points of Light Institute, AND TAKEN ON BY PROJECTS ABROAD IN EACH OF OUR REGIONS! THE VOLUNTEERS ENJOYED CONTRIBUTING A LITTLE EXTRA TO THEIR COMMUNITIES. READ ON TO FIND OUT!

INSIDE OUT: GENERAL INFO ABOUT GHANA

“GHANA MUSIC AWARDS 2011 – 5 THINGS WE LEARNED”

This month, Ghana hosted yet another music award ceremony, continuing this 10 year old program ... most thoughts about it have been controversial!

By Nana Wireko,
<http://nanawireko.wordpress.com/>

It was a night of fun. A night people have anticipated for a long time. The entrance fee could not stop them. To the ordinary Ghanaian, the amount of 75 Ghana Cedis was gargantuan.

There was a little debate by some friends of mine on twitter. The keyword was “choice.” While you may not want to shed 75 or 150 Ghana Cedis on a single night, others may not also find any problem with it.

They want fun and fun they will get. People had saved since January to make it to “Ghana’s Speech and Prize Giving Day” and they wouldn’t allow anything to stop them.

Others, like me, stayed home glued to our TV sets. As Nana Akuffo-Addo will say “all die be die.” We were all going to witness the show by kind courtesy of GTV.

Below are five things we learned from the show:

1 The ladies are “richer” than the guys.

Parading “buronya ataade” always has been a trend at the Ghana Music Awards. Do you remember the days of inter-co and super zonals? People used to fast in order to save and get new sneakers.....to woo the girls. Boys would do anything to look smart and elegant for the occasion.

There was a reverse this time around. I could see more ladies than guys. I saw a lot of statisticians on my timeline. Some said 80% ladies, 20% guys.....others went for 90-10. I feel most guys bought the

tickets for the ladies but didn’t have enough money to buy for themselves. It’s like a lady tells you, “I want to eat Chinese.”

You get it for her because you want to please her. You then go home and soak gari to eat since you have no money left to spend on you.” Whatever be the situation, the ladies proved they have more cash than the guys. So guys, a word to the wise.....

2 Highlife Isn’t dead

I am a little bit primitive. I hardly listen to hip-hop. Honestly, I know less about that genre of music. I read about it because I want to always be in the know (for arguments sake). I was born into a family where Ghanaian music was and is paramount. My dad would always let you listen to Kojo Antwi, Amakye Dede, Gyedu Blay Ambulley, E T Mensah and Osibisa. As a result, my romance with highlife is so deep. I got to love Hiplife but I believe the Hiplife songs of yesteryears were far better than those of today. Enough of that! Did you see Charles Kofi Mann? He rocked the show!!! He was the only musician whose songs made ex-first lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings dance. Highlife is still alive. Highlife isn’t dead. Do you also remember when DJ Black played one of Amakye Dede’s songs when he was about to present an award? The whole auditorium went bonkers! The likes of Ice Prince (the oleku man) and D Black couldn’t do that. Highlife is very much alive and the youth of today must embrace it. If you are proudly Ghanaian, you must proudly love highlife.

3 Asamoah Gyan (Baby Jet) has “resurrected” Castro’s career!

Ghana’s 50 cents was wallowing in the doldrums some years ago. After his hit song “Omega,” Castro took a down-turn. He was on the verge of extinction (industry-wise).

Even though he featured in some songs for MzBel and other musicians, he wasn’t

the man we knew. And in 2010, there was a BOOOM....Castro again featuring Baby Jet... As enthusiastic as Ghanaians are when it comes to football, anything related to the game is welcomed with open arms. Asamoah Gyan has been Ghana's prolific striker for some time now. He is an idol for the nation. His little sexy like cheese lines on the "African girls" song has made the hit a bomb. Castro claims Gyan didn't make the song a hit. Hey dude, accept it, Baby Jet gave you the "Tabitha cum"

4 Live band performances; a taboo to most artistes!

Miming has been tinctured into the genes of most of our artistes. It is the order of the day. Give them live bands and they will flop like leaves during the winter season. We saw many artistes struggling with the live band. I didn't get to see all the performances since GTV ended their transmission after 1:30am but the little that I beheld didn't do justice to the live band. It is either the artiste gets stuck somewhere or loses the voice intermittently.

Apart from Kwabena Kwabena and C.K. Mann who were great, I don't remember any other who rocked the crowd while using the band. Lest I forget, our artistes must also work on their stagecraft. They are good but they can do better! Tempted to write on the way some of them were dressed but.... Let's carry on!

5 We wait for death to strike before honouring legends!

Why do we always have to wait for death to tell us what to do? We seem to even paint our dirty houses as soon as someone is dead. It is almost as if death is the instructor in the lives of most Ghanaians.

