



Savannah
Education Trust

Newsletter



Educating Ghana's most needy children ▪ Charity No. 1104896 ▪ Issue No. 8 ▪ Autumn 2010

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 first school in Bagri, northern Ghana, opened in 2006. Further Christian schools are now being built in nearby villages called Pavuu and Gberi. The Trust also provides each schoolchild with a meal each day and is funding a number of teacher training scholarships to attract teachers to this remote and poor area.

A new school at Pavuu village

A new Christian primary school is rising from the fields of Pavuu. Pages 3-6 of this newsletter are a photo diary of the building work on the new schools. For a map see the back cover. In late Spring the local government gave official approval for the school to start in September 2010. This means that they will cover the running costs of the school - essentially teachers' salaries.

The building work started in early 2010. The first stage was the drilling of a borehole. Work on the borehole has been ongoing through much of the year, and was completed with the fitting of a pump during the summer. The foundations of the main school building have been laid, and the walls are beginning to rise. Villagers have been the volunteer

labourers to the project – and this despite the fact that much of the work has taken place during the 'rainy' season. The last few months have been the busy time of year when all of the farming takes place.

The building is not yet finished. The children are using the Baptist chapel building in Pavuu while they wait for their new building to be completed. There is much excitement and thankfulness among the villagers. For the first time a school in their village is becoming a reality.





A new school in Gberi

We reported in our last newsletter our gratitude to a family who have contributed funds for a new school for the village of Gberi. Since then things have developed quickly.

A school for the village was formally approved by the government at the same time as Pavuu. The borehole was also drilled at the same as Pavuu's – which avoided the need to bring the drilling company to this remote area twice. Building work is further advanced than at Pavuu – with the first classroom block nearing completion in time for the new academic year.

Unlike Pavuu, there is no chapel to use as an interim building for the schoolchildren.

Gberi is about five miles south of Lawra (see map on back cover). Like Pavuu and Bagri it is a very poor community. All of the families' lives are based around simple farming. The children are currently unable to attend school.

The intention is that the school at Gberi will be managed in the same way as Bagri and Pavuu and will form a network of Christian 'savannah' schools.

Teacher Training

The Trust is building Christian schools for children in this poorest of regions. It is providing each child a meal each schoolday to encourage full attendance. But of course any school needs teachers. And this region (and a village school particularly) struggles to attract qualified teachers. The Trust is providing teacher training scholarships for young people from this region.

The 'scholars' are selected following recommendations from the local Baptist churches and the district education office. The teachers are funded through their education at a cost of some £500 each year. This is on the condition that they return to this area once qualified for at least three years.

We are pleased to report that the first two teachers have just qualified from

the scheme and are starting at Bagri for the new academic year. Their names are Amos and Emmanuel.

With the work expanding into further villages we hope, as funds allow, to increase the number of teaching scholarships. This will provide additional Christian teachers, and much needed jobs for the area. For the individuals selected it has a huge effect on their lives.

Progress at Pavuu and Gberi

a photo diary, March–July 2010

This photo diary provides a photographic record of the different stages of the building process at Pavuu and Gberi between March and July 2010. It will be noted that the building technique is slightly different to that used in the construction of Bagri Primary School, with concrete blocks used instead of mud. The blocks are hand made with sand dug from the river bed, so village labour is still very important. The overall cost difference is not as much as might be expected because blocks only need a thin layer of plaster to cover them (the plaster for a traditional wall needs to be much thicker to protect the mud) and the maintenance costs will be less.



1. **Community meeting:** meetings with villagers to encourage involvement and ownership of the project



2. **Clearing the ground:** the ground is cleared by village work teams using machetes and spades



3. **Digging sand from the dry river bed:** in this remote region, the only source of sand for building is from river deposits



4. **Delivery of sand to school site:** tonnes of sand pile up at the school site ready to be used in block construction



5. **Carrying water:** the women of the village carry water to the building site



6. **Mixing cement:** the strenuous manual task of mixing cement by hand begins



7. **Making blocks:** as the blocks are made they are laid out in rows under the savannah sun



8. **Digging foundations:** the foundations are dug and the shape of the schools becomes clearer



9. Filling foundations with concrete



10. Laying of first blocks: the schools begin to rise as the first blocks are put in place



11. Walls rising: soon the walls begin to take shape - and villagers know that their school will soon be a reality



12. Window frames: the timber has to be collected from Techniman, over 350 miles away



News from the UK

Savannah Brunch

In May 2010, a coffee morning was held in Harlington (Bedfordshire). This had the express aim of raising funds and collecting toys/books for the nursery at Bagri. Currently the nursery has no toys and the assistant has something of a struggle to keep 3 and 4 year olds occupied while their older siblings learn at the school next door. A large pallet has been shipped to Ghana and no doubt there will be great excitement when it is unpacked in Bagri.



Siren Sox



One of our supporters, Abigail Izzard, (age 13) has very kindly been making (and organising others to make) beautiful knitted toys, made from socks, for the children at Bagri. Some 150 have been made so far. The intention is to mail these later in the autumn to serve as a Christmas present for the children. The challenge is to provide one soft toy for each child - some 350 toys in total.

If anyone would like to help, Abigail can be contacted on 01323 844939 or abz@sirensoxbuddies.co.uk More information is available at www.sirensoxbuddies.co.uk

Fundraising

We are thankful to report that funds have continued to be received for the work in Ghana. In addition to funding received for Gberi School, we have also received donations to cover the estimated cost of the main school building at Pavuu. This gives us great encouragement, not least as we consider the significant ongoing costs of the work.

We remain very grateful to all who have contributed. Please let us know if you would like a gift aid form or information about direct debits.

Bagri: a flourishing school ...and roof repairs



While significant developments have been occurring in the villages of Pavuu and Gberi, we are thankful that our first school in Bagri continues to flourish. The sixth class started in September, and each of the several hundred children continues to receive a meal each day.

Government regulators who inspected earlier in the year were very satisfied with what they saw. And on 27 July (during the last week of school) the paramount chief of the whole area,

Naa Puowele Karbo III, visited the school in an official capacity. He declared it a model school, and an example to others.

In May 2010, during one of the storms that sweep across the savannah, the roof of one of the classroom blocks was damaged. We are thankful to report that this has now been repaired, although at some expense. It does emphasise the need to have (in due course) a maintenance fund for each school to cover the cost of repairs in this inhospitable climate.

Daafah Pagyel

Supporters will remember Daafah Pagyel. He is the young boy, mentioned in the previous newsletter, who was born profoundly deaf. His father died when he was a toddler. Bright and attentive he had been attending school at Bagri – but obviously struggling in his silent world.

Thanks to a kind donor, he is now based at a specialist school for deaf children in the regional capital of Wa. The deacon of the local Baptist chapel in Wa is kindly acting as a guardian – and his family providing a friendly 'home from home'. Daafah boards in Wa during the week, but usually returns to his family in Bagri for the weekend.

