



# The GATEWAY

## Inside this edition...

- What Does "Benevolence" Mean to You?
- January – the month of courts
- Voices of the World
- Projects Updates
- Other Volunteer Stories
  - Leah Hamborg
  - Emma McLeod
- Project Updates
  - Farming
  - In Pictures
- Inducted!
- Amazing Pictures
- Social media



# What Does “Benevolence” Mean to You?

By Joseph Quaye Amoo

“Life” is one of the most relative terms I have known. It means different things to different people. As you may be tricked into believing that life is simply the state of been alive, it may be the narrowest understanding of this complex term. I have seen people live their lives by the way they understand it to be. I have observed people’s communication of life and I am convinced that one will be making a big mistake if he/she homogenizes the definition of life.

For some, life is cruel, hostile, tragic and indifferent. Yet for others, it is a happy-go-lucky, fun-filled and merry-making continuous event. No one can be blamed for these different perspectives of life.

What Trinidadian-born American rapper, singer-songwriter, Nicki Minaj said about life in her song *Moment 4 Life* interests me a great deal: “I believe life is a prize, but to live doesn’t mean you are alive.” This is a profound statement about what life really is. “Living life” and “being alive” are two different aphorisms. How much meaning are you willing to add to your life?

One of the most important human values responsible for achieving inner wealth and fulfilment is benevolence. In this article, I will walk you through a collection of values that defines benevolence.

## ***True Friendship***

Friendship is casual. True friendship is meaningful. A true friend is one that is slow to receive but quick to give. A true friend constantly inspires growth and positive change in the friendship. He is quick to correct and accepts correction. The friendship is more important than his personal ego so he makes reasonable sacrifices to keep the friendship growing. I spoke to a volunteer in a Care and Teaching project in Koforidua and this is what she told me about the volunteer friends she has found:

*My experience with other volunteers has been amazing. My roommate is like a sister to me. The volunteers working with me are like a family. They are a good support network whenever you are down and everything is not going ok.*

- Emma Kate McLeod

## ***Mature Love***

Mature love means to love someone or something with all its flaws and weaknesses. It involves a complete and concrete understanding of why some people are the way they are and why they behave the way they do. Matured love is slow to judge and quick to understand. It is not about doing what people like to be done for them but providing what people need, what serves their best interest. I have seen this trait in many Projects Abroad volunteers I have visited. Leah Hamborg is a Care volunteer and this is how she summed it up showing her depth of understanding of child behaviour:

*It is important for the kids to have people to look up to and to learn how to behave well. Children have reasons why they behave the way they do. Many times the reason is simple: They need attention. Badly behaved kids are not bad kids.*

- Leah Elizabeth Hamborg

## ***Helpfulness***

How did you always feel when you helped someone; when you saved a dying animal; when you nursed a plant; when you first helped a baby to walk? For me, the feeling is indescribable. At that very point, you feel more human, maybe super human. You sighed and smiled and cried joyfully. That sums up the reward for people who volunteer their lives to help others. Every single human being has a soft spot but many of us cover that up because the people around us have told us we are kings and queens, princes and princesses, powerful people, strong witted, macho, rich, famous and influential. We hold back tears when we feel like crying even for a joyful reason. It is this soft spot of our human nature that enable us to view our success in terms of our helpfulness to people and society. To descend from the heights of pride to the depths of service to humanity is to affirm that we are human beings with a meaning to life.

Helpfulness must not be defined by limits or borders. Humanity has no border, no territory. A single act of good is a universal and common good. Do it.

## ***Responsibility***

Many a time, we see responsibility as an imposed task. When we self impose it, it becomes a hobby – something we love to do. Usually, we have to inspire ourselves to do the things that we like to do especially those that benefit others. We are selfish beings only if we choose to be. Remember, we are responsible for each other and the world we live in.

# January - The month of courts.

By Joseph Quaye Amoo

“Hearing Begins Today,” screams the January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013 edition of the biggest selling newspaper in Ghana – *The Daily Graphic*. This headline resonated in almost all media networks in Ghana as the New Patriotic Party (NPP) failed to accept the results declared by the Electoral Commission which declared them runners up to the incumbent party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NPP, since December 10<sup>th</sup> last year, has cited irregularities in the December 7<sup>th</sup> elections which they believe advantaged the ruling party and have thus sent a petition to the highest court – the Supreme Court.



The NDC also petitioned to join in the suit of the NPP at the Supreme Court. This has been an iconic judicial event in Ghana and remains a big case test for Ghana's maturing democracy. It has defined the month of January in Ghana.