Osibisa was founded in 1969 by Teddy Osei, Mac-Tontoh and Sol Amarfio. It has been one of the greatest music groups in world history yet none of her members had received any gong from MUSIGA until last night. It took the demise of Mac-Tontoh for MUSIGA and Charter House to realise and honour the sax player, Teddy Osei.

What a shame! We should not repeat this in the future. Our legends must be honoured before they join their ancestors. They are role models.....those who have blazed the trail for the current generation of musicians. They deserve our respect before they die.

Someone asked me, "How could you learn something from a disorganised show like this?" It is simple. You call it wacky; I call it good but more room for improvement. I had fun watching the show but I had so much fun following the twitter commentary by my friends. Long live Ghana.... Long live Ghana Music.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Accra

In Accra, we decided to provide the Underprivileged Children's Centre with a necessary coat of fresh paint.



Fitting in one trotro and a half, the volunteers made their way to the Underprivileged Children's Centre (UCC). There we met some of the children (most had gone off for holidays), and also volunteers from other associations. They had wanted to paint some things with the children, so we split the walls accordingly.



The creative minds got straight to work, pencilling in what they wanted painted on the main wall of the centre. Little did they know, it had to be painted over with a base coat (to the disappointment of a particular windmill) ... so, they carried on after it was dry. The others began painting over the drawings in the classrooms, so that the colours would be bright and the writing would be legible!

We had to make sure children were paired up with volunteers to avoid situations which would end in blue-faced children. After several tries and much talk, we decided how we were going to arrange the letters and which drawings could be done on the second part of the wall. Several of the volunteers decided to do math with some of the children so that others could paint!

After a small break for water and pastries, we got to our finishing jobs, followed by a kind thank you from the director.



Koforidua, Eastern Region



The plan at Koforidua was to do a thorough cleanup at the Hour of Grace orphanage at Huhunya. We wanted to help the children with this task as a friendly gesture, but also one that taught them the value of cleaning up regularly so that they would continue this on the long term!

We all met on Tuesday afternoon at 205 junction, ready for what the day would bring! We made our way to the main station to get a tro-tro to the Hour of Grace orphanage, which was about 20 minutes outside of Koforidua.

As we climbed out, the children ran to us singing 'Welcome visitors, how are you? Welcome visitors!' with curious smiles. We met the director/owner/founder, Lawrence, and then

divided ourselves into teams according to the number of bedrooms to clean.

We started out with ceiling brooms, whilst the children cleared their mattresses and took out their clothes. The children would take charge of the small places and would climb on top of the wardrobes to catch the spots we missed. Then everyone would fill in wherever necessary – sweeping the floor, rearranging the mattresses or folding the clothes back ... Dancing and singing along was optional! It was great to see the children participating so actively, and so excited to have helpers.



Next on the list to clean was their

clinic, as well as the common 'room' outside, which was basically a big round roof. The cleaning went fast with everyone working together, and we came happily to wash our hands afterwards.

Then it was time for food and games! We all lined up for Fanlce (ice cream in sachets) and the volunteers brought some balloons for the children to play with, which seemed to be endlessly exciting for them.

Then the Projects Abroad team took on the older children at football, for a game that involved a lot of yelling and cheering from two improvised cheer squads of the girls, but to which we unfortunately lost 9-5!

The best soccer player received a jersey, and after a warm applause we received an official thanks from Lawrence. Prince, our regional coordinator, was sure to assure that this was only the beginning of Projects Abroad's relationship with the orphanage!



Ho, Volta Region



In Ho, we wanted to do an outreach at the leprosarium at Donokodzi, a place we usually go for medical outreaches! This time we wanted to help clear their gardens and clean their clinic which they go to in case they are sick.

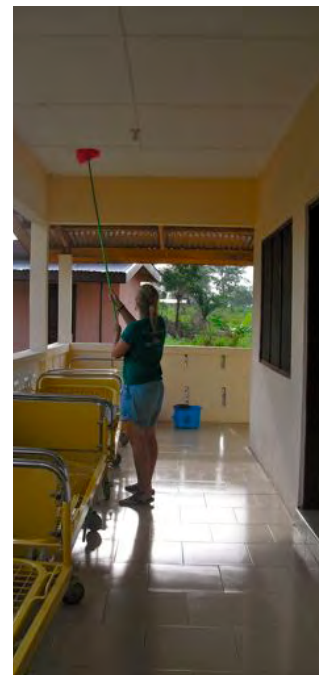
By 6:45 GMT (Ghana Main Time; if you are still confused, consult someone who has been to Ghana. It basically means *not* at the assigned time), we met up, piling into two taxis for a short ride. When

we arrived there were only a few people to greet us. Some started right away, sweeping and mopping, with our minds set on cleaning! Some local nurses had joined us to speed up the work!

