



Savannah
Education Trust

Newsletter



Educating Ghana's most needy children ▪ Charity No. 1104896 ▪ Issue No. 5 ▪ Autumn 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.

Teachers' Accommodation *completed*

A teacher's life in northern Ghana is difficult. The pay is low (some £25 per month) and resources scarce. But from this academic year, teachers at Bagri School will have somewhere to live. Building work has been ongoing throughout 2008, and is now complete. The buildings have been constructed in a slightly different manner to the main school

and nursery block. They have been built using home made breeze blocks rather than the more traditional (and labour intensive) technique. The simple, colourful buildings are homes for teachers and their families and will help to attract staff to this remote area. Some cycle up to 1½ hours to school, and so the accommodation will also save them the long daily journey they currently endure through tropical heat and rain.



The teachers' accommodation block

Our partners in Ghana:



Some parents in 'Sunday' best

Over the course of a number of newsletters, we have been describing our partners in the work. We have already considered the contribution of the local Baptist church, the tribal elders of the Dagaabe tribe and the local Ghanaian government. This newsletter we consider Bagri's parents.

Parents are a critical part of any school – but particularly so at Bagri School in that they constructed the school building. As we said at the opening ceremony in 2006: “This school is a great tribute to Bagri community. It is *your* school. You built it with your own hands. And it will provide an education for *your* children.”

The parents in the village are almost all either fishermen or farmers (and often a combination of both). The work is extremely difficult and produces a meagre return scarcely feeding their own families. The fishermen spend long periods away from the village on

fishing trips along the Black Volta river and, during the dry (“hungry”) season, the young men head south to farm in more fertile parts of the country. The manual work is not simply the preserve of the men. The women not only have responsibility for household chores and carry the heavy loads of water back from the river or waterhole. They also work long hours in the field, particularly at seedtime and harvest.

The advantages of education are not necessarily obvious to parents in a village where they (and indeed every preceding generation) have no experience of school. In the months before construction started, our programme manager - Pastor Charles Karbo - held many meetings with Bagri's parents to provide information about the proposed school, and to inform them of the benefits. Indeed when we visited during 2005, a public meeting was held to give parents an opportunity to ask us questions. A parents' committee was subsequently

formed to help plan and organise the work.

The mud core of the structure was then built by the parents, who were divided into three work groups starting at dawn each morning. Carpenters, plasterers and other skilled labourers from the local town of Lawra were used to complete the project.

It is a sacrifice for parents in this area to send children to school, as they cannot then be used to help with farming and other chores. It is to relieve the considerable pressure on parents that the Trust is providing a meal for each child each day. In this way, we hope that all parents in Bagri will send their children to school.

As we carefully consider a further school in another village, Pastor Charles Karbo is already beginning to work with other parents to ensure that – should we proceed – they will be enthusiastic about a school in their midst, and also willing to help build it.

A new vehicle

With the help of a number of grant-making trusts, who have given specifically for this purpose, a vehicle has been purchased. It is a Nissan double-cabin pickup: a robust vehicle, essential for travel across the rough terrain in northern Ghana. This is proving a great help to Pastor Charles and his team, and is a necessary first step toward undertaking work in other remote villages in this region.



Pastor Charles Karbo (right) with Pastor James Kori in front of the vehicle

Savannah Calendar



The journey to school often means walking a long distance across the savannah.

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|---------------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | Late Summer Holiday | 24 | | | | |
| 30 | 31 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |

August

Savannah Education Trust

A calendar for 2009 is now available for purchase. It is attractively produced and shows scenes around Bagri School and village. The size when opened is A3 portrait with the cost being £8.50, plus £1.20 postage & package. Any proceeds will, of course, be used to further the work of the Trust.

Orders and payment (made out to Savannah – see below) should be sent directly to:

Pingles Publishing
Cross Lane Close
Lakenheath
Suffolk
IP27 9HZ

Tel: 01842-861142

Tony: tony@pinglespublishing.co.uk

The calendars can be paid for either by cheque, made payable to 'Savannah Education Trust', or through our secure online donation facility at www.savannaheducationtrust.org (The online donation facility also incidentally accepts payment in euros or dollars). If paying through the internet, please let both Pingles and Savannah know that you have paid using the online facility.

Thank you!

As we draw toward the end of another year we continue to be thankful to God and to all of our kind supporters. We are finding support through regular direct debits especially helpful, particularly as costs increase and as we plan for possible expansion of the work.

Birth of Priscilla

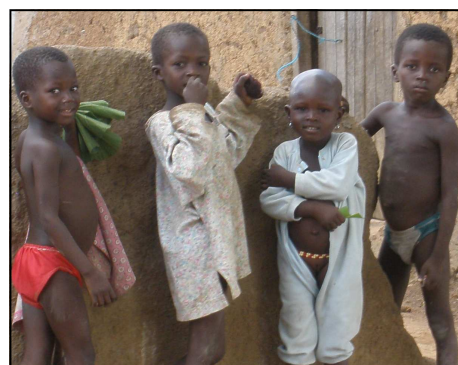
At the end of September, Pastor Charles Karbo's wife (who is called Grace) gave birth to a baby: a little girl called Priscilla. This is their fifth child.

The feeding programme

A meal continues to be provided for each child each day, which is a tremendous help to families, particularly when food is scarce.

As reported at the time, the 2007 harvest was decimated by a lack of rain followed by flooding. To help alleviate widespread hunger - and worse - the Trust extended the feeding programme. A small amount of uncooked food has been provided, through the school, for families in the village of Bagri. The harvest in 2008 appears to be much better, and the

flooding less severe. We are thankful for this - and for the very generous support that has allowed us to expand the feeding programme. The experience does, however, demonstrate the difficult and fragile nature of life in northern Ghana.



"A prevailing impression of happiness and hope" ... a visit to Bagri

In August 2008, Kate Hickman and Rebecca Ramsbottom visited Ghana. Although based in the capital, Accra, they spent five days in Ghana's Upper West Region and visited the projects of the Savannah Education Trust.

Having followed the development of *Savannah Education Trust* with keen interest over the past few years, it was with great anticipation that we set out for "the north". We were soon to discover that even the best of photographs and DVDs pale in comparison with the reality that is *Bagri Baptist Primary School*.

Bumping along a dusty road through the lush savannah, the landscape is green in every direction until, in the distance you catch a glimpse of vibrant blue. The school is not merely a wonderful provision for this remote village but is a startlingly beautiful landmark. It was a joy to see the children: bright eyed, happy and, most importantly, learning. We visited each classroom and the nursery, which have recently had some number and alphabet charts attractively painted on their interiors. The children, timid at first because unused to white people, grew in confidence before we left and delightedly posed for photographs beside the new Savannah vehicle. We were able to gather all of



the children together and say a few words to them before giving them the small gift of a Bible text card each. Many of these children attend the Sunday School at Bagri's Baptist Chapel and we were pleased to see their familiar faces when we worshipped with them on Sunday. The school is visible from the chapel and the spiritual link is evident: Pastor Charles often conducts worship at the school, gathering all of the children in a purpose-built small hall.

We also visited the nearly complete teachers' accommodation block, which is built to an excellent standard. It will greatly help those teachers with long journeys as some told us that they travel for up to an hour and a half morning and evening. Both teachers and children are

clearly benefiting from the bore-hole provided by *Savannah*. As the sun beat down it was reassuring to see that the children have free access to clean drinking water. Their bright and smiling faces left us with a prevailing impression of happiness and hope.

The happiness of the children at *Bagri Baptist Primary School* became more significant as the week went on and we visited other areas in the region. We then realised what Bagri had been like before the school and its feeding programme were in place, as we saw too many children malnourished, in rags and devoid of the energy they should have. In one village, named Pavuu, children sat motionless through a long meeting with the Savannah team and village elders – a patience that testifies to their deep desire for a school. When we asked them (through a translator) if they would like a school in their village, the quietness was dispelled by shouts of affirmation. These villagers are people who, in their own words, "have nothing" and they know that the only way to break the bitter cycle of poverty is through education. We cannot forget the children: wistful and wide-eyed, waiting for a brighter future.

