



The Gateway

Official Newsletter - Projects Abroad Ghana

July 2013

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Join our social media:



The chief was the first member of his community to have his blood pressure and sugar level checked by our volunteer Lily McDougall from the UK during the maiden medical outreach in the Odotom community. (Odotom is a village in the Ewutu Senya West constituency in the Central Region)

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Ackworth High School Students Kumasi

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Travelling together with a large group of friends can sure be one of the best travel experiences one may get in a life time. You laugh, joke, play and perhaps feel sad when the fun is all over and you have to go back home reminiscing the happy times one had within two weeks of volunteering in a developing country.

Ten students from Ackworth High School in Yorkshire travelled with their geography teacher to Kumasi to engage in different activities of cultural and humanitarian significance. They painted a classroom block to bring back the brighter learning environment that has been missing in the school for years.



Raising environmental awareness

The volunteers gathered one evening and with the assistance of their teacher planned environmental awareness activities that they will involve the students in on the following day. They supported the students to propose environmental solutions that are sustainable and that which requires the active involvement of the students at home, in school and in the communities they live in.



Planting trees: Saving the planet

The volunteers, with the help of Projects Abroad regional coordinator and the students, cleared the grass, dug holes and planted fifty trees on the school compound to increase the tree population in the school. This activity was greeted with enthusiasm and excitement from the students as they passed on the seedlings to the volunteers to plant and afterwards they watered and fenced the seedlings.



Tour: Deep insight into the rich history of the Ashanti Kingdom - If you ever visit Kumasi without making time to visit the historical Manhyia Palace Museum, then the essence of your visit will never be complete. The Museum was a former official residence for three former Kings of Ashanti Kingdom. It houses a ceiling fan that has not been repaired for over eighty years but still blows air of historical importance. You can find thrones, swords, kente clothes, palanquins, bronze statues that bear testimony of a truly powerful kingdom.

The volunteers from Ackworth High School (Britain) learned the link between Ashanti and their British histories during the colonial era.



Football 2 Week Specials

Accra

Our 2 Week Sports Specials volunteers had cross-cultural experience while training with footballers of Madina Manchester United FC in Accra.

They visited Cape Coast on a weekend and explored the rich history of the Cape Coast castle. Back in Accra, they visited the Accra Mall. They cooled off at the Lizzy Sports complex swimming pool.



Tour of James Town

The volunteers toured James Town, also known as “British Accra” – a town hosting remnants of the slave trade as well as that of colonialism. The popular red and white painted light house edifice which used to signal colonial ships on the sea stands firmly near the coast line. A few hundreds of meters descent into the beach reveals a massive sea of canoes that are berthed along the coastline. Fishermen were busy mending their broken nets. Carpenters dug out huge logs to birth another canoe that will serve fish to the local people for several decades.



As the volunteers walked through the canoes and over the fishnets and across the face of the local fish mongers, the tour guide stopped and pointed to a large canoe. “You see that canoe. The fishermen can spend one week or more at sea in that canoe. They sleep on the thwart. They take food with them.” One of the volunteers asked: “What happens when it rains”? “The rain beats them,” he answered.



The Hills seem to be the region with a massive number of 2 Week as well as 1 Month Specials volunteers. With over fifty volunteers from different parts of the world, one can never be wrong in saying that the world met in the hills.

They painted school buildings and interacted with the school children as part of their Care activities. As a cultural exchange programme, we organized a cooking lesson for the volunteers. Away from the sophisticated cooking equipment from their homes in Europe, we introduced them to the traditional Ghanaian way off cooking with charcoal and coal pots as well as the use of “asanka” in grinding vegetables. (Asanka is a bowl-like pot made from clay)



Ghanaian Food of the Month



Banku & Tilapia

Banku is a typical Ghanaian staple food made from corn dough and cassava dough. The doughs are mixed together and water is added to form a porridge-like starchy liquid. It requires a lot of energy as one has to use both hands to stir while it cooks till it forms a strong starch that are rolled into balls which can be taken with spiced grilled tilapia.