The rest of us began gardening (there were some hidden talents discovered there!). Those who were part of the community were delighted and came out to help us in weeding, cutting or clearing away the grass.

After some friendly exchanges, we put away the cleaning material, washed up well, and began unpacking the medical equipment. We proceeded to treat those cured from leprosy: removing bandages, cleaning and dressing with a new bandage. They were all immensely happy, and more kept coming to receive this special treatment! Those who were not dressing wounds were running around giving the necessary supplies to the working volunteers (and Kwasi, our regional coordinator, was walking around handing out 'yeeeeeees plaster', imitating the street sellers).

We left happily, after cleaning up and some ice cream, waving goodbye to the community until the next time.



Kumasi, Ashanti Region



At Kumasi, we decided to paint and clean a newly created Children's centre, in a village called Nyameani by Lake Bosumtwi. This centre is intended to give the village children creative learning experiences, by means of interactive material and opportunities to be creative!

Volunteers and staff fit in a large tro-tro which made its way outside of Kumasi. Upon arriving, we divided labour – cleaning, sandpapering, mixing paint and painting. Everyone busied themselves, helped by the children and people of the village!



We switched around jobs, so everyone had the opportunity to do most any kind of work, no one got bored, and we could all catch up on conversations with friends.



Our lunch break was bread and chocolate spread, and some were tasting Ghanaian chocolate spread for the first time! After an unfinished debate on which spread was better, the Belgian or the Ghanaian one, some returned to work, ready to finish. Some tasted the fried yam which was brought to us by a family in the village. A paint fight began just as we ran out of

turpentine, so that was quickly stopped!

We all put in a final effort, and after finishing touches to the windows, we could take a breath and look at our nice work. Most of the village ran to join our group picture, and after a warm farewell we packed into the tro-tro again, headed home after a long tiring day!



Akuapem Hills, Eastern Region



In the Hills one of our future projects will be the Wonderful Love Daycare at Akokoa, near Mampong-Nkwata. This was the previous Projects Abroad building site, and we plan on having it as a future care placement! For now there are two teachers and 30 children, and that number keeps growing. The plan for this week was to paint the school and construct a water reservoir for the school, but which would also serve those in the village.

Most of us could fit in one tro-tro legally, and the rest climbed onto the next one that came. The staff had been there the day before setting up some of the necessary material, painting the white base coat and making the skeleton drawings.

The material was set up and we could start! Most were painting, either with a big base coat brush or started working on the drawings with the small ones (and with a lot of concentration)! Some of us were able to clear the field by the school relatively quickly. Then we needed to prepare the mortar for the construction of the reservoir. The building volunteers showed their obvious expertise at mixing and carried on to suit the frequent demands for 'MOOOORRR-TAAAAR!'.



Everyone continued persistently, painting (and developing a personal attachment to their drawings), mixing, carrying, and troweling.

We enjoyed bread and eggs for a short break, before starting the soccer match with the older children, which we were holding up just fine until the local team, named 'Chelsea' arrived at the field. We courageously kept on, with some daring slide tackles and impressive blocks, but we eventually lost 2-1!

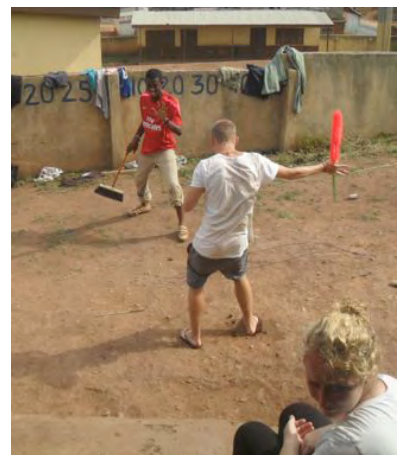
Most of us got back to work, whilst the more competitive of us relentlessly kept on the soccer. The last artistic drawings were being perfected as most of us focused on the working on the reservoir, developing effective teamwork strategies!

It was nice to see staff, locals and volunteers working together to put up the final pipes which would collect the water into the reservoir. The roof could be placed on after quite a lengthy time of troweling. Happy, chatty and exhausted, we all left ready to go home, excited that we could help this small village in a vital way



Cape Coast, Central Region

One of our placements in the Central Region is the Children's Home of Hope in Asebu, about 20 minutes' drive outside of 'Cape'. Here are some pictures to show for the National Volunteer Week event in Cape Coast !



PHILOMENA SAMPSON

Mrs. Sampson is very experienced in hosting volunteers and will quickly make you feel like part of the family. She is a primary school teacher in a school in Cape Coast.

