

Ghana School Aid



2024



GSA Representative Kofi Ohene at Asokore Holy Trinity Primary School for presentation of desks

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Fundraising champions - from left to right -Amel, Emily and Cressida.



Bunkbeds for Kumawu Technical Institute



Maame Serwaa at her stall in London.



Finished toilet block at Sorugu M/A JHS

FUNDRAISING

We have appreciated fund-raising this year from much-valued supporters of all ages. They have boosted our funds and promoted our work.

Emily and Friends

By Jennifer MacDougall, GSA Committee Member with Alhassan Salifu Baako, GSA Representative

Unbeknown to me, my granddaughter Emily and her friends, Amel and Cressida, set about raising money for GSA last summer (2023). Emily is the fourth generation of the Roddick/MacDougall family to actively support GSA. Having heard about the needs and difficulties of so many Ghanaian schoolchildren, she wanted to help and decided to raise funds by making and selling jewellery to friends and family.

The girls spent many hours making bracelets, earrings and key rings and also printed off information, photos and leaflets about GSA . The girls were all 11 years old at the time, in their final year at Bathwick St Mary Primary School in Bath. Their Headteacher offered them a stall at the annual school fair to sell and take orders for the jewellery, for which we are extremely grateful. Emily, Amel and Cressida worked very hard and made £375 (including Gift Aid). I was at the fair and was very impressed to see the girls explaining the work of GSA to interested customers. All this with no help from me!

I enlisted the help of our representative in the north of Ghana, Alhassan Salifu Baako, to suggest a kindergarten/primary school in need of teaching and learning materials. With his usual diligence,

and the support of Mr Charles (Education Circuit Supervisor), Baako visited Zagyuri Miskiye KG and Primary School near Tamale. Here, the youngest children (32 girls and 40 boys) were lacking a long list of essential equipment including text books, pencils, copy books, pens, white boards, counters, erasers and crayons. They also had no water containers, drinking cups or storage cupboards. They have been learning under trees for 11 years as their classrooms are only half built (by the PTA) due to lack of finance, in spite of many appeals to local politicians. Mr Dakurugu, the Headteacher, explained that the whole school is in poor condition with the primary age children working in classrooms with very rough unmade floors and verandahs, and little furniture. Baako reported that:

“The Headteacher also mentioned that whenever it threatens to rain or there is bad weather, they move the KG pupils into the classrooms to join their seniors and this automatically leads to ineffective teaching and learning in the classroom. Sometimes while having the lesson under the tree, animals such as goats, sheep and cattle graze and come closer to the pupils and divert their attention from the class.”



KG pupils enjoying their new resources



Baako, with the help of Mr Issah, worked very hard to put together a selection of suitable materials and organised the construction of secure metal cabinets for them. He has visited the school several times and provided many detailed reports and photographs at every stage. He also prepared a special banner showing a photo of Emily, Amel and Cressida with their names and some of the equipment bought with the money they raised. This was prominently displayed when Baako presented the teaching and learning materials at the beginning of January 2024. He told the PTA, staff and children all about Emily and her friends, their school, and the efforts they had made to help:

“They listened attentively to me and gave me a loud applause especially when I got to the last paragraph of my address where I said I would work with you to see if GSA could help roof the

new building for the children. In the comments of some of the teachers, they were touched by the story of Emily and her friends. Mr Charles in his address encouraged the pupils and all present to emulate the good work of Emily and her friends.”

Baako also sent many photos showing the happy, smiling faces of the KG children and staff using their new teaching and learning materials. Emily, Amel and Cressida are delighted that their hard work has provided so much useful equipment for the KG children of Zagyuri Miskiye. It’s great to see the children happily using their new books and materials in the photos. Many thanks go to Baako for his wonderful efforts in organising this whole process. My thanks also to William, Jo, Nigel and Kofi for their help and support in expediting the process.



Pupils at Zagyuri Miskiye School show off their new learning materials



Baako celebrates with the school

Penny’s appeal marathon

Penny Sewell, as well as her other work within the committee, continues to provide a valuable source of new funds for our grants through appeals to researched charities. She reports that:

Since May 2020 I have been faithfully sending out five appeals every week (or almost every week!) for funds for Ghana School Aid. So far (April 2024) I have sent applications to 720 charitable organisations. Nowadays the appeals go electronically where possible. As a proportion of my appeals, I do not receive many replies, but to date, thirty-six different charities have awarded us a total of £43,600 (net to us, after payment to our professional researcher, approximately £38,000). Long may this source of income continue!

A marathon effort

Jenny and William Regan had planned for many months to run the annual Edinburgh Marathon at the end of May 2023. After fitting in many miles of training between work and family commitments, they were as prepared as possible at the start line. Happily for GSA they decided to set up the Give-as-you-Live page and fundraise for us.

The Edinburgh marathon course starts in the city centre and then goes up the coast, looping back into the city. While a challenge for the brave runners, it is a beautiful setting for roadside supporters, of which there were thousands. Both Jenny and William completed the course in impressive time and, including Gift Aid, raised over £1,700 for Ghana School Aid.



Will and Jennifer Regan after the marathon!

Promotion in the community

Whenever Maame Serwaa, a previous committee member and continuing supporter of GSA, takes part in a craft fair in her area of London, selling beautiful Ghanaian cloth and textile items, she takes along with her copies of GSA's newsletter and promotional leaflets. Handing these out to interested shoppers (they love the vibrant African fabrics), she tells people of the charity's history and how schools are helped by our grants. Many people she speaks to not only have some knowledge of Ghana but also have family connections or familiarity through colleagues and friends. They might also have visited. She encourages them to visit our website and to donate on-line from there. Some have responded to the conversations and Maame has also raised money for us.

Raising money when shopping on-line

Give as you Live not only provides us with the ability to receive on-line donations and set up fundraisers but also, once the "Give as you Live" App has been downloaded onto a mobile phone, it can provide modest funds from on-line shopping at no cost to the individual. No action is required by the shopper as the App automatically deals with all the on-line administration needed. Once the App has been installed, if you are on a participating site, it pops up with a request in the corner of the screen to proceed with a donation. If you agree, you continue browsing and/or purchasing without interruption. Donations are collected and passed to us from Give as you Live.