Ghana has been applauded internationally for allowing the rule of law to take precedence over violent electoral disputes, like many African countries have been known for.

Both the NPP and NDC have committed themselves to stick to non-violent activities to resolve this electoral dispute.

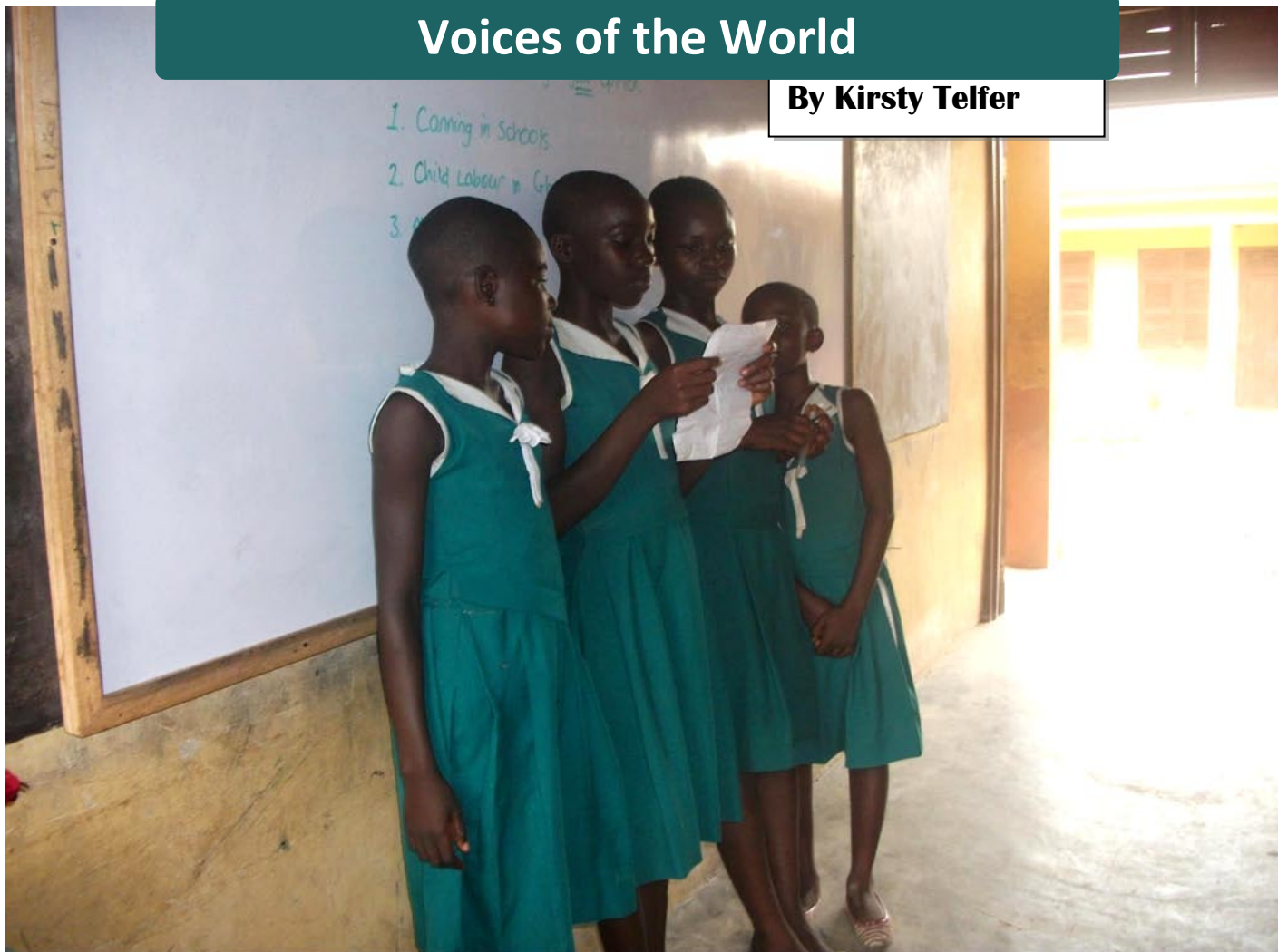
However, in separate developments, the President who was constitutionally sworn into office on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January has been appointing ministers and heads of public institutions in order not to create any power vacuum in the country and he has been applauded by different sectors of the country on his technocrat oriented appointments he has made so far.

This is the Ghana that is poised to put peace and development first and it is always welcoming to tourists, business people, visitors and volunteers. Ghana is an open space irrespective of the political, social, economic transitions it may through.



