



Savannah
Education Trust

Newsletter



Educating Ghana's most needy children ▪ Charity No. 1104896 ▪ Issue No. 4 ▪ Spring 2008

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.

Nursery Block Completed

The nursery building, located at the back of the school, was completed in time for the Autumn 2007 term. A total of 55 pre-school children are now attending. We are planning to equip the nursery with some basic toys and educational resources (these will be the only toys in the village).

The great advantage of the nursery is that the older children are now free to concentrate on their studies, rather than looking after their younger siblings. Without this provision, many older children (particularly the girls) would be withdrawn from school especially at the busy harvest time.



The nursery is built: above right, constructing the roof; above left, artwork on perimeter wall



Flooding and the...



Crops under water

Feeding Programme

As we communicated in our circular at Christmas, the area around Bagri was hit by significant floods just before harvest at the end of August and start of September. The small amount of damage to the school buildings was easily repaired. Much more significant was the virtual destruction of this year's crops.

The food shortage in the villages is now acute and the price of food on the nearest market in Lawra is high. There is widespread hunger. We are thankful that we have received a number of kind donations that have allowed us to extend the food programme, and we were able to send a small amount of uncooked

food for the children to take home from school as they finished for the Christmas holidays. We hope to continue this provision over the coming months. We are thankful that that the additional food appears to be preventing the worst of the suffering, and allows children in the village to continue with their education.



Above: Mothers receive additional food



Christmas in Bagri village

At the end of the school term school-children were given a small selection of sweets as a Christmas treat. For the vast majority of them this was the first time that they had received a Christmas present.

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We continue to be delighted and extremely grateful for so many kind contributions. We are glad to have this opportunity again to acknowledge the goodness of God.

DVD

A new DVD about the work of the Trust is available. This was used in our most recent presentations. It is based around the opening of Bagri School and gives an insight into the lives of children in the village.

We are happy to provide the DVD free of charge to anyone who is interested and copies can be requested by telephone (01444 456 865) or email (through the website, www.savannaheducationtrust.org)

Resources for the main school

The Trust has continued with the equipping of the main school. All children can now sit at a desk to study and, during the latter half of 2007, basic benches were also provided for the assembly room at the school. We are also glad that Bibles and Christian books have been provided for the school.



Vehicle for the work

The travel undertaken by our programme managers in Ghana places a considerable pressure on them. Currently a moped is the only form of transport available, and travel to and around the village (including, for example, transport of food) poses a problem. A project to build a second school (some 20 miles from Bagri) would make a vehicle essential. We would like to purchase a four-wheel drive vehicle to use on the dirt tracks. This would cost about £15,000 (the high cost reflects the fact that these vehicles are imported into Ghana).

Teachers' accommodation

Can you imagine cycling seven miles to school through tropical rain or heat of up to 46°C (115°F)? This is the situation currently facing teachers at Bagri School. And it is a challenge that most rural schools in Africa face: the result of a lack of suitable houses locally for teachers. It helps to explain why vacancies at rural schools are hard to fill, and why teachers are often absent.

The Trust hopes to provide three basic homes for teachers and their families. We are thankful to have been donated a 22 acre site for the school by tribal leaders. The houses will be situated on the ridge above Bagri School which has an attractive view and (more important) catches any cooling wind. These houses - consisting of three rooms - will be constructed using homemade breeze blocks rather than traditional techniques. Much of the preparatory work has been undertaken and building work will be ongoing across 2008.



Construction of breeze blocks



Sammy Dapilah at the same spot two months later

A visit to Bagri School

Clare Tyers, a dental surgeon from the UK, visited the school in October 2007. Her reason for visiting the area was to set up a dental clinic in Nandom (10km north of Bagri). A friend of Clare's, born in the area but now in the UK, is trying to improve the health and education of the town. She describes her experiences.

I recently had the opportunity to visit Bagri School as I have just returned from a trip to the north-west of Ghana on a different project. We had a party of twenty with us, including teachers, nurses and doctors. We are hoping that this will be a long term project and are planning to return later in the year to continue our work.

It is a coincidence that Nandom is so close to Bagri school, but I couldn't waste the chance to see this project in the flesh!

I think that it was all the more impressive because I had seen the reality of education in the area from Nandom primary school. The Bagri school project gave our teachers fantastic insight into what could be achieved in Nandom.

We were given a warm welcome when we arrived at Bagri by Sammy Dapilah. He seemed delighted that we had made the effort to visit. We were given a guided tour of the school. The building was clean and well presented, the children were very well-behaved and all the classes were being taught by staff on teacher training scholarships sponsored by Savannah Trust. It was a different world at Ko in Nandom which is essentially run by volunteers who are often less literate than the pupils that they are teaching.

The pupils in Nandom don't have any water or electricity at the school. They walk $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the nearest bore hole to get a drink of water which wastes a lot of classroom time and in the hot humid conditions is

really unpleasant, I saw 8 year olds carrying 8 litres of water on their heads (I couldn't even lift that quantity!). The pupils at Bagri have the benefit of a bore hole at the school.

The nursery school has just been completed. It has been thoughtfully decorated and is enclosed within a solid wall which makes it safe.

We met the village chief which was an honour and were, as is tradition, presented with a cockerel. We had to leave the cockerel behind though as I don't think he would have appreciated a two day trip down to Accra. I believe that he lives on!

Finally I was really touched because Sammy then gave me a basket with my name woven into it. It sits on display in my kitchen in Suffolk.

If we can achieve in Nandom half of what has been achieved in Bagri we will be amazed. The children of this village are being given a fantastic start in life and as my friend, born in Nandom, can testify, education is the key to escaping the poverty trap.



The headteacher with visitors; nursery in the foreground, school behind

A second school?

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Trustees are carefully considering the possibility of establishing another Christian school in a village several miles from Bagri. We are conscious both of the acute needs, and also the significant challenges. To discuss this further,

Pastor Charles Karbo (Project Manager) and Sammy Dapilah (Project Accountant) have been invited to visit the UK probably in October, if the Lord will. Neither currently have passports, and visas will have to be secured too. We hope also that a visit will be an opportunity for supporters to meet them, and discuss the work.