The number of participating companies is large and wide-ranging. Each company offers a small percentage of the value of the goods or services that you have purchased, as a donation. This typically ranges from 1% to 4%. In addition, throughout the year, Give as you Live negotiates double percentage rates from some retailers for a given period.

If you conduct any kind of transactions on-line, from travel and holidays, insurance and car hire, through to shopping for DIY goods, clothes and food, for example, please consider using this App, and/or recommend it to other supporters. We have some supporters registered for us earning modest sums without any effort. We would welcome more!



Making a difference in Zagyuri Miskiye

AGM REPORT

Compiled by Kate Regan

Always an enjoyable and friendly event, our AGM on 15th June deserved its previous title of Reunion Lunch. Penny Sewell, our AGM organiser, writes that we were glad to be able to meet again after the pandemic hiatus. There was a great atmosphere and much conversation amongst the attendees.

Encouraged by William Spooner, Chair, we exchanged news, celebrated what we had achieved and prepared for another busy year. In his welcome, William told us that "one of the 'lessons' from the pandemic has been how better we can use technology. Certainly, we in Ghana School Aid through the use of Zoom can now include Kofi and Baako in our meetings. I am sure we all agree this is a real advantage, as it is for our Committee members and supporters who

otherwise cannot travel to London. I commend our splendid 2023 Newsletter to you all. Please share and spread the news of Ghana School Aid widely. Not only does it show our supporters what we do and how we spend their donations, but it represents a link to our formation and those who established Ghana School Aid 37 years ago.

I wish to note our appreciation and offer sincere thanks to Jennifer. She and her daughter, Anna, have worked together on the Newsletter for nearly 20 years. Thank you again to Jennifer, who is now stepping down from her role, and, please, pass on our thanks to Anna.

I wish to acknowledge Jo as Secretary and Nigel as Treasurer. And there are, as we know, many others. This is a team effort, and we are more than the sum of our parts. Today, in particular, we thank Penny for her role in coordinating our AGM. I also pay tribute to our patron, Lord



Attendees at the 2023 AGM

Paul Boateng, for his unwavering support. He cannot be with us, but has asked I pass his warm greetings to you all. I have been chairman since 2021. Power or responsibility is held in trust. To that end, I have three aims: to, at a suitable time, encourage a successor; to be of as much use as I can to Jo and Nigel; and, finally, as a Committee to seek and welcome new members.

Ghana School Aid has a pedigree and contribution that is unmatched. No other charity or NGO has existed as long as we have, nor offered our continued, effective support. Our history is entwined with that of Ghana. We represent in miniature the strong ties of friendship and common destiny that bind Ghana and the UK together. I saw this firsthand from Kofi in his explanation of GSA and its history to the teachers at Cape Coast Primary School.

The need for what we do – classrooms, toilet blocks and desks – remains as strong as ever. This is a special endeavour. Baako used the term ‘sacrificial giving’, which captures our task well.”

Nigel Dennis, our treasurer, led us through his report:

Our income for the year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 was £24,395.54 compared with £40,527.41 in the previous year. Expenditure was £28,632.75 versus £24,347.06 in the previous year. Decreases this past year included a lower income from both legacies and donations from Trusts. Personal donations for the proposed school at Atikagome were £950 which is ring-fenced while we await further news of the project.

Under expenditure, grants totalling £26,208 were made to 19 schools. Nigel gave us an analysis showing the amount and reason needed

for each. Total balance at 31st March 2023 was £26,668. Grand Totals from 1986 to 31st March 2023 are an income of £453,754 versus expenditure of £427,085.

His Treasurer’s Report from 1st April to 12th June 2023 shows an income of £15,711, including an Earle Bequest of £10k and income of £1,300 from a Give as you Live fundraising event. Expenditure for this last period, including grants to schools of £12,170, was £13,487. The current balance of funds as at 12th June 2023 is now £28,892. (See p.25 for our latest accounts.)

Jo Hallett in her report as Secretary, spoke of the changing nature of our committee; new members bringing energy and a different perspective. We continue to support schools



Rita de Graft, Jo Hallett and Mary Owusu

across Ghana with a wide range of needs. Grants have, for example, enabled the purchase of building materials for repairs and upgrades, pupils’ duo desks and mono desks, as well as staff furniture, bunk beds, toilets and latrines, and library shelving. Flood damage has been repaired and teachers’ quarters upgraded with Ghana School Aid’s help.

She explained that we disperse grants following applications coming through our representatives in Ghana, links with committee members or from projects and other NGOs with which we already have close links. It is important for the integrity of our charity that we have reliable feedback from beneficiaries of grants. Kofi Ohene, our representative based in Accra, is the lynchpin in the cycle of the receipt of monies, action by the recipients and accountability.

Finally, the committee members all agreed to serve again and were re-elected.

Our informal afternoon session after a sociable lunch began with Jo’s PowerPoint presentation on schools given GSA grants in 2022 to 2023 and their successful outcomes. Many of these were reported in 2023’s Newsletter. The outcomes of grant awards to other schools and institutions are set out under Project Updates.

William spoke of his recent visit to Ghana, when both Kofi and Baako took him to see many of the GSA projects on the ground. He was thrilled, excited – and exhausted- by the trip. His full account is also contained in the 2023 Newsletter.

Rita de Graft, who set up and maintains GSA’s Facebook page, told us about her fortunate contact through LinkedIn with a school in need.



Through this medium she had met a newly-qualified young teacher, Abigail, in 2021. Abigail had been posted to Nambiri Primary School in a remote area in the Upper East Region. Impressed by Abigail’s enthusiasm for her new job, Rita interviewed her and posted their conversation on YouTube. The teachers’ quarters at the school were in a dire state and GSA gave a grant of £1,300 to the school for their renovation which has been successfully completed and reported in last year’s newsletter. Rita has subsequently interviewed Abigail again, talking about her progress, love of teaching and connection with the community. Language has been an issue for Abigail, however, she has found creative ways around this in order to teach effectively. She has also made close bonds with the women of the community. We look forward to keeping in touch via Rita with Abigail.

