



The Gateway

Official Newsletter - Projects Abroad Ghana

September 2013

Issue No. 50

Connect with us:



Her Ladyship Justice Rebecca Sittie, Justice of the High Court unveiling the FLAP plaque to officially open the center to the residence of Old Fadama. Pro-Volunteer Jennifer Croker (Aus) and volunteer Kristine Mikkelsen (US) and others raised funds to put up the building and develop the Program.

Project Abroad Ghana
House Number 19 Kanfla Street Asylum Down
PMB 226, Accra North, Ghana.

infomanager-ghana@projects-abroad.org
www.projects-abroad.net

In this edition

Human Rights Volunteers open

FLAP Center

PAHRO

ContentPage

Human Rights

Human Rights volunteers
open FLAP Center.....1

Inside Accra

Chale Wote street art festival –
James Town.....2

Social Work

Social Workers Isabella Steinmann and
Lindsey Hunt train teachers3

Farming

Updates from our Demonstration Farm
in the Hills3

Building

Ebenezer International School benefits
from a 2 classroom block project from
Projects Abroad.....3

Teaching

Creative workshop for teachers at
Underprivileged Children's Center..... 4

Human Rights

Volunteers renovate children's shelter.....4

New Region!

Volunteers start work in Winneba5

Volunteer Article

By William E. J. Jenner6 - 7

Social Media.....8

September 19 was the official opening of the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP) in Accra. The event brought together human rights volunteers, a Justice of the High Court member her Ladyship Rebecca Sittie, partners such as Amnesty International, UNDP, WILDAF, STAR Ghana, the Australian Vice Consular as well as Mr. Frederick Opoku of WISEEP who has played an instrumental role in establishing and building the centre in the slum.

FLAP is a community operated legal service in the heart of Old Fadama for the people of Old Fadama. The purpose is to improve the standard of living of the community by providing access to information and advice; by increasing awareness of human rights and legal rights; and by enabling people to enforce their rights, resolve disputes, and pursue legal remedies.

FLAP from the beginning will be staffed entirely by volunteers who are passionate about the cause. The volunteers are local residents of the slum and they have been trained on how to provide advice and mediate in disputes with the hope of finding amicable solutions.

The partners shared solidarity messages and congratulated the volunteers who have contributed in making the project a reality. The Projects Abroad country director also congratulated them for putting together the project.

All attendees of the programme paid a visit to the centre. The building has a mediation room and a small conference/presentation room for educational purposes.



Volunteers in a pose with the Her Ladyship Justice Sittie, Projects Abroad Human Rights Office Staff and some Old Fadama residents



Accra was bustling with a gathering of art lovers, artists and the James Town folk who hosted the third edition of the privately organized street art festival – *Chale Wote*. It drew local painters, installation artists, cultural drumming and dancing troupes, performance artists, stunt cyclists, skaters, digital artists and an array of art lovers both from Ghana and from the Diaspora.

GoLokal, an emerging installation and performance art group from Labadi thrilled the audience with the popular Ghanaian yellow jersey which had a combined painting of Ghana's first president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The actors and actresses were in strikingly eccentric costumes and had with them pestles and pipe holes that represented weapons with which they use to "protect the legacy of Nkrumah."

Stunt bikers left the patrons' jaws drop as they performed amazing and scintillating choreographed stunts

with their bikes. Cultural troupes played indigenous Ghanaian highlife music to the enjoyment of the club. Artists invaded the old Kingsway building with striking coloured paintings on the walls with a creative blend of art work and the deformities in the walls.

One cannot miss the beautiful interactive theater in Brazil House in James Town that featured the elements of nature as well as the ever cunning Ghanaian folktale character Kweku Ananse. The good old James Town was brought to life when the rains started and the famous and controversial musician Wanlov Kuborlor played soccer on the wet streets of James Town with the children.

You may want to put the next edition of Chale Wote on your calendar next year.



Social Work

Social Workers Isabella Steinmann and Lindsey Hunt train teachers



The New Life Orphanage has a school that the children in the home attend. With very little resources, they have managed to hire teachers to teach the children. Our professional volunteers Isabella and Lindsey planned a training workshop for the teachers to be able to handle the children in order to reinforce the value of learning in the children as well as respect and responsibility.

The two social workers interacted with the teachers and inquired from them the challenges they face as teachers in the school. Some of the challenges had to do with the lack of teaching aids and computers amongst others.

Farming

Updates from our demonstration farm in The Hills



The Projects Abroad Demonstration farm in The Hills had two volunteers Simone Salmine and Lina Eienkel who were supported by our farm coordinator to vegetable seedlings and take care of the animals on the farm.

The female pig (sow) and the rabbits are pregnant. The guinea pigs are in good health. The volunteers donated the harvests and animal products to the school children. They taught them the benefits of eating organic food that is fresh from the farm. They encouraged the children to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables to enhance their health.

Building

Ebenezer International School benefits from a 2 unit classroom block project from Projects Abroad



The building volunteers started work on a two unit classroom block for the Ebenezer International School in the Hills. They are supporting the building at each stage of construction. This will expand the capacity of the school to decently accommodate the students to enhance teaching and learning in the school.

Creative workshop for teachers
@
Underprivileged Children's Center



The Under Privileged Children's Centre in Accra is an open opportunity for children who have less at home to access education free of charge. Projects Abroad volunteers like Karen Karlsen are sent there to offer one-one learning assistance to the children of the school. The Projects Abroad Care coordinator Rhoda Apkakpavi organized a creative workshop to produce fashion accessories that will be sold in the Centre's shop to raise money to support the operations of the school.

Karen Karlsen, together with other local teachers of the Center created beads and added accessories to bathroom slippers to make them fashionable.



Human Rights Volunteers renovate Children's Shelter

Human rights volunteers have been working in the children's shelter for a few years now. They provide human rights information to the juveniles and assist them to learn math and English. Most of the juveniles have been admitted in the shelter because of severe behavioral issues they have.

The juveniles have a dormitory, classrooms and other facilities within the facility. A group of volunteers, Jenny Mill, Maddy Thimont Jack, Rachel Savage and Samuel Myhill raised funds from their home countries to finance repair works in the children's dormitory.

The repairs include replacement of the ceiling, windows and mosquito nettings. The volunteers who raised the funds have returned to their home countries and the ones that are still in Ghana will oversee the repair work in the children's shelter.



New Region!

First batch of volunteers start work in Winneba



5



Care Placement: Saint Anna's Family



Teaching Placement: Solocom Educational Centre



Care Placement: A Japanese volunteer playing with children at Saint Anna's Family Home



Teaching Placement: Church of Christ Basic School



Care Placement: A volunteer donating learning materials to the children at Saint Anna's Family Home.



Akwaaba! (welcome!) Whether you are a PRO volunteer or a volunteer on a gap year, or about to start university, as we say in Ghana, 'You are welcome!' This article is based on the experiences

of myself, a Registered Nurse from the United Kingdom. I hope my experiences will empower you on your own very unique and special adventure here in Ghana.

I'm Will (Twi name Kwaku) and I have spent 10 weeks here in Kumasi, Ashanti Region of Ghana working as a PRO volunteer in a small district hospital and also assisting the public health team on outreach to those in the community. Part of my duties have included essential wound care, medication administration, consultations with Medical Officers regarding treatment and care of patients and performing a variety of health checks to educate and empower the people of Ghana to make informed decisions on their health. All this is to ensure they are fit to contribute to the growing economy and ensure longevity of life.



It hasn't all been work though. Throughout my time here I have travelled with my fellow abroni (white men/women) volunteers to a variety of beautiful and exciting destinations in Ghana (listed later on). This has aided me greatly in developing an understanding of the heritage, culture and beliefs of the Ghanaian people. Ghanaian people are generally God fearing, friendly, helpful, peaceful and proud of their country. There is a strong ethos here but this does not mean that everyone is as I have just described. As with everyone we meet in life, there is a small minority who have the potential to cause harm or cheat us (some have the

opinion that the abroni are rich and will raise their prices significantly).

I'd like to introduce to you to a couple of phrases you may well come to readily use during your placement here: T.I.A. (or T.I.G.) – This Is Africa (or This Is Ghana) and G.M.T. – Ghanaian Mean Time. You may be wondering what this mad Englishman is on about, but you will soon come to relate to these phrases as your journey takes its path. T.I.A. – anything unexpected or otherwise out of the ordinary for us 'westerners', whether it be a trotro breaking down and filling the cab with black smoke or seeing a goat tied to the top of an articulated lorry loaded with grain: T.I.A.!

These events are commonplace and ordinary for Ghanaians and can provide amusement for us in hindsight... G.M.T. – Not to be confused with the efficiency of Greenwich Mean Time! Ghanaians are laid back people but also their transportation / road systems are not the best (see example in T.I.A. of the trotro!). As a result, people can be a bit more than fashionable late for meeting or buses can be delayed in their departure. As frustrating as these may be in delaying us during our travels remember: T.I.A.!