Football: 2 Weekers vs. Regular Volunteers

The regular volunteers met the 2 Week/1 Month Specials volunteers in a fun football match in The Hills. All the volunteers were there in their numbers to support their teams. On the rainy pitch and amidst the slippery grass, the match was underway and the pitch promised to offer a few slips and falls, fouls and free kicks, penalty kicks and goals. The match ended 4 goals for both sides after one hour of regular time to force the game into a penalty shootout. Long story short, the 2 Week/1 Month Specials carried the day on the penalty shootout which adds another defeat to the regular volunteers after two streaks of matches between the 2 weekers and the regular volunteers.



Quick Read

Appropriate Dressing

Ghanaians tend to dress conservatively and are easily offended by the insensitivity of some foreigners in this area. Girls who do not cover their shoulders, stomach or lower back are likely to be frowned upon in [trotros](#) or around town. The best thing is to take note of what the local people are wearing and use this as a guide.

NOTE: It is important to have yourself covered at least down to the knees especially if you are a female volunteer working on projects [such as Public Health, Veterinary, Medicals, Human Rights and Care & Teaching] that send you to local communities since such “inappropriate” dressing causes a huge distraction for the local people who work with, thus, the impact of your work will be significantly minimized or at worst, your work may be ineffective.

2 Week Specials

Cape Coast

We received our 2 Week and 1 Month Specials volunteers totaling 41 and they arrived on the 30th of June. The volunteers were divided in three groups and they worked at the Aboom Methodist Primary, St Mary's Anglican and Ntranoa Basic schools.

Our next group of nineteen volunteers arrived on the 14th of July they worked at the St. Nicholas Anglican School. All volunteers got themselves involved with care activities in the mornings at the school and in the afternoon they painted the school.

The volunteers have been doing different kinds of care activities such as singing songs and rhymes, reading, finger painting, paper folding, environmental education and so on.

There was also time to play games with the children during the school break time. On the sports day, the played fun games such as sack jumping, egg race and balloon race.

After a week of hard work, the volunteers deserved a break and they all went for the weekend to Safari Beach Lodge. Were they could relax, play volleyball, football, enjoy some fresh coconuts and a bonfire in the evening. Almost all volunteers admitted that Safari Beach was like Paradise and that was something they never expected to experience in Ghana.



Human Rights Vacation School Accra

Our human rights office organized a vacation school on human rights for junior high school graduates in Accra. Our volunteers Jessie Poon, Simon Holmes and Katherine Macleod facilitated different sessions that were designed to equip the students with human rights information.

Jessie introduced the students to basic human rights. She explained the processes that led to the development of universal human rights and engaged the students throughout her facilitation.

Katherine introduced human rights within the African and Ghanaian context and explained the different legal framework that is protecting children and young people.

Simon took the students through the judicial system in Ghana and explained the jurisdiction and power that each court has and which court young people who offend the law are taken to.

The volunteers used innovative and fun activities to generate interest in the subject of human rights to the children who participated in the human rights vacation school twice every week for three continuous weeks.

The children showed significant interest in the judicial system especially since many Ghanaians have been watching and following a petition hearing at the Supreme Court which seeks to challenge the veracity of the 2012 general election results that was declared by the electoral commission.





PAHO

Volunteers and staff move offices for a week-long special programme in Dodowa

Human Rights Volunteers empowers communities in Dodowa

Our Human Rights volunteers and staff move office for a week from Accra to Dodowa to offer valuable human rights information to children and adults living in certain communities within the Dodowa district.

This unique programme provided an opportunity for our volunteers to interact and train the children at the Presbyterian Basic School. The volunteers worked in two separate groups – Human Rights Defenders and Girls Empowerment.

HR Defenders

The HR Defenders assembled girls of the school and did three presentations. They gave a general introduction to human rights and that generated discussions among the girls. As Charlotte Evans, our volunteer from England remarks: “The girls responded very well to the issues. They were engaged especially on the topic of domestic violence. They initially weren’t aware of some of the issues under domestic violence. I think now they have changed their attitude.”

Aside domestic violence and introduction to human rights, the group made a presentation on suspect rights and the death penalty. The children worked on case studies and made group presentations.

Charlotte admits that she gained a positive experience from the four day interaction with the students in the school. “It was very engaging and I’m happy that I have gained a Ghanaian perspective on certain issues. The feedback from the children was good. We gave them important information but I am taking back an open-mind and more awareness.”

Girls Empowerment School

The other group empowered the young girls in the school on topics such as sexual and reproductive health and HIV as well as the different types of abuses that meted out on especially girls in the home setting.

The volunteers empowered the girls to learn to say no when they do not want to. During the reproductive health and HIV session, they encouraged the girls to be bold and get tested.

Maddy Thimont Jack observed that the girls looked for a lot of advice from them and she admits that it was tough considering especially the difference in the Ghanaian and Western perspectives on women and girls having a right to saying no. She believes that they built the confidence of the girls during the sessions.

She realized that there were many confidential questions from the girls which she believes might suggest that they [the girls] may have been sexually abused.

It was interesting for her to learn about the culture in Dodowa and how that fits into the general Ghanaian culture and traditional practices. She made a useful observation: “Boys are the ones who choose to wear condoms most of the time. Speaking to the boys too about condom use may be more effective than speaking to the girls alone.”

Maddy enjoyed the games they played with the girls and was happy that they – the volunteers – got to know the girls very well over the few days of the outreach.

Focus Group Discussion on Gender Equality

The human rights teams visited the community people in their homes. One team held a focused group discussion with both young and old men and women on the issue of equality. The volunteers asked a set of questions through a translator and the community people who participated gave their responses to the questions. They explored the difference between a man and a woman and the roles that they can or must perform as they themselves believe they must do. The participants debated on whether a joint bank account of a couple is an important venture of a couple as well as whose responsibilities it is to head a family. Interesting responses were gathered by the volunteers.



Weekend Trips?

Oasis Beach Resort



This is a popular weekend getaway destination for lots of our volunteers. It is close by the beach and allows you to enjoy nature while you have fun with friends. It is also close by the Cape Coast Castle. They often have live performances in the evenings.

CAUTION!

Please do not take expensive phones or cameras to the place as it is a hotspot for petty theft. If you still want to take expensive things there, then be extra careful and keep them safe.

Volunteer with us!

Ghana is an exciting and popular place to spend some time on a volunteer project or work experience placement.

Projects Abroad has many projects available to volunteer in Ghana, based in Accra, Cape Coast, Koforidua, Kumasi and the Akuapem Hills.

Volunteers in Ghana work on a wide range of projects including Teaching, Care, Community – including Building and IT Projects, Medical & Healthcare Projects – including Medicine, Physiotherapy, Nursing, Midwifery and Dentistry, plus Journalism, Veterinary Medicine, Sports, and Human Rights.

Funny!



What do you do when the *trotro* you are traveling with “dies” on the hilly road to a deprived community that you are going to offer basic medical assistance to?

Get down and push!

That’s what our Accra medical coordinator Richard did.



Dirty Day!

Dirty Day at the New Life Orphanage:

A number of volunteers in Accra took a day off their normal duties to clean, scrub and paint the dormitory of the children at the New Life Orphanage in Nungua, an Accra suburb. They disinfected the mattresses that the children sleep on and assisted the girls of the orphanage to wash the children's dirty clothes. They dried the shoes of the children.

Projects Abroad donated mops, long sweeping brushes, buckets, dustbins, disinfectants and buckets to the orphanage after the volunteers finished using them.