Prompted by members of the committee, Rita also told us about her series on YouTube that speaks in particular to nurses in the Ghanaian diaspora. She was a school nurse in Ghana before continuing her nursing career in the UK. Some of us have much enjoyed and recommend her informative and thoughtful YouTube series called *Chronicles of a Ghanaian Diaspora Nurse*. Postscript: Last year the school suffered severely from rain storms and help to repair both the Primary roof and the JHS block was needed.

The school has since had the good fortune to have a new JHS block built with a donation from two benefactors in the UK who saw the school's plight on a JustGiving page posted by Rita. £500 raised in addition will go towards furniture and other resources for the school. See Rita's above-mentioned Chronicles on YouTube for an excellent video of the project's progress and completion.

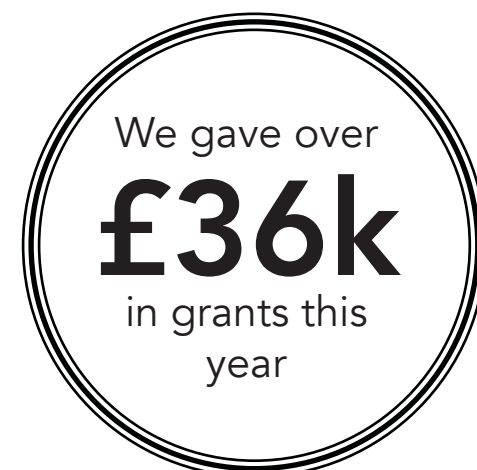
Sarah Gardner from Action Through Enterprise (ATE) spoke about the history and progress of this NGO and charity celebrating its 10th year since being founded by her. Lawra is 18 hours by bus from Accra and is close to the border with Burkina Faso. The charity operates in community hubs with a school or schools at the centre. From a modest beginning in Lawra, ATE now works in a number of surrounding villages through 12 development officers and a total local staff of 42. They support 1,000 children per day and now work with 550 disabled children. They have opened an Inclusion Centre which is also an IT hub for the whole community, resourced with help from SEGA. Other recent successful initiatives in their hubs include a second harvest/dry-season farming for such businesses as well as scholarships for secondary schooling. They now plan to extend their work from the district of Lawra to the neighbouring district of Nandom. (See p.22 for their latest news.)

We were fortunate to have Jane Scott present at St. Mary's and Lynne Symonds on zoom representing the Wulugu Project which we have supported for some years and benefit from exchanges of news of conditions in the north.

Rod and Jenny Earle, introducing the Earle Family Bequest, explained that they wish to fund an educational project in the Ho area in memory

of their parents Eric and Auriol who spent a happy period of work in that area of Ghana and were founder members of GSA. The family is considering a classroom with a special learning purpose and aim to settle the choice of school before the end of the year. (See the exciting progress report opposite.)

Rounding off an informative and friendly (as always) AGM, Kofi gave us an update on Ghana today. Politically, Ghana is very stable, with elections coming up in December 2024. The debate is whether to re-elect the existing government in the interests of stability or to go for another contender. There is a cost-of-living crisis with high fuel costs noticeably contributing to this. The IMF is being asked for a bailout while there are many unfulfilled requests for infrastructure projects such as more road building. Having been recently changed, the academic year is reverting to a September to June calendar. This is proving a challenge for teachers and means that students will not have had a full year of teaching this last academic year. Kofi ended by saying that underfunding of schools is ever present so that help from GSA is still very much needed.



NEWS

Eric and Auriol Earl's legacy

Following on from the introduction in last year's newsletter, there is exciting progress to report: Through the considerable efforts of family friend Hilary Gbedemah and aided by Kofi, a suitable partner school was agreed upon as the beneficiary in August 2023; the Adaklu Kodzobi D/A Basic School. It has 365 pupils and 16 teachers and is in the Ho area of the Volta Region, where Eric and Auriol had spent several happy years, Eric as an education officer and Auriol establishing a nursery school together with Hilary's mother, Emily Amable. A lasting friendship was formed.

Hilary held a constructive meeting in June with the school management, the community's chief, Togbe Dzegblade IV, and a number of local GES staff, including those involved with supporting girls' education. The headteacher, Charles Kugbeadzor, confirmed the need for a reading room as the school lacks this and the chief was in support of the benefits provided by an independent reading space. A washroom would also be welcome. The school has running water and electricity as well as an enthusiastic school community accustomed to using grant monies to good effect.

Hilary states: *The school's KG block was built with the assistance of an NGO, Pencils of Promise, in partnership with the community who contributed labour. The Primary and JSS blocks were built by another NGO – School Aid – in partnership with the community who again contributed the labour. I see this as a testament to their experience in collaboration, delivery on schedule and being results oriented. This record of accomplishment for me is a good sign.*



Back row L to R: Rev. Richard Agbi, Assistant Director - Planning Adaklu District Education Office; Rev. Daniel Amanu, PRO – (Kodzobi Palace); Miss Erica Darko, District Girl Child Officer, Adaklu District Education Office; Mr Charles Kugbeadzor, Headteacher, Kodzobi D/A Basic School. Front row L TO RMrs Hilary Gbedemah, Lead; Togbe Dzegblade IV Chief of Kodzobi; Mrs Millicent Gadzanku, Regional Girls Education Officer, Volta Region; Mrs Thywill Kpe, Regional Director, Department of Gender, Volta Region.

Kofi had circulated the plans and drawings of the Allan Mayhew Memorial Building (a classroom and 6-seater toilet block built in 2006) that could be used as a blueprint for this proposal. This had been built in partnership with the University of Cape Coast and impressed William on his recent visit. Following on from the detailed discussions at Hilary's meeting, the Earle family's further consideration, and at Kofi's suggestion, we made a proposal to the school for funding a single story building and washroom, the proposal to stipulate that the community contribute to the construction. All is going very well. The family has received from the chief, who is a retired building contractor, a full bill of quantities and costs for each stage of construction as estimated by a quantity surveyor. It is understood that the sand, stone, labour, etc. will be provided by the chief and the

community. What remains, when going to press, is for confirmation from Ghana School Aid of the total amount of finance to be provided by the legacy and a memorandum of understanding to be agreed regarding the sharing of costs with the community. It is exciting to be told by the chief, that once finance is in place, the building could be completed within six months.