Mrs. Sampson lives with her two daughters, Marilyn (1991) and Suzzy Kukuwa (2004), her son, Jojo (1997), and her niece, Gloria (1989).



The house is in Tsibudarko which is less than a five-minute walk from the Pedu junction (on the Accra to Takoradi Road) and a short ten-minute taxi-ride from the centre of Cape Coast.

Cape Coast is situated on the coast (surprisingly), three hours' drive West of Accra. The town centre is lively and small enough to walk around, with a good market and a selection of restaurants and bars.

There are several nice beaches nearby, notably Anomabo and Coconut Grove, where volunteers spend their free time. Kakum Rainforest Reserve is also nearby and a night in the jungle, followed by watching the sunrise from the canopy walk is not to be missed.

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.

Mrs. Sampson hosts a maximum of four volunteers. Your shared room will have two beds with comfortable mattresses, a table, a wardrobe, a dressing mirror, a fan and a light.

Meals will be mostly Ghanaian-style food such as rice or yam with stew and vegetables. Mrs. Sampson is keen for you to try all the local dishes, but also appreciates the need for variety and that some people have particular tastes.

Mrs. Sampson understands that volunteers want to socialise and go out in the evenings, however, she appreciates knowing where you are going and prefers that you don't get home too late.

BUILDING PROJECTS IN THE HILLS



The Akuapem Hills team has been gladly hosting the Projects Abroad building sites! Here is a little news about the past, present and future projects! Many thanks to all those who contributed by means of funds, donations to the establishments, and most importantly the hands-on work!! We have been creating many lasting smiles all over the region.

The previous building site was the now well-known Wonderful Love Daycare, The children from the town of Akokoa would walk very long distances to get to and from school at the next village, so we decided we would give them a decent school building in their village, which would also help to develop this small Ewe-speaking community by Mampong.



The volunteers completed this project in about 4 months! The building consists of two classrooms and an office; you can read in the National Volunteer Week section that we repainted and built a reservoir for this school and community! There are now about 30 children there, and the one teacher will soon be joined by another, who will start in May!

Just now finishing in Kwamoso, we have our most recent building project, the Ebenezer International School. The children at this school were using an unfinished house for classrooms, but were soon to be ushered out as the house was being built. Projects Abroad took on this project by building two classrooms nearby, in order to keep the school running. This was started in January and will become a Projects Abroad teaching project! At the end of this month, Tadashi from Japan and some friends of his donated 10 tables and 20 chairs to the complex. It is ready to start!



Around the middle of April, we began the new construction which would be our next building project. For now, the school is taking place in an old post office belonging to the community at Adowso, which they have rented so far but now have to move. Projects Abroad decided to build a suitable place for learning! 'Compassion for Humanity' Illiteracy School will also be a placement for our teaching as well as IT volunteers, most likely starting in 2012.

PROJECTS ABROAD DONATES TO CENTRAL PRESS NEWSPAPER

Frances Black, Journalism volunteer in Cape Coast.

Monday 18th April marked the donation of a brand new computer with top-of-the-range software from Projects Abroad to Central Press Newspaper.

The donation occurred after Projects Abroad learnt that Central Press did not have satisfactory graphics software, or a computer that could use such a programme, for the creation and editing of their newspapers. A short ceremony was held at the Central Press office, which was attended by Tom Davis, the country director of Projects Abroad in Ghana, Anthony Egyir Aikins, the Mayor of Cape Coast, Joseph Opoku Adjei, credit analyst of UT Bank, Ebo Sackey, the regional chairman of Ghana Journalist Association, the manager of the Hampton Printing Press and Victor Sauvage, as well as some others.

Most of the guests present gave short speeches concerning their involvement with Central Press Newspaper and Projects Abroad, and how they hoped that Central Press would grow, develop and expand in the future. Sackey emphasised the importance of bringing more written news to the people of Ghana, stating that reading newspaper was declining, but that 'putting thoughts on paper is very important'. He also highlighted the importance of engaging young people to read, and used the Central Press Newspaper as an example of a medium to achieve this.

The Mayor also pledged his support to CPN, saying that he was 'going to go a

long way to support Central Press'. Victor Sauvage, a board member of CPN stated that he was 'overwhelmed' by the support from UT Bank and Projects Abroad, and praised the non-political and unbiased stance of the newspaper.

Projects Abroad have been long-time supporters and sponsors of Central Press Newspaper since it began in January 2010, and the new computer is just one donation among many, along with new desks and chairs. Those at Projects Abroad are now also locating a permanent office for the newspaper, which has published a total of 15 editions. Central Press Newspaper has so far received 12 volunteers from Projects Abroad, from countries as diverse as England, France, Holland, Germany and Australia, and the editor Kwamina Bamfo expressed his sincere gratitude towards Projects Abroad's contribution and help, without which he said he could not run his newspaper.

