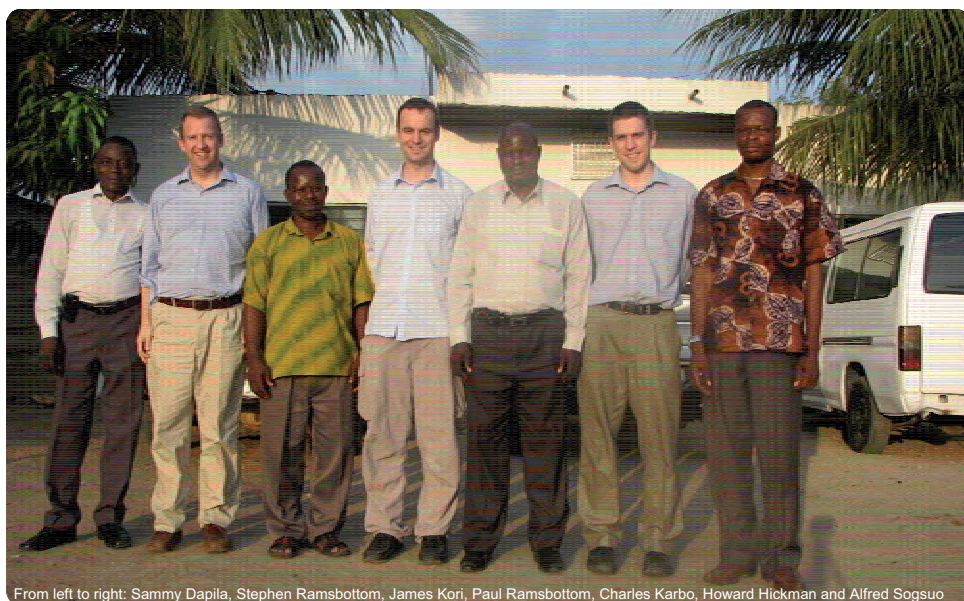


# Savannah Education Trust Newsletter



Educating Ghana's most needy children ▪ Charity No. 1104896 ▪ Issue No. 7 ▪ Winter 2009/10

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 project, now complete, 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.



From left to right: Sammy Dapila, Stephen Ramsbottom, James Kori, Paul Ramsbottom, Charles Karbo, Howard Hickman and Alfred Sogsuo

## Visit to Ghana, October 2009

During October 2009, the Trustees visited Ghana to discuss the future direction of the charity's work at this important juncture in our history. We were very grateful that the full costs of the visit were funded by a donation specifically for this purpose.

Our time limits meant that we were not able to make the long journey to the north of the country and so flew into Ghana's capital, Accra. We were joined by three people who had travelled from the north of the country: Pastor Charles Karbo, Programme Manager, as well as Alfred Sogsuo and Sammy Dapila.

Meetings took place in a small white-washed, wooden chapel in Nungua on the edge of Accra, with refreshments provided by the pastor's wife ranging from freshly picked coconuts to Lipton tea.



Fruitful discussions

The discussions proved very fruitful and a number of important decisions were taken. These included employing Charles Karbo and a helper, Alfred Sogsuo, from 2010 to work for Savannah. This will ease the pressure, both financial and practical, they are currently facing – and allow them to devote more of their energies to the work of Savannah. An important benefit will be to allow more detailed reporting of activities and finances. Their role as employees will mean that they can also



Lighthouse Baptist Chapel, Nungua, Accra

spend more time visiting the school(s), helping to improve the level of education provided and allowing them to take school assemblies on a regular basis.

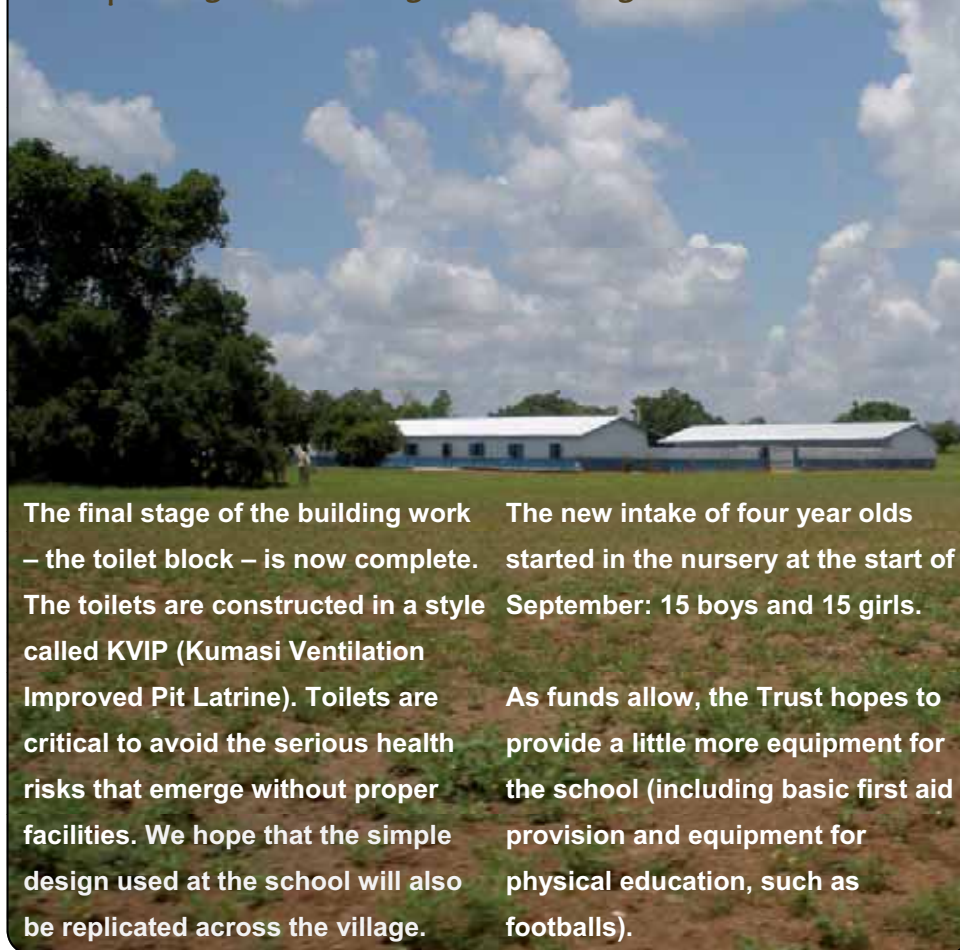
Much of the conversation was, of course, focussed on the future – and the expansion of the work into other villages near to Bagri. We report on this elsewhere in the newsletter.

A short video account of our visit can be viewed on our website by following the news update link.



# the KVIP

*Completing the building work at Bagri*



The final stage of the building work – the toilet block – is now complete. The toilets are constructed in a style called KVIP (Kumasi Ventilation Improved Pit Latrine). Toilets are critical to avoid the serious health risks that emerge without proper facilities. We hope that the simple design used at the school will also be replicated across the village.

The new intake of four year olds started in the nursery at the start of September: 15 boys and 15 girls.

As funds allow, the Trust hopes to provide a little more equipment for the school (including basic first aid provision and equipment for physical education, such as footballs).

## Disability Matters

Daafah Pagyel is a young boy in Bagri. He enjoys going to school. He is bright and attentive, but has a problem that none of the other children face. His world is silent. He is entirely deaf.

An important aim of the Trust from the start has been that every child should be able to attend school. This includes children with disabilities. Disabled children have a particularly tough time in this difficult environment - and their disabilities are often seen as a stigma.

Daafah's father died when he was very young, and his family have no means to pay for additional help. The Trust is hoping to provide a small scholarship (as little as £40 a year) to allow Daafah to attend a specialist boarding school in the regional capital, Wa. This is some 50 miles away.

## Work in Pavuu

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, we hope to establish a Christian school in the village of Pavuu, which is about 12 miles from Bagri.

A survey has been completed, detailing the number of children in the village who would be able to attend the school.

The first stage of the work is the drilling of a borehole. This provides clean water for the school and, because a borehole can only be drilled in limited locations, the school's position is partly determined by the location. But the use of water in construction means that a plentiful supply is also important for the building work. Initial exploratory drilling has taken place, and we hope building work will commence soon, if the Lord will.

Some £80,000 toward the cost of the school has now been contributed, for which we are very grateful. This leaves an anticipated shortfall of about £20,000.



*A young child in Pavuu*



### Activity in the UK

During Autumn 2009 we were invited to hold presentations in Hullavington (Wiltshire), Lindfield (West Sussex), Strood (Kent) and Lakenheath (Suffolk).

Our next presentation, if the Lord will, is on Saturday 20 March 2010 at 2.30pm in the Church Room, adjacent to the Parish Church in Ripley (Surrey).