Atikagome update

In last year's newsletter we reported the substance of our meetings with Mr. Abankwa of GES regarding the waterside community of Atikagome. He told us of his intention to build a school for this community that had suffered tragic losses of children canoeing across water to reach their school. Deep sympathy for this loss had meant that GSA received £950 from members towards this cause. This sum has been ring-fenced by our treasurer. For some months in the first half of 2023 we liaised with Mr Abankwa regarding his plans for the new school and how we could contribute to its cost.

However, after some time we were asked for a far greater sum of money than we could afford, to build a proposed new school, and we decided to offer £2,000 towards furnishing, once the school was complete. The ring-fenced money will be in addition to this.

William, our Chair, has been in contact with Mr. Abankwa but has not yet received an update from him. Our representative Kofi Ohene told us that there had been a leak in the nearby Akosombo Dam, creating a crisis for communities in the Volta Region as a whole. This may explain a lack of progress.

Reflections on a visit to Ghana

By Kate Regan

The need to visit Ghana regularly is 'in my blood'. Ghanaian friends will warmly exclaim "You are Ghanaian!" This is a very acceptable complement. As well as living in Accra as a primary school student in the 1950s, I have visited when possible over the last twenty years since arriving in 2004 on a school linking mission. Not long after this, joining the community of GSA added another positive dimension to my personal attachment.

After retirement I have helped voluntarily with a number of school library projects around the country and enjoyed a holiday or two. The aim of this trip was to see friends after a five-year absence and to introduce my partner Anthony to at least the South of the 'sunshine' country. The sun was in fact unusually hot and unrelenting! Warm welcomes were many though, as always.

Arriving a day after Ghana's 67th anniversary of independence, we saw Accra returning to work after the public holiday as we travelled to committee member Letitia Boateng's home in the peaceful and beautiful village of Abonse. The village lies hidden in the Akwapim Hills of the Eastern Region. It is a community with which I now have traditional connections, having been previously honoured with the title of a Nana. Our week's stay with Letitia, although made challenging by power cuts, was full of interest. We enjoyed Ghanaian dishes and attended a traditional ceremony in which it was my duty to swear allegiance to the new chief. Both Primary and JHS schools in Abonse have benefited from GSA grants and are under the experienced leadership of headteacher Godfred Opare. The schools now have environments suited to safe,



Enjoying the view from Letitia's garden

comfortable teaching and learning thanks to GSA and other benefactors as well as the community. (See Letitia's article on p.20)

Patrick Nyante, GSA's representative in the Eastern Region, who teaches in a school in the area, kindly travelled to Abonse to greet us. He is a passionate educationist and happy to help GSA when needed.

On our return from a visit to the Cape Coast area, we noticed the entrance to Mfantshipim Secondary School and close by signs to Wesley Girls' School. Many of GSA's founder members taught at these famous institutions. Readers might be interested to know that a current exhibition at the V & A Museum, called Tropical Modernism, features some beautiful buildings in these Cape Coast schools as well as some at Aburi Girls' School and much of KNUST.

Before reaching Accra, we called in at the Hartley Trust School which has recently benefited from a grant to repair the school bus, badly needed to bring the majority of its students to and from school safely. The headteacher William Doe and administrator Ruby Alhassan warmly welcomed us and gave us a tour of the school. (See p.15 for the project report.)

Our final four days were spent in Accra, a city buzzing with events. Ghana had been hosting the 13th African Games that were coming to an end, having very successfully taken place at the University of Ghana Sports Stadium in Accra as well as locations around Cape Coast and in Kumasi. When near a sports screen, we had seen Ghana doing well in football (of course!), boxing and athletics among other successes. The country came an impressive 6th in the final medal positions of over 40 participating countries.

While being driven through the very busy streets, there were opportunities to read billboards advertising, interestingly, many further education institutions as well as politicians in pre-election style, squaring up for December's general election.

Elsewhere, the final activities connected with Accra's successful hosting of UNESCO's World Book Capital, due to end in April, had been taking place. A closing statement by Mr Edmund Moukala, the UNESCO representative in Ghana, recognised that the city had "embraced its role as the torchbearer of literacy and storytelling... has championed the cause of literacy, focusing particularly on our young people..[and has] reached out to marginalised groups. [...A] commitment to life-long learning has led to reinforcing school and community infrastructure, ensuring that no-one is left behind in the pursuit of knowledge."

As I write on 23rd April, it's World Book and Copyright Day, again promoted globally by UNESCO. Audrey Azoulay, Director- General of UNESCO, pays tribute to books and authors in her published statement. "Books in all their forms, allow us to learn and to keep ourselves informed. They also entertain us and help us to

understand the world, while offering a window into otherness.” This sentiment is reflected in efforts by many of us to help provide free access to books and as an example known to GSA members, aligns with the Morel Trust’s current project to distribute copies of books by Ama Ato Aidoo to libraries in the Eastern Region. (See James Gibbs’ report p.24.)

On a multi-country scale, it is the driving purpose behind Book Aid International’s work in Africa and beyond. Its Patron is Her Majesty the Queen and Chair Lord Boateng. In Ghana, this organisation supports, amongst many types of libraries, the Ghana Library Authority. I learned this on our tour of the spacious premises of Accra Central Library.

This visit was an unexpected bonus, thanks to an introduction by GSA’s patron Lord Boateng. We were given a comprehensive tour of the various departments where my father, John Strickland, had worked to help set up Ghana’s public library system in the 1950s.

The Executive Director of the Ghana Library Authority, Hayford Siaw, kindly made time to meet and talk with us. He has made numerous organisational changes, including the introduction of a specialist librarian and resources to cater for French language learners, helping Ghanaians of all ages to improve communication with their French-speaking neighbours. Of particular interest was a large study room dedicated to supporting the school work and career ambitions of young people aged between 14 to 24. This is one of 10 Youth Engagement Centres funded by UNICEF and placed in GLA libraries around the country. They provide IT for research, as well as mentoring, careers advice, workshops on-site and outreach visits to secondary schools.