So, what is your mission here in Ghana – you'll be asked this a great deal by the locals. Whether it be Medical, Public Health, Veterinary or Care, I'd like to give a few tips on your placement once you have gotten over the culture shock.

- Get involved in your placement. Embrace the country, the culture and their work ethic. You may have to promote yourself and continuously ask to be involved in your workplace – don't be shy! If you argue for your limitations, sure enough they are yours!
- You may see bad practice. Whether this is a pig being punched in the face by the farmer as a way of

"anaesthetic" when performing surgery, a lack of privacy and dignity to patients when being reviewed in hospital, outdated treatments (partially due to lack of resources) or children receiving the cane at school. But as Winston Churchill said, 'Difficulties mastered are opportunities won'

- Be tactful in aiding our Ghanaian colleagues to change their practice for the better – educate and advocate!
- Learn some Twi – these can be simple phrases and aid you in working alongside colleagues, caring for children or even bartering for the price of a taxi to get to your placement
- Be punctual for placements. Just because others may turn up late does not entitle you to – set the professional example as a volunteer. This also goes the same for littering – role model and don't do it.
- Let's talk about mosquitoes for a moment. Yes I hear the collective groan but this is serious. Have you looked through the Ghana handbook? Have you brought your mosquito net and been to get a prophylactic course of medication from your doctor? Malaria is a serious risk here and should not be taken lightly. In the 10 weeks I was based in Ghana, I knew of 6 cases of malaria among volunteers. The illness can virtually take you out of action for a week limiting your placement; interactions with other volunteers and you're travelling and doing the touristy 'bits'.
- There is no way of eliminating the risk and even following all the rules does not guarantee safety. The advice as per Projects Abroad is to sleep under a mosquito net – check regularly for holes mosquitoes could get through, and if your room has a fan, keep it on, keep covered when out at night – no short sleeved tops or shorts and sandals, wear mosquito repellent.

I have also been told while here that mosquitoes are attracted to black so avoid this colour at night. Be safe out there!

Now on to the more fun bit: travelling! You've worked hard on placement all week and now it's time for you and your fellow volunteers to go see the sights of Ghana. You'll note in this article a few pictures. These are photos I've been able to capture first hand on my adventures. I'm certain with a keen eye and patience (when photographing the wildlife), you'll take much better pictures than me, to aid you in making friends and family all the more jealous when you regale them with your tales!



So get planning, discuss the potential plan with the Projects Abroad staff – they are the experts in their country so use their knowledge to the upmost. When travelling in a large group, ensure all in the group understand what is happening (and when) should you for any reason become separated – having to take two separate buses because the first one is full, for example. As part of this, always have a 'plan B' – remember T.I.A. and anything that can go wrong probably will, whether it be a drastically delayed bus, double booking of rooms at your hotel / hostel.



When going out in the evening to a restaurant or bar, keep your wits about you – don't flash the cash or your expensive electronic items. I unfortunately was part of a group when two volunteers during the course of an evening had their mobile phone and camera stolen and this was not realised until much later in the night. This

is not to say do not enjoy yourself or not to mingle with others. I have made many friends here from Ghana – they've taught me a few of their local dances (or tried to), aided me in bartering in the local markets or assisted me in getting to places of interest.

Depending upon where you are based, there are many attractions you can travel to enjoy. Some may be a mere day trip; others require a full day of travelling to reach them. On my adventures, I experienced both day trips and very far away trips! Make sure you take adequate supplies such as food and water. These can be found along the roadside by roaming sellers but it is always best to have these items readily available – prevention of dehydration is much better than cure and a potential visit to hospital!



Some of the areas / attractions I visited, which you also may wish to consider are:

- *Mole National Park (safari)*
- *Cape Coast (Castle and night life)*
- *Kakum National Park (canopy walk and bird watching)*
- *Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary*
- *Besease Museum and Shrine*
- *Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary*
- *Cocoa plantation at Adjeikrom*
- *Boti Waterfalls and Umbrella Rock*
- *Lake Bosumtwi*

I hope this article has been of use to you. You at least deserve congratulations for getting to the end of it! Enjoy your trip to Ghana and allow yourself to be immersed in the culture. Remember that travel is the only thing you pay for that makes you richer! So become rich that in years to come, you have many stories to tell of your adventures. I for one look forward to listening to them should we meet. Until that time, enjoy Ghana!

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.

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 September.

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:

