

# Savannah Education Trust Newsletter



Educating Ghana's most needy children ▪ Charity No. 1104896 ▪ Issue No. 3 ▪ Summer 2007

**This is a newsletter of the Savannah Education Trust, a charity set up to provide an education for some of the most needy children in West Africa. The initial aim has been to build a Christian primary school in Bagri, northern Ghana. The Trust is also providing each schoolchild in the village with a meal each day and funding a number of teacher training scholarships to attract teachers to this remote and poor area.**

The last formal update was the report of our visit to Ghana for the official opening of the school in October 2006. We were very thankful to see Bagri Baptist Primary School open. It is located in attractive buildings and occupied by some three hundred happy, uniformed children enjoying an education.

Further copies of the visit report are available on request.

Since our return we have continued to receive monthly written reports on progress at the school and are in regular telephone contact with the Programme Director, Pastor Charles Karbo.

## News from Ghana

### Second phase of building work

The main school building formally opened in October 2006, and in Summer 2007 the school completed its second academic year (and the first in its new building). The cost of the school was £39,500 and the borehole was £4,500. Furnishings to date (e.g. chairs, desks, cupboards, blackboards etc) have been £2,000.

The borehole is in daily use by the villagers as well as the school children. We hope that the clean water will have long term positive benefits for the health of the village as many of the serious diseases in rural Africa are spread by dirty water. In addition, the borehole means an end to the long trek to collect dirty water giving more time for parents to earn a living and for children to go to school.

Ghana was in the world news during March when it celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an independent country.

Some schoolchildren from Bagri visited the local town, Lawra, where they enjoyed a marching competition and other celebrations. Many of the younger children will only occasionally have left their village, so this was a very exciting day for them.

The second phase of building work consists of three important projects (the estimated total cost of these projects is £38,000):

#### ▪ Teachers' accommodation

This is important in order to attract teachers to work in a village that is seven miles from the nearest town. Currently some teachers cycle several miles through the heat or during the wet season, tropical rain, to reach school.

#### ▪ Toilet block

When you consider that just one gram of faeces can contain 10 million viruses, one million bacteria, one thousand parasite cysts and one hundred worm eggs, it is easy to see how without proper disposal, human waste can contaminate water and food, and how this causes disease. It is intended to improve hygiene at the school by using a simple but effective toilet design known as the Kumasi Ventilated Pit Latrine.



## Ghana Day

## • A nursery

A *nursery block* is crucial if all school-aged children are to attend school. The nature of farming in this savannah region means that both parents need to work in the fields during the “wet” (or growing) season. As a result the older children, particularly the girls, are expected to look after their younger brothers and sisters, preventing them from going to school. An important aim of the Trust is to provide an education for all children - girls and boys - no matter how poor. It is clear that if all of the older children are to go to school, then the younger ones need a nursery.

The nursery block, like the school itself, will be a mud structure comprised of classrooms, an office and a storeroom.

In **January 2007** land behind the school was cleared and the foundations of the nursery prepared. The village has again been divided into work groups, labouring in shifts and starting work early before the heat of the day.

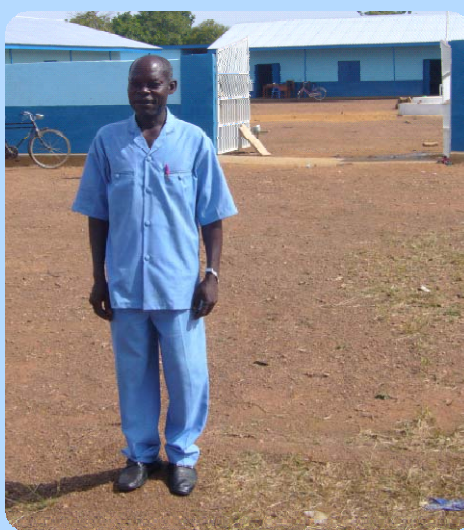
In **March 2007** the mud structure was completed and a wall erected around the perimeter. In **April 2007** the roof was added and in **May 2007** the external walls were plastered to prevent the rains during the wet season from damaging the mud.

Across **Summer** and **early Autumn 2007** it is hoped to complete the internal plastering, painting and furnishing so that the nursery will be ready for children at the beginning of the next academic year.



## Teacher- training scholarships

Seven teacher training scholarships are ongoing and we are pleased to report that three of the recipients are now enrolling in teacher training college.



The general lack of qualified teachers, the poor standard of unqualified teachers and the difficulties of teachers travelling to remote villages are significant problems in this region.

The teacher training scholarships provide a rare opportunity for local Christians to obtain a professional qualification. The scholarships are provided on the condition that the teachers return to this impoverished area to teach once trained.

In May 2006 the Trust also funded a workshop for 65 unqualified teachers in the area around Bagri village. Teachers without any professional qualifications form the bedrock of the teaching in this area, often to a poor standard. The teachers met for an intensive week-long course during school holidays, and the programme was greatly appreciated by the local teachers, schools and district education office. The cost was £1,800.

## Another School?

The Trust has been asked to consider the possibility of helping with another Christian school in a similarly needy village locally. We have agreed prayerfully to consider the request, on the understanding that the current priority is to consolidate the work started in Bagri village.



# Our Partners: The Ghanaian Government

*Over the course of a number of newsletters, we have been describing our partners in the work. In the last two newsletters we considered the contribution of the local Baptist church and then the tribal elders of the Dagaabe tribe. This newsletter we consider the role of the local Ghanaian government.*

Ghana is divided into 10 regions and 112 districts. Bagri village is located in the poorest region (Upper West Region) and one of the poorest districts (Lawra District). Clearly the Ghanaian government have significant problems to combat, but it is telling that they spend approximate 30% of their annual income on education.