In discussion with Hayford Siaw later, however, we learned that much more financial support is needed from the Ghanaian government to fund his remit to improve the resources and operation of the country’s public library service. We hope that his dynamic vision is rewarded.



Meeting Hayford Siaw, Ghana Library Authority

Finally, while in Accra, we were fortunate indeed to enjoy attendance at the traditional wedding of Letitia Boateng’s granddaughter, an invitation from Kofi and Floria Ohene to a delightful lunch at their house and finally on our last day, an informal breakfast meeting with Lord Boateng who happened to be in Accra during our time there. Altogether, our enjoyable travels were much enriched by the company of members of the Ghana School Aid community.



Lord Boateng reads the GSA promotional leaflet!

UPDATE ON PROJECTS

The following reports of successfully completed projects show the variety of needs that Ghana School Aid supports.

Asokore Holy Trinity School, Ashanti

This school in the Ashanti region purchased 100 much-needed dual desks as well as KG furniture with our grant of £2,200.

Kofi and Floria Ohene visited this school in December, for an official presentation (see image on front cover).

Headteacher Comfort Larbi writes: “We extend our deepest appreciation for your exceptional generosity in donating an amount of GHt30,756.00 in purchasing 100 dual desks to Asokore D/A Trinity Primary School. This impactful contribution has not only alleviated our pressing student-desk ratio challenge but has also significantly enhanced the overall quality of teaching and learning within our school. We are profoundly grateful for your invaluable contribution, and we look forward to a continued partnership in the journey of educational advancement.



Desks arrive at Asokore



Students in front of the newly repaired and refurbished school bus

Hartley Trust School, Greater Accra

We have supported this school at Kasoa for many years. It is privately run and serves an area west of Accra that has become much more densely populated since the school was founded. The semi-urban catchment area includes the nearby fishing communities that were originally served. David Mustill, who visits the school frequently to support them, explained the dire need for repairs to their school transport. Without a bus service, many children could not attend, as local roads are in poor condition and small, commercial transport vehicles are not safe or reliable. School enrolment could fall below a sustainable level despite the quality of the school’s teaching and nutritional support.

We approved a grant of £2,000 for vehicle repair that has been completed.

Jisonayili M:A JHS, Northern Region

In November 2023 Baako paid a visit to Jisonayili MA JHS to officially hand over, on behalf of GSA, the 40 dual metal desks that we had provided. They are a large school with 300 students and have been in desperate need of desks. Baako writes: At the time of my visit, some of the students were on break and were called in. Together with the headteacher and staff we visited the classrooms to see the new furniture. It was arranged neatly in two spacious classrooms. Each classroom had 20 desks for the use of at least 40 students.

I seized the opportunity to advise the students in the class. I told them how much GSA loves all students like them in Ghana and of their wish to support all schools, which they cannot do. As Jisonayili JHS is lucky enough to have this support, GSA expects them to take care of the furniture so that it lasts not only for them but for future students. They should make good use of the desks to improve their learning and aim high to become what they dream of in the future.



The new classroom extension at Kanvilli Tawfikiya

The headteacher and PTA chairman expressed their appreciation to GSA and promised to care for their new desks.

Kanvilli Tawfikiya, Northern Region

This school until recently was led by Salifu Baako. GSA had funded the building of a two-classroom block and in February 2023 a request was made to add another classroom to accommodate more pupils. A detailed breakdown of costs was provided amounting to 43,357 cedis (£2,850) and the request was agreed. Baako had encouraged the school to purchase materials before Ramadan, which they did, so that work could begin as soon as possible after that period, with the involvement of the PTA and the community.

We received a progress report in May, showing the preparation and early stages of the building. Subsequent good progress led to the completion of the extended block by the end of the year and the photo below shows the splendid, streamlined result.

Kumawu Technical Institute, Ashanti

This newly located technical institute, which we had earlier provided with mono-desks, has many needs. Kofi visited and reported that students were sleeping on mattresses on the floor, hence the request for bunk beds. A grant of £2,000 for these was agreed in May 2023. At our September meeting, we funded mattresses for them with an additional grant of £2,000. We received a letter of appreciation and pictures from the institute as well as a similar letter from the Ashanti TVET regional director. Kofi and Floria visited Kumawu in December to meet the principal and board members for an official presentation.

Lungbun D/A JHS, Northern Region

Although Lungbun is the traditional seat of the district chief, it is a remote community and this is the only JHS in the area. The school had many needs, including electricity as well as building works for classroom blocks. Plastering was needed for inside and out as well as windows and doors. We agreed a grant of £1,800 towards building costs in 2023. Baako reported in January 2024 that all the renovation work on the main block had been completed. Metal doors were fixed and painted. The separate block was plastered, and metal doors fixed with a new verandah. It is now wired and both blocks have electricity.

Sorugu JHS, Northern Region

This school had no toilet facility and requested a 4-toilet block which will improve teaching and learning by cutting down classroom absence

significantly. Girls' menstruation is a particular problem. A grant of £1,500 was agreed.

Baako had to rectify a situation where the mason had not considered several of the constructional issues involved in building toilets. He had failed to order the correct size of blocks and underestimated the quantity of other materials needed. A new mason was sought. The integrity of GSA is maintained by Kofi and Baako's oversight of the projects we support. We agreed to rectify the underestimated costs of the toilets with a grant of £250. (See inside front cover for a picture of finished toilet facility.)



Tiled interior of the toilets at Sorugu



Excitement at the arrival of desks for the KG classrooms, Sampa Methodist Primary

Sampa Methodist Primary, Northern Region

Sampa Methodist Primary School, which we have helped before, requested a grant for furniture, at the end of 2022. Both KG classes lacked seating and many pupils were sitting on the floor. £650 was given for wooden desks. We received news from them too late to mention in last year's newsletter.

Voggu RC JHS, Northern Region

We often receive from Baako an insight into how work has progressed from start to finish. Voggu D/A JHS has had many challenges. All classrooms, the office and verandas had crumbling concrete floors. We agreed a grant of £2,400 for repairing potholes in the floor concrete, making doors and windows safe and repairing holes in the roofs. We have received many pictures of work in progress as well as the finished project.



Finished building, Voggu

Tibung DA Primary School, Northern Region

We gave a grant of £1,500 in 2023 for a new roof for the school and work on the teachers' accommodation. The latter has two rooms, one of which was to be occupied by a Peace Corps volunteer. They have now finished the work, including a concrete skirt to the main building. A transformation occurred. (See p.27.)



Work in progress, Tibung

Zagyuri Miskiye KG, Northern Region

The Primary School at Zagyuri Miskiye has many challenges as presented to Baako and Mr Charles, the Circuit Supervisor when they visited last year. (See Emily and friends on p3.) Overall enrollment is 267 pupils with 15 teachers. The classrooms and verandahs of the primary classrooms need repairs to the floors, for example and there is not sufficient furniture. Some KG pupils carry stools from home to school every day.

However completion of the KG classrooms is the most urgent need as they are being taught under trees; this despite requests for government help. Under Baako's guidance, they have applied for help with completing the unfinished KG block started by the PTA many years ago. This is an expensive project to complete, involving roofing, flooring, and the installation of windows and doors and is estimated in total at £5,000.

Impressed by their need, he has worked to reduce estimates for the various essential works.

Asked whether a grant of £3,000 would provide a roof, he confirmed this and GSA was happy to allocate this amount.

Work is well underway as of March 2024. The school has now spread the gravel and says they would start using the classrooms as they are. They are happy getting it to this stage.

Zuarungu Moshie Community School, Upper East Region

Help for this JHS in the Upper East Region was initiated by Marika Sherwood, who visited in 2022 and saw the many challenges that the school faced.

It was decided by the school community that their top priorities were to have new urinals and a concrete apron around the crumbling footing walls of the school buildings. They were given a grant of £1,600 and the work was completed last year.



KG class under the trees at Zagyuri Miskiye, showing the unfinished classrooms behind

Zugu Dabogni TI, Northern Region

By Alhassan Salifu Baako

I visited the Zugu Dabogni Technical Institute in July 2023, to monitor the progress of work since their funding of £1,000 for improvements to their school buildings got to them. Work was ongoing on their school dormitories on my arrival. The community and other communities nearby had helped by supplying thatch. Metal doors were fixed and the plastering done. All the newly built rooms were wired and at the time of my visit, they were doing the flooring as I went round with the principal. I also saw the electrical students busy wiring their classrooms while the Visual Art students were eagerly waiting to carry out the painting when finished, according to the principal.

You would realize that the support given to this institution for the needed materials is not only to find them a place to lay their heads but also it has given the various departments of the school the opportunity to practice what they have been learning in the technical school right there in their school under the supervision of the various heads of department as the needed materials were made available to them. The Principal also added that wiring to extend electricity to the classrooms and dormitories would enable the students to have preps in the night, bringing a lot of improvement in teaching and learning and also enhancing supervision by teachers at night.

Baako visited again for the commissioning of the units which was done in exam time. The chief and community expressed their gratitude to Ghana School Aid. (See picture on inside back cover.)

Abonse School: a story

By Letitia Boateng

Ghana School Aid has helped to transform Abonse Junior High School (JHS) from a small bamboo shed to a three classroom block with an office and a library.

In the late nineties, the school, from Primary to JHS, was earmarked for closure due to low enrollment, inadequate teachers and lack of resources. That meant that pupils from class 1 to JHS 3 would have to walk to Aseseeso, a nearby sister town about three kilometres away, for classes. Meanwhile records showed that for 10 years since 1994, there had been no passes for entry into secondary schools.

The diaspora in the UK (Aseseeso Abonse Citizens Association UK) of which I am a member, acted swiftly to find volunteers to teach the children for a monthly token. The overwhelming response saved Abonse school from total collapse. Meanwhile, in 2004, I heard about a School Linking and Partnership Program. A year later, with support from the diaspora, Abonse Primary School, in an old Presbyterian Church building, and Abonse JHS in a bamboo shed, were linked with St. Michael's Primary School in Figheldean, Wiltshire.

Badly needed exercise books, text books and other teaching resources were immediately provided by the UK partners. All this, coupled with the volunteer teaching, saw a rapid rise in enrollment, from less than 100 to 200 pupils. The education authorities heard about the link and noticed improvements in the school, so the plan for its closure evaporated into thin air.

Adrenaline began to flow. The diaspora began to put up a school building for JHS. The American Embassy came to our aid and the building reached a roofing stage. At a Link Conference organised by UKOWLA (UK One World Linking Association) in York in 2005, I met the late Alan Mayhew and his wife Elizabeth and they introduced me to Ghana School Aid.



Foundations of the JHS in early 2000s



Community helps to lay the foundations

GSA has since supported Abonse school with a number of grants. The first was for the roof of the JHS building. Various grants followed over some years, towards completion of the building in 2011. Creating the right environment helped to raise performance in examinations and the pass rate jumped from 0% to 56%. Encouraged by the above success story, the Citizens' Association decided to put up a block of two big classrooms to be partitioned, for the primary school. Some friends from Kentucky University donated \$400.00 for the foundation work. GSA came in again

with grant support to make the building finished and equipped for classes. Later on, a primary school complex was built on a different site by the government and the children moved there. The original primary classrooms are now used as valuable extra space by the JHS.

As for JHS examination results, in 2014 a 100% pass rate was achieved and sustained until 2021, when it dropped drastically to 18% due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Under the experienced leadership of the headteacher Godfred Opari, attendance and results are picking up rapidly and the latest pass rate is now 55%. I am happy to report that over the years, many children have had secondary education and some have continued to obtain degrees in tertiary and university education.

Recently the JHS block needed considerable repair work and GSA gave a grant for new louvres to replace rotten wooden windows, and to deal with roof leakage, electrical work and painting of the whole building. The work has been completed to good effect. GSA has received a letter of thanks for all its support for Abonse Presbyterian Basic Schools from the Abonseman Council and includes the statement 'The impact of your support extends beyond the physical structures; it has empowered our educators, inspired our students and fostered a sense of pride and ownership within our community.'



The newly painted buildings in 2024

NEWS FROM ASSOCIATES

Action Through Enterprise

Since Sarah Gardner, ATE's Chief Executive attended our AGM in 2023 and reported on the impressive ten year progress of ATE, the new Inclusion Centre in Nandom has been developed at pace and is now almost ready for its first users.

Tara Colsell-Hawes, ATE's Development Director writes: It's happening! Construction of the new Inclusion Centre in Nandom is almost complete, with a new roof on, interior work almost finished and exterior work underway. The completed building will be the heart of our work in Nandom - where we will run workshops for disabled children and their carers, provide training for small business owners, store food ingredients and educational materials for distribution to schools, and - eventually - have a state-of-the-art IT suite free for use by the community. We are so excited to see the new centre full of children laughing and playing with their friends! We start work over the next couple of months with the recruitment of a Hub Manager and two disability programme coordinators who will



Repaired desks at Dowine JHS

spend a month shadowing our team in Lawra and then return to Nandom to kickstart the projects in their own community. We can't wait for our programmes in education, enterprise and inclusion to impact a whole new district!

In 2023, ATE received a grant for £350 for the repair of desks in schools in Dowine and Kalsagri. GSA was happy to support sustainability, while encouraging sturdy repairs, which were done by carpenters in the community.

Let's Read

By Jo Hallett

<https://www.letsreadghana.com>

Where did it start? Ten experienced UK teachers were on the Millennium Volunteer Global Teacher programme in Bolgatanga District in 2001, each posted to a remote village for 6 weeks, to help with the development of the school. An amazing experience!

Four of us fell in love with Ghana enough to have continued working in the area ever since. After a couple of years, we formed Let's Read Ghana and have been to Ghana two or three times a year ever since (except for Covid). So that's over 20 years!

So – what is Let's Read? Let's Read is a simple, cost effective and innovative programme for raising achievement in reading and writing in English, which has evolved to meet the needs of those schools. We now have 74 primary/basic schools in the project, all in Kassena-Nankana West District. The focus is on teaching basic phonic understanding and using more interactive – and therefore effective – teaching methods.



Meeting children in the Bolgatanga District

We now employ a senior advisor, John, two days a week, to manage the project. He was one of the four heads/advisors whom we brought on a study visit to the UK in 2014.

Where are we now? After living in the villages, we understood the enormity of the needs - from teachers to desks, from books to buildings! We had to work out what we could and could not provide. Over the years, we have provided many actual items – such as alphabet hangings, selections of books in large boxes circulating between schools, and small payments to volunteer teachers. For six years, children in 20 primary schools were able to have their first taste of using a laptop, through our excellent "Laptop Library".

We have applied to and been funded largely by Lace's Educational Trust, for the educational materials and the employment costs for John. We produced a 12-book reading scheme, based on life in the Upper West, covering the earliest reading to the upper primary school.

We have found that the most sustainable system is the simplest, and this has steadily expanded to 74 schools. Unable to visit during the pandemic, we devised a 'Booster programme', which has been in operation for the past few years.

We produced detailed programmes, to supplement the National Curriculum, for all the primary school year groups. We have also produced programmes for training workshops based on a pyramid system. John runs workshops for the 12 School Improvement Support Officers in the District, with programmes and materials provided by us. The SISO's then run workshops for the teachers in the relevant year groups in their circuit. And the teachers use this approach with their children. We use practical and interactive methods, particularly with the younger children.

Help from GSA for specific school projects, such as the provision of desks, has been much appreciated, but the need is very great, and Let's Read is focusing on what they CAN do, even in challenging circumstances, making the most of what they have.

Some of our team visited again last autumn and were pleased to report back on progress! The schools that have taken the LR approach seriously have made very good progress. There were schools where the children were reading with fluency and understanding. We are planning forward with the Booster classes, including assessments and spelling competitions, with prizes such as footballs as an incentive!



Learning to read together

A partnership to get books by Ama Ata Aidoo into the hands of Ghanaian readers

by James Gibbs, Chair Morel Trust and GSA member

The Morel Trust was eager to finance a book scheme in Ghana and GSA kindly agreed to accept a grant of £3,000 from the Morel Trust to meet an invoice submitted by Becky Nana Ayebia Clarke of Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited, Oxford. The invoice covered the cost of the purchase, transport to Ghana and distribution in Ghana of books by Ama Ata Aidoo published in Oxford. The Trust is very grateful to GSA for the role it played in facilitating the payment and can report that the 165 books were paid for and sent to Ghana.

Ayebia wrote to me in November 2023, with information about the books earmarked for despatch to Ghana for distribution there by Akoss Ofori Mensah of Sub-Saharan Publishers, Accra. The three titles selected for the project were: Diplomatic Pounds & Other Stories by Ama Ata Aidoo , African Love Stories Anthology Ed. Ama Ata Aidoo and Essays In Honour of Ama Ata Aidoo at 70 Ed. Anne V Adams.

I had initially wanted to target community libraries in the selected area – the Eastern Region of Ghana. Each community library reflects grass-roots initiatives and self-sacrificial giving by individuals, but there are shortcomings. For example, some of the individuals promoting community libraries are working in the US, and on occasions the books they have shipped to these libraries – often in their home towns - were ‘selected’ on the principle that they were surplus to the requirements of US libraries. Because of

this, some of the books were not suitable – or not particularly suitable – for Ghanaian readers. The American donations sometimes filled shelves, but there was no funding to purchase locally published writing – let alone to buy locally-written books that had been published abroad.

While in Ghana towards the end of 2023, my wife and I took some steps to assess the situation. We visited a number of libraries, some of which fell into the ‘Community Library’ bracket. (Others were attached to educational institutions, or were branches of the Ghana Library Authority.) Experiences of libraries, in, for example, Abiriw, Apirede, Legon and Tema varied considerably. But we were left with the strong impression that the Community Library model was fragile.

I concluded that I should place distribution responsibilities entirely in the hands of Akoss Ofori-Mensah, a very experienced publisher/distributor. Having indicated to her my interest in getting the work of Ama Ata Aidoo into community libraries, I allowed her freedom to use her discretion about how to proceed.

While waiting for final reports from her and others involved in the scheme, I would like to mention that the example of the Morel Trust/ GSA funding collaboration encouraged an American academic with fond memories of time spent in Ghana, John Lemly, to offer additional support to cover distribution costs.



Ata Aidoo and one of her books

TREASURER’S ANNUAL REPORT 01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024

GHANA SCHOOL AID TRUST – CHARITY NUMBER 299178		
Treasurer’s Report 1 st April 2023 – 31 st March 2024		
	2023 - 2024	2022 - 2023
INCOME	£	
Earle Bequest	10,000.00	-----
Other Donations In Memory and Legacies	2,150.00	3,739.87
Donations from Trusts	11,150.00	10,650.00
Donations for Atikagome School	-----	950.00
Other Donations	5,711.85	6,132.00
Donations through Give as You Live	3,197.88	2,409.99
Annual Lunch Bookings and Donations 2022	-----	40.00
Annual Lunch Bookings and Donations 2023	1,080.00	292.00
Annual Lunch Bookings and Donations 2024	442.00	-----
HMRC Gift Aid	1,032.50	176.25
Interest	-----	<u>5.43</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>34,764.23</u>	<u>24,395.54</u>
EXPENDITURE	£	
Grants to projects in Ghana	36,845.00	26,208.50
Grant to Let’s Read Ghana	-----	360.10
Advertising Leaflets	179.22	219.22
Newsletter May 2023 (and May 2022)	734.72	686.95
Website	-----	60.00
Lunch and AGM 2023	342.52	-----
Lunch and AGM 2024	215.00	-----
Fundraising	885.50	980.98
Expenses of Officers in Ghana	225.00	100.00
Bank Transfer Fees	<u>30.00</u>	<u>17.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>39,456.96</u>	<u>28,632.75</u>
FUNDS at 31 st March 2024	£	£
NatWest Current Account Balance 1 st April 2023		26,668.77
Deduct Expenditure less Income £39,456.96 - £34,764.23 =		<u>4,692.73</u>
Nat West Current Account Balance 31 st March 2024		<u>21,976.04</u>
GRAND TOTALS 1986 – 31 st March 2024	INCOME	EXPENDITURE
	£	£
1986 – 31 st March 2023	453,754.55	427,085.78
1 st April 2023 – 31 st March 2024	<u>34,764.23</u>	<u>39,456.96</u>
Total	<u>488,518.78</u>	<u>466,542.74</u>
Income less Expenditure	£488,518.78 - £466,542.74 =	£21,976.04

With thanks to Nigel Dennis, Treasurer

OBITUARIES

Eileen Shelton 1927-2024



Eileen and her husband Kenneth moved to the Gold Coast in 1953. Ken was an accountant working for the Methodist Church. They lived on the Mfantshipim Secondary School compound in Cape Coast. Eileen had a busy life in Cape Coast which involved attending functions connected with her husband’s work and raising three children. Her husband’s job also entailed travelling extensively in Ghana and round West Africa. Taking their three children with them on these journeys often resulted in many adventures.

After returning to the family home near Harrogate in 1961, Eileen became an active member of the local Harewood community and the Methodist church. Her husband continued to work in Ghana for several months each year and Eileen worked in the family business taking on a great deal of responsibility in his absence. In 1974 Kenneth died unexpectedly. This was a challenging time for Eileen and her teenage children. Eileen went into partnership with her brother-in-law running the farm and continued to work in the business into her 70s. Despite the

pressures of the business, Eileen still led a full life with her friends, children and grandchildren.

Eileen was a founder member of GSA, attending the inaugural meeting in 1986 and a valued supporter. She will be much missed by all who knew and loved her especially her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Hugh Pett 1928-2024



Hugh was a geography teacher at Mfantshipim Secondary School, Cape Coast, in the 1950s. One of his pupils was Kofi Annan (Secretary General of the UN, 1997–2006). Hugh enjoyed coaching the school cricket team, and he and his wife Hazel had two daughters while living in the Gold Coast. They enjoyed a happy and rewarding life there, making life-long friends, including Eileen and Ken Shelton.

After returning to England in 1957, Hugh taught in schools in Sheffield and then Scarborough where he became Vice Principal of the sixth form college before retiring. He was a Methodist lay preacher for over 50 years. Hugh and Hazel, who died in 2023, were supporters of GSA for many years and are sadly missed by all who knew them.



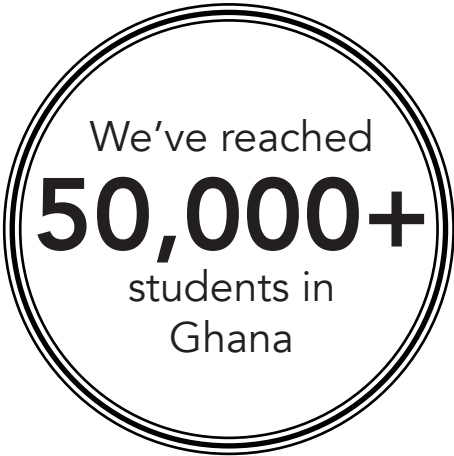
Patrick Nyanteh with students at his school.



Zugu Dabogni TI boys’ dormitories : Baako with headteacher



Lungbun D/A JHS after renovation



Renovated teachers’ quarters at Tibung D/A Primary school

Ghana School Aid



June 2024



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

The meeting and reunion lunch will be held in the crypt of Saint Mary's Church Upper Street, Islington, London, N1 2TX on **Thursday 13th June from 11am**. To book please contact pennymsewell@gmail.com

For those unable to attend in person, there will also be a live Zoom link from 11.30am at:

Website: www.zoom.us/join Meeting ID: **846 5137 3293** Passcode: **1234**

DONATIONS

Please donate online: giveasyoulive.com/charity/ghanaschoolaid

Or scan the adjacent QR code with your mobile phone's camera

Cheques: Payable to Ghana School Aid

Please post to: The Treasurer, 230 Greys Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon, RG9 1QY

Bank transfer details:

Ghana School Aid Trust, Bank: Nat West, Sort code 60 80 07, Acc no. 36306274



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