# Voices of the World

By Kirsty Telfer



Our Journalism Coordinator Kirsty Telfer regularly travels to Senya Bereku to train girls in journalism and newsgathering. Girls at Mother Teresa School in Senya Bereku were excited to have had the chance to work on a computer during one of the workshops. For many of them, it was their first time and they were eager to learn how to type their stories up. The girls took turns to use the computer.



They spent the rest of their time working in groups to try and find their own news stories. They went out and did some amazing interviews and collected interesting information. They also brainstormed on some great topics to write about in a very short space of time. They presented the outcomes to the entire class. "It was a great first week back and we are looking forward to a successful term," says Kirsty Telfer.

# Volunteer Story

**Leah Hamborg**

Before coming to Ghana to volunteer, 20-year-old Leah Hamborg from Denmark had always had plans of travelling after high school but insisted that her travels be meaningful. "I wanted to have something to do every day and I've always wanted to work with kids. I wanted to get up early in the morning and do something," she maintains. The Projects Abroad Care Project in Ghana provided her with the perfect opportunity to do exactly that. Leah worked in the New Life Orphanage, in Nungua, a suburb of Accra, where she provided care for the children and played with them in order to lessen their boredom in the home. She believes that it is important for the kids to have people to look up to and to learn how to behave well.

According to Leah, "There is no one to look after the children after the school closes and the teachers go home; so that is why volunteers are needed to care for them before and after school hours." In Denmark, Leah studied English and Social Studies at Aurehøj Gymnasium. The two subjects, she believes, have had a direct bearing on her future aspirations to work with kids at a kindergarten level.



Leah is convinced that her problem-solving skills have improved tremendously as a result of her placement at the Projects Abroad Child Care Project. She has learned how to communicate and get through to children, emphasizing that "badly behaved kids are not bad kids." She strongly believes that her experience at the Care Project in Ghana will help her as soon as she gets back to Denmark.

Leah has had several memorable moments in Ghana.

She recalls her very first day when she was walking with another volunteer to work: "About 20 kids ran towards us and hugged us and jumped at us and asked us our names. One child asked me in a funny way why I am so white!" she recalls with intermittent laughter.

Leah believes that since Projects Abroad send volunteers to projects like these, she and the other volunteers' small collective contributions really make a difference. "The absence of volunteers will create a lack of proper upbringing amongst the kids. The kids like fighting but we are always here to tell them no!" she states reassuringly.

She advises future volunteers to never yell at the kids and to keep an open mind and get to the bottom of any problem the kids might create. For Leah, the whole Ghanaian atmosphere made her feel at home. "Ghanaians are different people, religious and very friendly, especially my host family, and the historic forts and castles, beaches and waterfalls I've visited in Ghana are amazing," she says with happy smiles.

More refreshing for Leah are her co-volunteers from other countries with whom she has created a special bond. Getting to meet other people her age from different parts of the world with similar values of giving back is something she is thankful for.

In the future, Leah hopes to reconnect with 6 year old Erica at the New Life Orphanage, whom she speaks highly of as the girl who makes weird faces; too smart for her age; and one who was able to point out a flaw in a stage performance at the National Theater. "I was surprised because she's only 6 years old," she concludes.

# Volunteer Story

## *Emma McLeod*

Emma McLeod, now 22 years old, was in the Eastern Regional capital Koforidua from November 2011 to January 2012 in a small community village with an orphanage, kindergarten and primary school and a home for the aged. At that time, she was halfway through her teaching degree and yearned to gain a different experience out of Australia.

After completing her degree programme, Emma returned to Ghana in the thick of events in the week of the 2012 general elections. The elections were not the reason for her trip. She felt incomplete after she finished her first project so she decided to come back once again to continue volunteering with Projects Abroad at the very orphanage she worked with – Akwadum Christian Village. “I feel I have to come back to do more again as I am now completely qualified,” she remarked.



Emma has been teaching in primary four and she has been assisting teachers in other classes. She emphasized the benefits of team teaching to the children and she has a strong conviction that that strategy is effective. “If the children do not understand one teacher, they might get help from the other teacher. They other teacher can explain from a different perspective for the children to understand. We get to split the class into two sub-groups and that makes learning more effective for the kids,” she explained.

Emma McLeod believes that volunteers especially those who are qualified teachers are needed in her school and orphanage because many of the staff are mainly senior high school graduates who have not had professional training. According to her, they – the volunteers – are teaching the teachers how to teach effectively.

The teachers and children are not the only people benefitting from Emma’s assistance in the school. She herself, she evaluates, has gained tremendous experience in teaching. “I have learnt to be a lot more patient. It has made me a better teacher and now I know how kids here learn and how those in Australia also learn,” she compared.

Personally for Emma, she feels she has made a difference with individual children. She refreshingly remarks that “knowing that the children understand what you teach is the most fulfilling point in the teaching profession.”

Ghana is considered one of the friendliest countries in the world and Emma has experienced that for the second time, something she does not feel hesitant to admit. “Living and working here is different from Australia. The local people teach you more that you can learn on your own. All friends I have found here are going to be friends for life,” she states with joy on her face.

She is proud of meeting other volunteers from other countries and sees them as a family. “They are like family. They are a good support network when you are down and everything is not going ok,” she concludes.



# Project Updates

## Farming

Projects Abroad Farming Project in The Akuapim Hills has been running steadily. Twice a week, there are farming outreaches that educate community members on the importance of eating fruits and vegetables. Volunteers and staff of Projects Abroad breed farm animal like pigs, rabbits, and guinea pigs and donate to needy homes, orphanages and schools.



“We encourage the children to eat the animals they rear and the ones we give them and not to sell to people because they need protein to grow well,” says Isaac Ohene Asare, the Farm Coordinator. “We encourage them to embark on backyard farming and afforestation and grow flower gardens,” he added.





# Project Updates

## In Pictures



Building project in The Hills.



Volunteers with children at a Care placement – Kumasi Children's Home

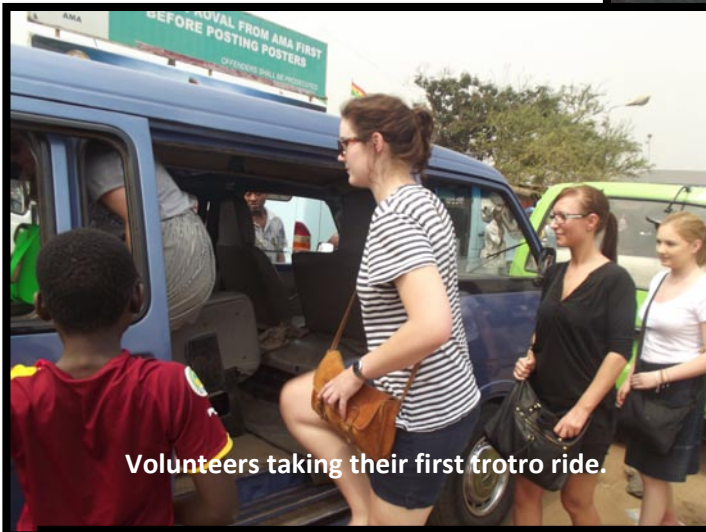


Nadia Tvermoes dresses wounds and skin infections on children during a medical outreach in a school in Kumasi.



# Inducted!

## In Pictures



Volunteers taking their first trotro ride.



Accra Regional Coordinator, Fynn Kusi Adjei showing new volunteers around the busy Kwame Nkrumah Circle area.



Richard Dugbeni, our medical coordinator showing new volunteers how to eat banku and other local Ghanaian dishes.



Diana and Simon take a shot with girls in their host family.



From left to right: Jamie, Melissa and Jasmine returns to their host family after their induction in Accra.



## Amazing Pictures!

*From Ghana*



*Bring it on and let's bounce!*

A child playing basketball at a Projects Abroad placement – The Kumasi Children's Home.



## Amazing Pictures!

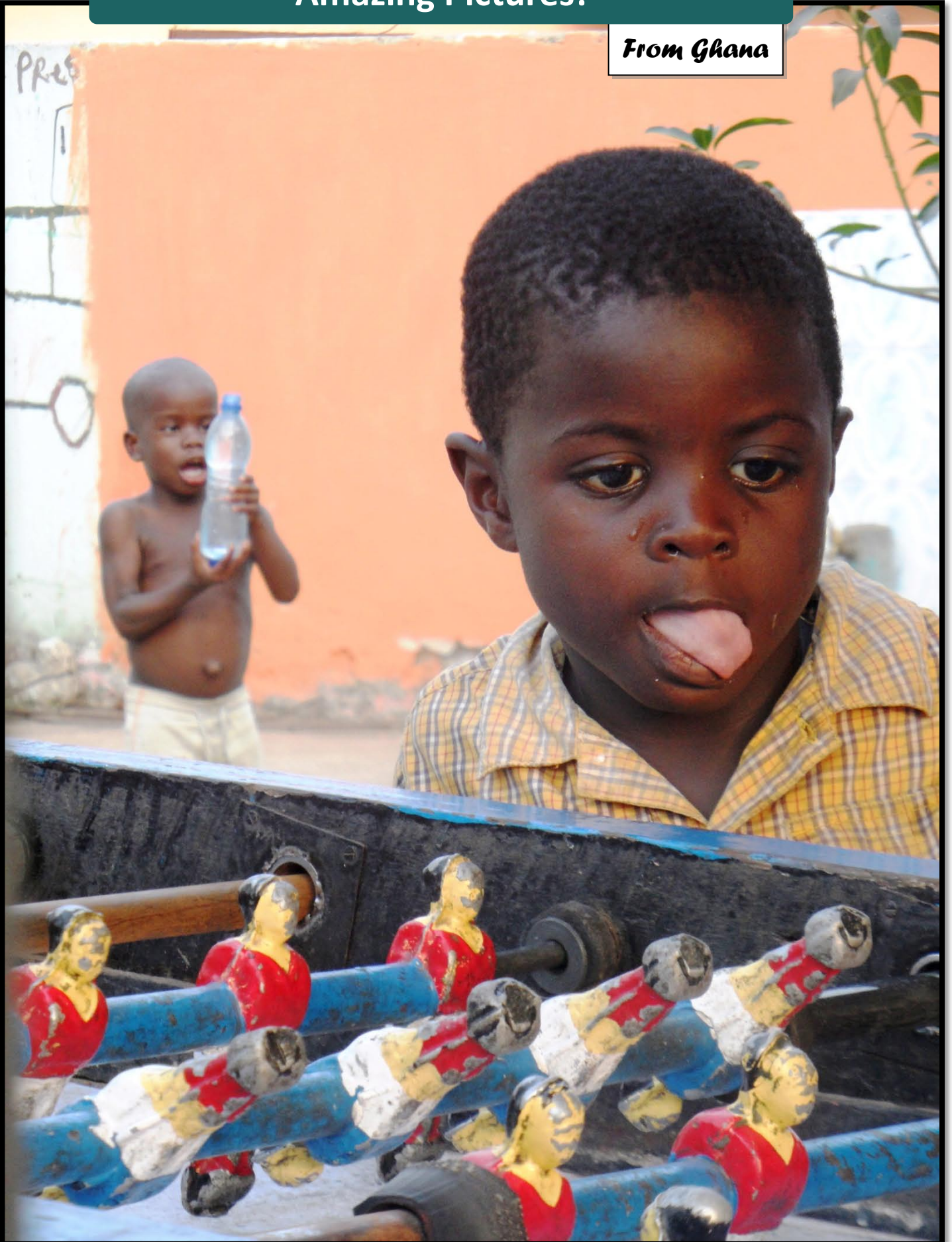
*From Ghana*



Sights and sounds of the 7<sup>th</sup> January inauguration of the newly elected president of Ghana. This how some peace-loving Ghanaians celebrated the day.

## Amazing Pictures!

*From Ghana*



Fifi, one of the children at Projects Abroad New Life Orphanage placement in Accra plays table football with the highest degree of seriousness. He's an aspiring pro!



## Social Media

Our social media platforms remains a powerful tool that connects volunteers, friends and family of Projects Abroad through status updates, tweets, pictures, blogs and videos. Our Facebook groups were as active as always in providing information on volunteer experiences and that informs the expectations of volunteers who are coming to Ghana and prospective volunteers as well. Our different Facebook groups – [The Hills](#), [Koforidua](#), [Accra](#), [Cape Coast](#), [Kumasi](#) and the [Projects Abroad Human Rights Office](#) were active throughout the month of December.

For many of our volunteers, our social media platforms are where they can continuously relive the valuable moments they once had in Ghana and it becomes their space for expressing the heart warming satisfaction they gained from volunteering to affect the lives of people in need.

This is how Bixi expressed his fondness about Ghana after leaving for his home country Holland:

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

**Bixi Azurmendi**

Hey everyone (better late than never.. ghana style) I'm back in Holland for some weeks now and just want to say thank you all for the kindness and love you gave me. I had an amazing time in Ghana and will miss all of you and everything about Ghana. I hope to come back one day! Shoutout to all the Projects Abroad Staff: [Fynn](#), Richard, Andy, etc. I won't forget you and everything you've done for me! Everybody take care of yourself, One Love! MEDASEEEEEEEEEEE ♥

Check out our other social media platforms by clicking on the images below:





**Help!**

**Learn!**

**Explore!**

Volunteer with  Projects Abroad

Please feel free to contact the Information Manager if you have any questions, concerns or comments: [infomanager-ghana@projects-abroad.org](mailto:infomanager-ghana@projects-abroad.org)

Thanks for reading!