A visit to the local Ghana Education Service offices, on the edge of Lawra, gives some insight into the struggle that local government faces. The offices are entered up a long staircase to the upper storey of a worn colonial-era building. Education officials share a number of dark offices, sitting behind desks full of paper but

with no computers or telephones in sight. There are simply not enough resources to provide education for every child in the district. At the opening ceremony for Bagri School, the Director of Education commented that the villagers were "hardworking farmers and fishermen who have long asked the Education Office for the establishment of a school." Without assistance from the Trust generations of children would face a future without an education.

The Trust's policy has been to work alongside (although not through) government, and the government have warmly welcomed the presence of an educational charity in their district. They agreed at the outset to fund the ongoing costs of teachers if the school's building costs were met by the charity - making the school sustainable in the long term - and they have fulfilled their promise. The representative of the District Commissioner (the head of the district local government) described the Trust at the school's opening ceremony as



*"a strategic partner who shares in our visions and dreams."*

Importantly, the Education Service are sympathetic to the school's Christian ethos and allow Pastor Charles Karbo oversight of the school. It is clear that, across Ghana, the government are used to working with charities and churches of various denominations.

On a continent where governments sometimes have a reputation for corruption, we are thankful that the local Ghana District Education office have been helpful partners and are supporting the school without undermining its Christian basis.

## Feeding programme



A full-time cook was appointed during 2006 (with her wages paid by the villagers) and the feeding programme has recently completed its first 12 months. There is no doubt that this is one of the main reasons that the school is able to provide an education for each child in the village, no matter how poor.



### Sammy Dapilah



We are pleased that a trained accountant is assisting Pastor Charles Karbo with the management of the work. Sammy Dapilah is well known to the Trustees from our visits to Ghana. He is a native of Lawra, but studied finance (on a government scholarship) at the University of Ghana. He provides detailed accounts, with backing invoices, on a monthly basis.

# News from the UK

During May we held meetings in Bedfordshire and Surrey to provide updates on the work of the Trust, including a DVD of our visit, a tour (using satellite pictures) of the village and information on future plans. We have been invited to speak, if the Lord will, on the following dates:

## Forthcoming meetings

Saturday 1 September 2007, Sussex  
(East Hoathly Village Hall), 2.30pm

Saturday 13 October 2007, Kent  
(Matfield Village Hall), 3.30pm

Directions are available from our website or from Trustees. We would very willingly undertake further illustrated talks about the work of the Trust. Please feel free to contact us if this would be of interest.

## Funding

We remain very grateful for the generous donations that we have received. We continue to be moved by the way in which support has been given, and are glad to have this opportunity to acknowledge the goodness of God and to express our sincere gratitude to all who have contributed.

**Regular direct debit contributions are especially helpful as they enable us to meet the ongoing costs of the feeding and scholarship programmes as well as plan for future projects.**

**Direct debits can be set up via our website ([www.savannaheducationtrust.org](http://www.savannaheducationtrust.org)) or forms are available from the address below.**

## Schools

We are pleased that a number of schools have been fundraising for the Trust.

## Research

Prior to starting the charity a considerable amount of research was carried out into sustainable rural development in Africa. This work is ongoing but recently we have been considering the feasibility of solar energy as a way of providing Bagri Baptist Primary School with electricity. This would open up the possibility of running evening classes and providing adult education.

## Website

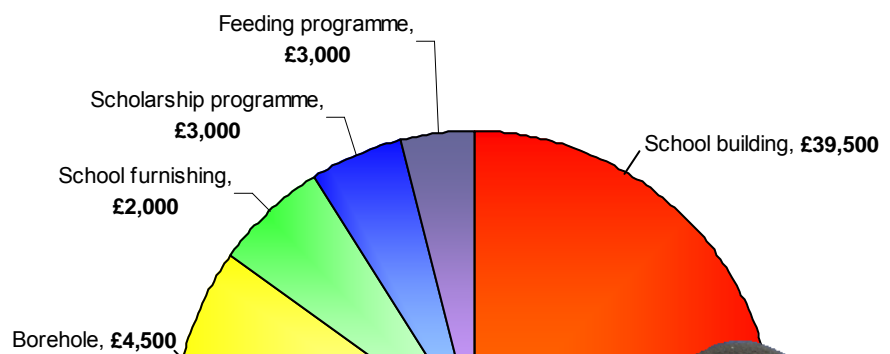
The site ([www.savannaheducationtrust.org](http://www.savannaheducationtrust.org)) now includes pictures from the most recent visit to Ghana. The section entitled "news update" provides the latest details of the work.

## A new chief for Lawra

At the start of July 2007, the new chief of Lawra District (which includes Bagri village) was inaugurated. The chief of Lawra is a highly responsible position as he acts as 'paramount' or overall chief of the area and also has a national role. The Ghanaian Times reported that the ceremony 'attracted one of the biggest crowds in recent times.' The new chief paid tribute to the Regent (Pastor Charles Karbo, our Programme Director) for 'holding the fort and ensuring peace.' We met the new chief, who will now be known as Naa Puowelle Karbo III, when we visited Ghana last year. He pledged his strong support for the work of the Trust.



## Expenditure to date (£52,000)



*N.B. The figure of £2,000 for school furnishing covers double-desks, blackboard and cupboards for three classrooms and furniture for the assembly hall, library and office. The figure of £3,000 for the feeding programme covers a 9 month period for approximately 300 pupils.*