We wish each of our supporters a happy New Year. We would again like to acknowledge the goodness of God and the kind support received during 2009.

### A school in Ghana ...

A recent report from volunteers with another charity in a different region of northern Ghana gives an indication of the shocking state of schools. It is interesting to see the challenges schools experience but also, we hope, the contrasts with Bagri Baptist Primary School.

*"The classroom: three planks of wood. An aluminium roof. No electricity. With an open space substituting for a door, we are frequently visited by a selection of farmyard animals, including goats, chickens and lizards. Our shacks resemble stables more than classrooms.... Lacking these very basic necessities is a huge obstruction to education. To think that in our school days we had almost expected resources such as electronic blackboards and laptops, and most certainly never even questioned that we would have a seat to sit on, a pencil to write with and four walls to keep us dry. Everyone knows of the poverty that exists in Africa, but nothing can prepare you for the faces of malarial, malnourished children each with a personality and a story behind them."*

### Change of address

As most supporters will know, the registered address of the Trust changed at the start of September 2009. The new details, including new telephone number, are shown at the end of this newsletter.

### Gberi Village

Gberi village is a few miles south of Lawra, the main town in the area in which the Trust works. The village faces the same challenges as Bagri and Pavuu: a generation of children facing a bleak future without education. We are extremely grateful for a very kind pledge from a local (Sussex) family to fund the construction and ongoing costs of a new school in Gberi. We look forward to reporting further developments in future newsletters, God willing.



*Discussing the accounts with the Savannah team in Accra, October 2009*

## Financial reporting and accounting

We are sometimes asked how we account for the expenditure of our funds in Ghana. The subject might seem a little technical (or even dull). But clear accounting is, of course, important in any part of the world – it perhaps becomes more important in poor areas where the temptation to misuse money is higher.

Essentially the same systems are used in Ghana and the UK. Three signatures are required to withdraw funds from the Trust's bank account in Ghana. Each month a financial report is provided (signed by our programme manager, Charles Karbo, and the accounts officer). This details all expenditure and provides invoices/receipts in each instance. Where in this largely illiterate

society no written record is available an 'honour certificate' is produced, signed by two people.

In this way we can provide full details of exactly how much projects have cost – and the breakdown of costs for the project at Bagri can be viewed on our website.

The items of expenditure in Ghana range from nails through to food for the children's lunchtime meal each day. Wherever possible, we try to buy things locally so that local farmers, traders and craftsmen benefit.

At the end of the year, our accounts are produced, scrutinised by an independent examiner (a chartered accountant) and then lodged with the Charity Commission.

# Upper West Region

*Previous newsletters have contained a series of articles about our partners in Ghana. Over the next few newsletters, we hope to provide information about the context to the work in this remote area of West Africa, starting with a description of the region.*

Savannah Education Trust works in an area called Upper West Region. This is one of the ten administrative districts of Ghana. The region is in the north west corner of Ghana, on the border with Burkina Faso. It is the poorest of Ghana's regions.



## **Upper West Region: “a deep sense of removal from the rest of modern Ghana.”**

The population is about 575,000 - fairly sparsely spread across an area of 7,100 square miles. By comparison, an English county like Bedfordshire has exactly the same population but would fit into Upper West Region fourteen times.

Over 80% of the population are in rural areas: living in scattered villages like the ones in which the Trust is working. The countryside is classical savannah: tropical grassland punctuated by acacia, mango and the wonderfully strange baobab trees. There is a beauty to the landscape but it masks a crippling poverty. This is a remote area over 500 miles from the main centres of population and decision-making by Ghana's coastline.

The district in which we work – Lawra District - is north of the regional capital of Wa. It is very much off the beaten track and experiences few outside visitors. A travel writer has described it as having “a timeless frontier atmosphere and deep sense of removal from the rest of modern Ghana.” Hence while labour costs of our building projects are small, some materials need to be transported into the region (such as cement, corrugated iron and timbers for the roof); these materials travel long distances which inevitably increases costs.

Upper West Region is home to a number of ‘tribal’ groupings, including the Dagaare speaking communities among whom the Trust is working. These communities are based around this border area of Ghana, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire (and will be the subject of a future article).

In concluding, it is perhaps worth noting that we are conscious that in newsletters and presentations, of necessity, we tend to emphasise the tremendous difficulties, devastating poverty and need for a basic education in this area. But it is also important to realise that

this is not a hopeless place.

Upper West Region is home to a very rich local culture and a growing church.