Tom Davis gave those in attendance a brief summary of Projects Abroad's history in Ghana so far, explaining that it is 13 years since they first started. Accra was the first destination made available for volunteers, and Cape Coast the second, allowing for further expansion into different areas and regions in Ghana.

We at Central Press Newspaper would like to thank Projects Abroad for this generous donation, and everyone who supports the newspaper.

To check out the most recent posts of Central Press Newspaper, follow the link!
<http://centralpressnewspaper.blogspot.com/>

STAFF MEMBERS

YOUR LOVING REGIONAL COORDINATORS!

These hardworking people are sure to do everything to make your stay more enjoyable! Their role is to coordinate volunteer activities and placements, and to make sure there is a flowing link between the staff so that all your needs can be provided. Look out for their assistants next month!



Emmanuel Abaaja - Deputy Director and Regional Coordinator - Akuapem Hills

Emmanuel is responsible for our placements and volunteers in the Akuapem Hills region. He holds a BSc from Legon University in Accra, and joined Teaching & Projects Abroad in December 2002 after completing his National Service as a teacher. He is a very active member of the church near his home in Nungua and has a lovely wife, Rita and two energetic and adorable children, Lois and Christian.

Grant Appiah - Regional Coordinator - Cape Coast

Grant grew up in Cape Coast, and holds a BSc in Tourism from the town's University. He joined the Projects Abroad team in May 2003, and established many of the placements we now operate in this region. Grant meets all volunteers on arrival in Cape Coast and will then show you around the town on your induction. His two dogs are expecting puppies soon!!



Gabriel Ayeh-Fianko - Regional Coordinator - Kumasi

Gabriel is in charge of our programs in Kumasi, and does inductions, monitoring and introduces volunteers to their placements. He grew up in Koforidua and holds an NHD in Marketing. He was working in Accra as a Customer Service Officer before joining Projects Abroad in 2006. His father's home is a very loved host family in Akuapem Hills!

Kwasi Acheampong - Regional Coordinator - Ho

Ho is one of our new destinations in Ghana known for its beautiful scenery! A popular figure amongst the volunteers, Kwasi has worked over the last two summers helping out with the two-week special programs. A self-motivated graduate from the University of East Legon, Kwasi is currently busy learning the regional language of the Voltarians, Ewe.



Fynn Kusi Adjei - Regional Coordinator - Accra

Fynn holds a first degree in Geography and Resource Development from University of Ghana, Legon- Accra. He is responsible for all the placements and volunteers in Accra. He has been working with Projects Abroad since November 2008.

Princeley Kweku Bondzie - Regional Coordinator - Koforidua

Princeley holds a Higher National Diploma in Tourism from the Cape Coast Polytechnic. He used to be the regional coordinator for the Akuapem Hills, worked shortly in Ho, and now took on the job at our new Koforidua office! Princeley has been with Projects Abroad since 2007.



“GOODBYE” IN HO APPARENTLY MEANS ‘JUMP OVER FIRE’ ...

Ho has a special tradition to make sure each volunteer is seen off well. They will meet up at the Mirage pub in Voredet Village, eat together, have the opportunity to dance and chat. Ghanaians and other volunteers they met during their stay will come join them to say goodbye. When it gets dark enough, Eric will start the fire and those who leave have to jump over it!

Here are a few pictures from this month's farewell party!



DRUM & DANCE AT QUIZ NIGHTS ...



One thing which will surely stick in your mind as a volunteer is learning how to dance in to the beat of the African drums!
Here are a few fun pictures from quiz nights in the Hills and Kumasi.



Dan writes from PAHRO

From the Netherlands, worked at the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office, HRAC

My name is Dan and I am a volunteer from the Netherlands. Back home I just graduated from university and I am volunteering in Ghana for three months. I have been in Accra over five weeks now and I have been having a great time. I am staying with a host family with four other volunteers. I am in Ghana for a Human Rights Project and my first month I stayed with the Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC). During this month I handled lots of different cases and projects, some smaller than others, but all the assignments were very interesting. The cases varied from making a affidavit for a change of name to a rape of unlawful imprisonment. Most of the cases involved a lot of research and, in some cases, fieldtrips and fact finding missions. During these fieldtrips and fact finding missions I went to prisons, a mental hospital, the courthouse and even a Liberian refugee camp.



When I am not at the office most of the volunteers spent some time together watching movies or having a drink at the local pub. During the weekends we go on trips to all sorts of beaches, cities and places you have to see. One of the highlights was the trip to the Wli waterfalls and also the trip to Cape Coast was amazing. The best thing about these trips, and having all the volunteers together is that the volunteers created a great community together which is the safety net of Projects Abroad. In my first weeks it helped me a lot with the adaptation to the Ghanaian way of life.

The best thing about Projects Abroad is that they gave me the opportunity to take initiative and to organise other things besides the Human Rights Project. I am aiding the Ghanaian Baseball and Softball Association with my expertise and supplying them with baseball equipment. The office gives me all the space and time I need to help them.

News from Stéphanie

From France, worked at the School for the Deaf at Mampong

Après la fin de mes études, j'ai décidé de mettre une croix temporairement sur l'activité professionnelle afin de me consacrer à mes divers projets dont la mission humanitaire. Et je peux dire que je ne regrette nullement d'avoir fait ce choix ! Mon choix s'est porté sur le Ghana, pays bien assez méconnu de la population française. J'ai souhaité travailler avec les enfants handicapés, plus spécialement avec les sourds puisque moi-même je le suis.

La première impression de la plupart des bénévoles sur place était la stupéfaction de me voir m'engager pour la bonne cause vis-à-vis de ma surdité. Mais avec le temps, ils finissaient par se rendre compte que la surdité n'a pas de barrières comme on peut laisser supposer. Nous, les sourds, on a la capacité de concrétiser nos rêves avec la même motivation, la même volonté que les autres, ce qui rend encore plus humain dans les relations sociales.

Je ne m'attendais pas à un accueil aussi chaleureux que celui que l'on m'a réservé à mon arrivée dans une école pour sourds à *Mampong*, petite ville dans les collines d'*Akuapem*. J'ai été agréablement surprise par la gentillesse des habitants ghanéens, tout comme celle de ma famille d'accueil. J'ai dû apprendre à maîtriser la langue anglaise, la langue officielle du pays, qui était mon point faible jusqu'à maintenant, et la langue des signes ghanéenne. L'apprentissage d'une double langue se révélait à la fois enrichissant et agréable.

Que dire sur les enfants sourds ? Il m'est difficile de les décrire. Ils étaient tellement adorables avec moi que j'avais l'impression d'être devenue leur deuxième « maman ». C'est devenu irrésistible car les enfants ne voient que leurs parents pendant les vacances scolaires et la notion des liens affectifs leur est un peu inconnue. D'autant plus que notre surdité commune a tissé des liens très forts.

Mon travail avec les enfants consistait à la transmission de savoirs, c'est-à-dire une mission dans l'enseignement dans une classe de primaire. J'enseignais les mathématiques et un peu l'anglais. Avec la maîtresse de la classe, on se relayait. Ce qui est assez drôle, c'est qu'à chaque fois au début des cours, les enfants avaient tendance à me demander de les aider à tailler les crayons. Dans un premier temps, je trouvais ça anodin mais j'ai vite compris qu'ils aiment prendre leur temps pour mieux bavarder avant de s'y mettre sérieusement, mais aussi peut-être pour retarder les cours. Qui sait ?

J'ai fait une petite mais belle et frappante révélation au cours de ma mission : les enfants, malgré le fait que la cantine ne leur fournisse pas un repas de bonne qualité, voire insuffisant (on compte 300 élèves), se serrent quand même les coudes en matière de nourriture même s'ils souffrent de la faim. J'ai une anecdote à vous faire partager : un jour, lors d'une pause-déjeuner à l'école, je servais les repas pour les enfants dans la salle de classe. A un moment donné après la distribution, une élève s'est approchée de moi en tenant un bol propre et c'est là que j'ai réalisé que je l'avais oubliée ! Or, la grande gamelle dans laquelle on trouve la nourriture était épuisée. J'étais gênée de ne pas pouvoir la servir. J'ai dû me tourner vers d'autres enfants, persuadée qu'ils allaient se plaindre, et leur demander timidement de donner chacun un peu de leur assiette pour cette pauvre petite fille. Et à ma plus grande surprise, ils se sont contentés d'acquiescer sans la moindre protestation. Incroyable ! Alors, comme ça, entre « pauvres », ils se soutiennent mutuellement de manière spontanée. Finalement, la solidarité n'a pas de prix pour eux.

Ce n'est pas ce que nous possédons qui fera de nous des gens heureux mais bien les relations que nous créons avec les autres. Il suffit juste de tendre la main à quelqu'un et on voit en retour que l'on reçoit avec un sourire plein d'amour, de tendresse, qui vaut cher !

J'aimerais pouvoir m'étendre à ce sujet mais il n'y aurait plus de place pour les autres volontaires, dommage ... Je n'oublierai jamais les moments que j'ai passés avec les enfants. Ils ont marqué ma vie à tout jamais ! A mon départ, on m'a même offert des cadeaux. Ce geste en dit sûrement long ... Les Ghanéens ont dans le cœur une compassion déconcertante de sincérité ... Je ne demande qu'une seule chose : y retourner un jour !

REGIONAL UPDATES

ACCRA

Accra continues to receive huge numbers of volunteers each month. It currently has over 20 volunteers as many of them have completed their projects, so have left since March. Accra continues to excite and attract volunteers due to highly urbanized nature and closeness to tourist attractions such as Ada Foah, Kokrobite, Wli Falls, etc.. Volunteers in Accra always have something to do each night with the soccer lovers always grouping together to watch UEFA Championship, the English Premiership, etc. The Osu Oxford Street and the Arts Center continue to provide easy access to made-in-Ghana and other authentic African handicrafts and souvenirs for volunteers and their loved ones back in their home countries.

The Dallas Texans FC, our new soccer placement at Madina, has three volunteers at the moment and they are happily coaching young talented players.

Accra has also added a new basketball placement where underprivileged children from Nima, a poor suburb in Accra, are gathered and trained in basketball every day. The aim of the project is to give alternative source of entertainment and also as a medium to encourage the children to stay in school in order to have the opportunity succeed in life. The children are also helped to improve their reading skills at a nearby library.

Our HIV/AIDS program is gradually improving and expanding the opportunities for volunteers to directly work people living with HIV/AIDS. Some of the volunteers have had the chance to directly interact with people living with HIV/AIDS at the hospital and at a Roman Catholic Home run by Sisters of Mother Teresa.

Ho

This month begun with the departure of two lovely volunteers Erna and Nina. As part of our usual tradition, a bye bye party was organised for them at Mirage, a local pub in Ho here. Volunteers played games and danced to some local tunes.

Also in this month saw the arrival of Annette Mitchell, who was here for ten days and worked at Eugemont orphanage. In her ten days she did her very best to paint some few rooms and made one a sick bay for the children. She took the children, including some non-teaching staff to have fun at the Wli water falls and the monkey sanctuary.

Another major feature of the month is the National Volunteer Week, which we participated in on the 13th for a clean up exercise at the Ho leprosairum. This day was a communal labour day for the cured lepers... They came out in their number to help clean their compound and clinic. This was followed by a medical outreach where their wounds were attended to. On the 14th the volunteers helped in a similar outreach in another village nearby.

Generally the few volunteers here seem to be doing well!

KOFORIDUA

The Eastern Region is now composed of two Projects Abroad offices: one in Akropong, and a second in the region's capital, Koforidua. Koforidua is the regional capital of the Eastern Region of Ghana. It's about an hour and half by road from Ghana's capital Accra. Koforidua has a population of about 90,000 and a land area of 110 kilometers constituting 0.57% of the total land area of Eastern Region.

Koforidua is well noted today for its weekly Thursday bead market that draws bead buyers and sellers from all over the region. A predominant natural feature in Koforidua is the Obuo Tabri Mountain. The world's largest man-made lake, the Volta, is about an hour by road from Koforidua. Other nearby tourist attraction are Boti Falls, Akaa Falls and the Umbrella Rock.

The Koforidua region is the new region for Projects Abroad. The region started with 8 volunteers in April. Projects covered in Koforidua are Teaching, Medicine and Care. Volunteers in Koforidua live close to each other, making it easy for them to socialize.

On every Thursday, Medical volunteers travel to nearby villages like Okorase, Akwadum and Huhunya for medical outreach. At our weekly Quiz-night, volunteers get the opportunity to learn the history and culture of the people of Ghana. Also they learn some indoor Ghanaian games like Ludo and Oware.

Also on 12th April, all volunteers met at Hour of Grace Orphanage near Huhunya to do a cleanup exercise to mark the National Volunteers Week. The volunteers were warmly welcomed on arrival at the orphanage by the Kids and the in charge of the home. We started cleaning their rooms, clinic and kitchen few minutes after arrival. The kids could not stand to watch us clean their rooms but joined in the cleaning. After the clean up, we refreshed our self with ice-cream and spent an hour playing football with inmates of the orphanage. It was a day full of fun for volunteers and the children of the Hour of Grace Orphanage.

CAPE COAST

Volunteers in Cape Coast about 30 this month, and they are undertaking various projects such as Care at Children's home of Hope, New life International Orphanage, Journalism at Eagle FM and Central Press Newspaper, or Teaching and IT at FEDEP school.

There have being a lot of activities like the National Volunteer Week where all volunteers helped in cleaning children's home of Hope and played games with them, volunteer Birthday parties with host families and volunteers, volunteer leaving parties, the wedding ceremony of our host family Joseph Acquah among others.

Some volunteers have donated books, pencils and gloves for medical outreaches and are looking forward to the Easter festivities and the Easter volunteer party in Accra.

THE HILLS

This month, Akuapem Hills have about 25 volunteers and we are getting ready for the busy season of summer!

At one of the Wednesday quiz nights, the volunteers enjoyed local drumming and dancing, and although a little shy at first ended up participating!

For national Volunteer Week, they were glad to contribute to the water provision in the village of Akokoa by building a reserve. We also repainted that school, which was a previous Projects Abroad building project.

The initial building project is being finished this month and we are starting a new one at Adowso. Some of the volunteers even put in longer hours so they can get more done before they leave! We are also starting up two new teaching placements (to be read about in the 'Projects' section)!

KUMASI

This month, there have been about 15 volunteers, and each has enjoyed poolside quiz nights, as well as the occasional Twi lessons.

This month, we enjoyed painting a creative centre and library destined for the children of Nyamease, a village by Lake Bosumtwi, to participate in the National Volunteer Week program.

There have also been some exciting contributions from volunteers to the region!

The team of volunteers has just finished clearing a room at the Kumasi Children's Home which will serve as a classroom for the disabled children who live there.

One former volunteer, Catherine from the U.S., has donated a bath to our teaching and care placement at Mariah Estee Learning Centre, which will be much appreciated!

By the end of the month, Kumasi will equally have celebrated the commissioning of a classroom that one volunteer, Jane Body tiled at the beginning of the month.

Ayekoo everyone!

YOU KNOW YOU'RE IN GHANA WHEN ...

Here's Part 1 of a small combination of the best ones from the Facebook sites "You know you're in Ghana when ...", "You know you're in Accra When ...", and "You know you've been in Ghana too long when ...". Enjoy!

- You cannot escape marriage proposals.
- "You start to believe your name is Obruni."
- You don't notice the 'O' at the end of most words.
- You can call pretty much anyone 'auntie' or 'uncle'.
- Movies are looong. And often have a second, third or fourth sequel equally as long.
- You eat rice at least 4 days a week.
- "An event starts at 6 and you know it's okay to get there at 10."
- Advertisements can be anywhere. And you know yellow is MTN, blue is Tigo, Red is Airtel, green is Glo ...
- Almost anything can be 'dis tin' (= this thing).
- The whole village gets involved in the debate about a minor accident. Everyone from the surrounding villages have heard about it, and have their own point of view on what should be done.
- "You know what day of the week you were born."
- Anyone can be 'Charley'.
- People use the same hiss to get food, transportation, and to call the attention of a pretty woman.
- You've been captivated by at least one Spanish telenovela.
- You've learned new alternatives to standard cutlery, like your hands, or plastic bags.
- It's okay to tell your friend to 'flash' you.
- You seldom use an alarm, roosters will do the trick.
- Internet is just generally slow. Except Vodafone!
- "You probably know more than two Kofis."
- You attend church whether you like it or not, and most often it's so loud you don't even have to leave your room.
- Honking the horn of a car is normal, in any context.
- "You don't consider it uncommon to have a taxi drive 120 km/h whilst talking on his mobile phone and overtaking a police jeep."
- You have never considered going to Lagos because you've been convinced the Nigerians are inherently bad people and are at the source of all crime in Ghana.
- Life in the street stops when a match is on. Don't even think about travelling somewhere ...
- "It's okay that a country has over 1000 kings."
- "You buy food from the top of people's heads instead of in a super market."
- It's weird to see a truck or taxi without some kind of inscription at the back, or a flag in the front. You start wondering if the driver is trustworthy.
- At any moment, all your electronics can be rendered utterly useless by 'lights out', and you know what 'lights out' means.
- You know that D.C. stands for Dansoman Community.
- "You think malaria is not much more than a cold."
- "Your family has grown considerably after picking up so many mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters."
- "You've heard the loudest frogs in the world."

SOCIAL MEDIA

Guys!

Don't forget to join our official Facebook Group for each placement region:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Up coming Human Rights volunteers, please check out what's up on the PAHRO link.

Country Blog:

http://www.mytripblog.org/mod/blog/group_blogs.php?gl=true&group_guid=2915

Am sure you will meet some past, current and up coming volunteers there, to share ideas, tips and stories!

It's time to NETWORK!!!

THANKS SO MUCH TO ALL THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED. KEEP WRITING STORIES AND SENDING PICTURES AND UPDATES! WE LOVE TO HEAR IT ALL.

DEAR READERS, I HOPE YOU ENJOYED OUR APRIL EDITION. YOUR VIEWS ARE VERY MUCH WELCOME.

WATCH OUT FOR MORE IN NEXT MONTH'S EDITION!

TAKE CARE!!