Many thanks to the volunteers who participated in the dirty day activity and many thanks to Laura Smith who organized the clean up at the orphanage which is her Care placement.



JULY The month of giving

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Charly Ainsworth and Erin Curtis donated a set of items including toys and footballs worth CAD 500 to our Care placement in Teshie: Underprivileged Children's Center.



Justine de Noirmont and Andréanne Béguin with their friend Berenice Grivet who is a past volunteer raised 760 euros from their school Lycee Fenelon Sainte-Marie and donated that exact amount to New Life Orphanage in Teshie. Many thanks for a kind-hearted donation. Thanks to them, the money will be used to floor a room in the school that the children of the orphanage attend.

Our 2 Week Special volunteers in Accra donated footballs and training kits to the Madina Manchester United FC.



Laura Van Rooyen brought smiles on the faces of the children at the Apostolic Basic School in The Hills when she donated exercise books worth 200 Ghana Cedis.



Liz Abate, Trine Petersen, Lisa Jongorius and Stephanie Paukner raised funds and donated food and other items worth 800 dollars to the leprosy camp in Cape Coast.



Left: Justine and Andreanne donated clothes and shoes to the New Life Orphanage.
Above: The two volunteers also painted the orphanage walls with K. Haring artwork.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

Medical Outreach Odotom community



The medical team of volunteers and staff in Accra sends basic health care to a deeply outlying village called Odotom within the Ewutu Senya West constituency in the Central Region of Ghana.

The team travelled on a five kilometre dirt road in particularly bad shape connecting the nearest major road and the small community living on the fringes of poverty. The team met the chief and people of the community and they explained the purpose for which they visited the community with medical assistance.

A partner nurse with us educated the community people on the causes of hypertension (high blood pressure). She encouraged them to eat fruits and vegetables and avoid less fatty foods especially animal fat.

The volunteers, with the support of our medical staff run free blood pressure and sugar level tests for the men, women and children that gathered at



the outreach. The chief of the community was the first person to be tested for hypertension and high sugar levels.

The outreach was extended to a nearby primary and junior high school where the volunteers treated basic wounds, cuts and ringworms affecting the children.



Picture Galore!

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Accra volunteers scored the local footballers 3:2 at our soccer placement – Cantoment FC



2 Week Specials group from Ackworth High School in their host family in Kumasi.



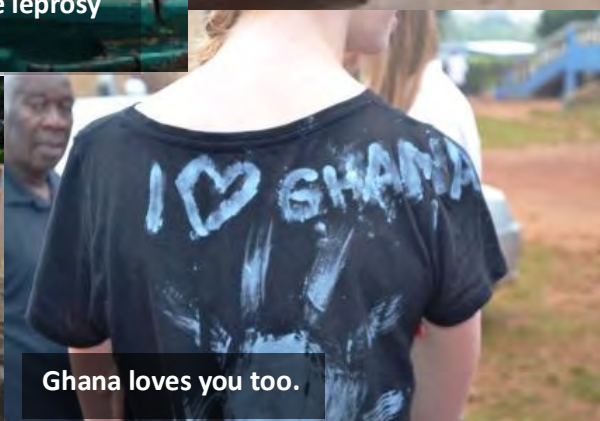
Liz, Lisa, Stephanie and Trine inside the bucket of a truck carrying items for donation at the leprosy camp in Cape Coast.



Our Care Coordinator Katie Woolley narrating a story while the children at our Care Placement Adom Day Care Centre acted it out during their open day.



Azonto dance lessons in Kumasi



Ghana loves you too.



Painting in The Hills



Justine De Noirmont plays with a child at the new life orphanage in Nungua – Accra.



What might our Hills coordinator, Prince be telling Jovanna Figueroa when she was here on a one month specials programme. Could it be a lecture on Africa? LOL

Social Media



Our social media platforms remains a powerful tool that connects volunteers, friends and family of Projects Abroad though 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 July.

An opportunity to relive

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

Visit us:

