

ANNUAL REPORT 2004/2005

Introduction	2
Chairman's Message	2
Founding the Sabre Charitable Trust	2
Brenu Beach Development Project	3
Background	3
Area 1: Improving the Existing School Buildings	3
Area 2: Constructing the New Junior Secondary School	3
Current position	4
Area 3: Introducing New Teaching Methods and Teaching/Learning Materials	4
PROJECT ISSUES	5
Communication	5
The School Development Committee	5
Support in Country	5
Community Participation and Buy-in	6
Community partnership	6
Community work gangs	6
Volunteer Issues	6
Lack of volunteers	6
Accommodation in country	6
SCT Partners	7
Schools	7
School Partnerships	7
School Sponsorship	7
NGOs and Charities	8
Kit Aid	8
Sabre Adventures	8
Recommendations for 2005/2006	8
Appendix	9
Development plan – action for 5 years from May 2004	9
Appendix	11



Annual Report 2004 – 2005

INTRODUCTION

Chairman's Message

It has been an exciting time for me personally. Since January 2000 I have been thinking of ways to help and support Africa in my own way. It was in January 2000 that I first visited Ghana. Some friends and I had bought a Landrover and driven it there to deliver books and medical supplies. Sitting in my office now with a wife and son, it seems such a long time ago that the first thoughts began of what I could do to help. One thing I have learnt is that time passes in an instant and whatever we decide to do we should aim to do it sooner rather than later.

This first year of work has been very exciting, full of highs and lows and unexpected twists. I have, for the most part, been fortunate to have family and friends who have been extremely supportive. Whether this has been with their advice or organising fundraising events, the response has been positive throughout. It is sometimes difficult for me to approach people and ask for help, but I am learning that most people are on to willing to help; this is especially true if there is some physical connection with Africa, Ghana or the work of Sabre. To this end I see the association with schools and volunteers as a major part of the charity's growth.

There have been many different projects taking place, from micro teaching placements to large scale building projects, from presentations in UK schools to delivering donated teaching resources by vehicle from the UK to Ghana. Some of these tasks have proved large and complicated operations, but with help from a variety of sources, the tasks have been achieved admirably.

Founding the Sabre Charitable Trust

Setting up the Sabre Charitable Trust (SCT) has been a huge effort for a variety of people and it was with great delight that formal recognition of the SCT as a registered charity was granted by the Charities Commission of England and Wales.

Dominic Bond and Sophie Malcolm-Green worked tirelessly for many months ensuring the application to the commission was perfect and our aims and objectives fitted the mould of what we wanted to achieve within the parameters set by them. Agnes Boger in Ghana has been instrumental in liaising with the community and district assembly making introductions when we have needed them.

BRENU BEACH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Background

During Oct 2003 on a research visit to Ghana, a meeting was held with the district director of the KEEA District to enquire what the government plans were for the community school of Brenu. I had previously been informed that the community had visited the director's office for several years requesting that something be done about the current school situation. It transpired that the government had listened and plans were underway for the construction of a six classroom block primary school. However, the director also informed me that there were no plans for a Junior Secondary School (JSS) as there was very little government money.

With this in mind we approached the headmaster of the school and a couple of the village elders to see whether there were plans from within the community to build the school themselves. By the time I returned in May it was generally accepted that the building of the new JSS would fall on our shoulders. We held a meeting with the chiefs of Brenu Community to discuss an overall development plan (Appendix 1). The outcome of this meeting was mostly favourable although it did transpire that the community had funds which they were not prepared to allocate to the building of a Junior Secondary School. Despite this, they did offer assistance whenever it was required suggesting that sand, water and labour from the community could help reduce the overall cost of the building.

Area 1: Improving the Existing School Buildings

When I arrived in Brenu on April 15th 2004, I met with Agnes and the elders and confirmed that we could start work on the new site, but while that was going on we should also make improvements to the current school buildings. A major improvement was to be the construction of a nursery classroom for the kindergarten. The current situation was that nursery children attended school and were taught by one teacher under the shade of a tree on the beach. These children can be as young as two years old.

We proposed building an open air thatched classroom large enough to contain the 40 to 50 children who attended. The money for this project came from a Sabre Adventures trip and the work of five holidaying volunteers! After five days of basking in sunshine the structure took shape and six days later it was finished much to the delight of the children, staff and parents of the school.

[Work carried out by Sabre Adventures clients – carpentry, roofing, etc, also sanitation project]

Area 2: Constructing the New Junior Secondary School

The inaugural start of the building project began on May 12th 2004. Wednesday is community work day and there were up to 150 people on the site clearing the bushes,

shrubs and trees. During the following week the appointment of a contractor was discussed in detail and finally it was decided that a member of the community, Mr Aggrey, would take on the role. It was then agreed with Mr Aggrey that any labour fees be reduced to reflect a contribution from the community and therefore release more funds for the building work.

A lot of hard work was done by both Stan Moffat and Tom Malcolm-Green, who at various times of the year stepped in to help at crucial points. Stan driving the truck and Tom running the project with Aggrey throughout May and June 04.

Current position

By the end of March 2005, the new JSS building was just past foundation level and with the help of Nick Smout, a volunteer with building experience; the hardcore platform laying was completed on one classroom. This new building was to be built slightly larger than the architect's plans as it had been noted the current classrooms were too small. As Aggrey had informed me, as soon as the hardcore has been laid, the rest is easy! I looked forward to seeing the change.

Area 3: Introducing New Teaching Methods and Teaching/Learning Materials

Liz McQuillan went to teach at Brenu from January 2004 until August 2004. She went out with the intention of teaching students in JSS. Soon after she arrived she realised that where she was needed most was in the kindergarten. In Ghana, the government provides a curriculum for kindergarten teachers but it does not fall under the education programme proper which starts at primary level.

In Brenu there is a situation where the three kindergarten teachers are actually members of the community and are unqualified. As a result their experience and enthusiasm for teaching is not high and the children suffer. Liz soon realised that what was needed most was to train the teachers to teach. As she began this monumental task she discovered a store room full of teaching aids that had been donated by World Vision some ten years ago. It was therefore with great delight that she set about clearing out this storeroom ready for regular use. This also coincided with the first overland expedition's arrival in Brenu filled to the brim with toys, games, clothes and more importantly for Liz – volunteers!

For the next six weeks, Liz and Robyn Dwyer set to work in the kindergarten, transforming it with their enthusiasm. Much work was done by other volunteers in the painting of murals and cartoons on the walls and it was not long before the numbers of children attending had doubled to over 100!

Regrettably, that number drops when there are no volunteers in Brenu, but the usage of the classroom and some teaching materials still goes on thanks to the staff having undergone strict training from 'Madame Lizeth' as was called. Since returning to the UK Liz has continued to volunteer for Sabre and she has proved to be a Godsend for me. Always full of ideas and enthusiasm you get the feeling that there is nothing which cannot be achieved when she is around!

PROJECT ISSUES

Communication

The School Development Committee

Comprising of two teachers and two elders, the purpose of this committee was to act in the best interests of the school (Appendix 2) and promote the development of education within the community. They were to also set up a bank account with Barclays Bank in Cape Coast so that money could be transferred from the UK as and when required. The setting up of this account took four months to complete as all four signatures were needed.

The idea was that when money became available in the UK, we could transfer it directly to Ghana. Initially this plan was to come into effect when there were long periods of time in-between Sabre coordinators being in Ghana. As it happened, from April to Dec, there was a presence in the community every couple of months. Between Jan and Mar the only Sabre presence was through volunteers and to keep costs low we physically handed cash to outgoing volunteers at the airport. While far from ideal this system worked well.

The relative effectiveness of the development committee began fading after some months. The committee failed to meet when not prompted by Sabre coordinators and when they did meet not all members were present so its effectiveness was reduced. One of the major changes required for the committee would be to enhance the presence of the personnel actually interested in developing education. For example, introducing members of the current PTA to the committee and replacing one or both the elders.

One of the major problems that developed over the year was that of communication. The Development Committee lost motivation to meet and it seems that inaccurate accounts of the development process were being spread around the community.

When requested by us to assist with the work, the community neglected to commit, rather stalling for time or being unavailable due to a variety of more important issues that arose. With only two members of the development committee taking an active interest – both representing the school, it has become obvious that the elders, while desiring a new school, are not prepared to assist in a partnership. Rather, they want somebody else to do the work for them. The reasons for this are unclear.

Support in Country

Over the coming months, when there was no Sabre presence in Ghana very little building work took place. The main reason for this was lack of funding received. On top of that the funding plan we had devised was not effective.

As time passed and Liz left Ghana it became increasingly obvious that we needed to have someone in Ghana who would be responsible for volunteers. Esther Ghanney, already a member of the School Development Committee volunteered to take on this role. As an unpaid role, she became Sabre's first Ghanaian volunteer! Since then we have formalised her role a little giving her the title of Volunteer Liaison Manager.

Community Participation and Buy-in

Community partnership

As outlined in the agenda for the meeting with the elders held on May 2004 the community were invited to agree to, and be involved in, a development partnership with SCT.

Community work gangs

The community had agreed that during the early stages when the building work was labour intensive they would organise seven work groups each headed up by a leader who was directly accountable to the elders. Each group would work for one day of the week providing the contractor with free labour. Regrettably, this plan was never enforced by the elders.

Volunteer Issues

Having volunteers visit Ghana to work on the project is potentially fraught with problems. Nevertheless, the importance of volunteers cannot be underestimated. They not only bring funds, but enthusiasm and ideas. People with particular skills are encouraged to use them in whatever way possible. This is sometimes difficult as we do not necessarily have the funds available to spend on extra materials, however it did seem to allow for some added creativity from the volunteers!

Volunteers coming out on building or teaching placements paid money to SCT. Depending on the already mentioned funding issues this was either done in the UK or paid directly to the community.

Lack of volunteers

One of the major issues with the funding of the project was the lack of volunteers, which can largely be put down to lack of marketing, funds and the balancing act required to use the funds more for the project than promotion. It is fair to say that very little money was used to promote the Sabre Trust, and most of that was spent on running the website.

Accommodation in country

The structure for volunteer support in country began well but faded rather quickly to a point where a complete restructure was needed. Interestingly one of the community's main concerns from the start was where the volunteers would stay. During April we had camped on the beach, it was then suggested we should use the

beach guesthouse which we did in May. By June the elders decided that volunteers should no longer stay in the beach guesthouse but we should move to the community guesthouse. As I later discovered, some of the elders had manipulated the situation to their advantage and used Sabre as an excuse to take control of the beach guesthouse so they could run it as a business for themselves. Sadly it has taught me a lesson: to be wary of the intentions offered by some of the elders. As an interim measure (until we buy our own land), we have formalised an agreement with the caretaker of the community guesthouse and this now offers volunteers a solid base.

SCT PARTNERS

One of the keys aspects to running the SCT has been to develop partnerships with other organisations for mutual gain and development.

Schools

School Partnerships

Chesham High School: For two years now Moyra Zaman and I have been talking about starting partnerships with Brenu Community School and Chesham High School and it is with great pleasure that we can finally say the process is under way. Moyra wears many hats at school and one of them is Cultural Development Officer. The starting point for this partnership was to get Moyra to Ghana and to get Mr Arthur (Head Teacher at Brenu) to England on a reciprocal visit. The aim of this visit is to share ideas and systems of best practice while developing cultural awareness among students and staff alike.

School Sponsorship

Between April and June a concerted effort was made to liaise with schools in the UK to promote the situation of Brenu Community School and gain funding.

Gillotts School in Henley on Thames, through the enthusiasm of Vicky Bearstow, raised a transit van full of clothes, books and gift boxes made up by the Year 9 students.

Broughton Manor Prep School, in association with Milton Keynes Prep School near Northampton undertook an incredible donation programme and thanks to the efforts of the staff, students and parents filled a seven tonne lorry with toys, games, clothes and books – all for children.

Abingdon School's Sixth Form very kindly donated several hundreds of pounds as part of their annual fundraising activities.

Thomas's School, Battersea raised a substantial amount of money through a sponsored swim undertaken by the Year 2 students. Through the enthusiasm of one member of staff many books and pens were also collected and donated.

The Duston Upper School's Ghana Gig – organised by a sixth form student and Polly Nuttall was a huge success in promoting awareness of Ghana and issues of education within Ghana. We are hoping this will be an annual fundraising event as it was also very enjoyable!

NGOs and Charities

Kit Aid

Derrick Williams contacted us to see if we needed football clothing for Brenu. Kit Aid form associations with a variety of football clubs with the intention of distributing old/out of season jerseys to the developing world. The potential was obvious and we were kindly donated over 30 sets of kit that have been distributed to Mauritanian and Ghanaian communities.

Sabre Adventures

The partnership with Sabre Adventures (a commercial adventure company) is an obvious one with all Sabre Adventures clients supporting the work of the trust. As the charity grows, it is important to remember that much of its exposure is due to the work of Sabre Adventures. The low overheads of running the charity through the Sabre Adventures office can only continue if Sabre Adventures runs trips.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2005/2006

Key areas for growth for the following year should be focused on schools, developing and consolidating relations established with volunteers and other NGO's.

We also need to focus more on the education programme and linking in with academics who can offer the right guidance and experience in the field..

It would also be prudent to aim to secure a steady funding stream so that the project work actually in country can continue at a regular rate rather than having to wait for my presence in country for both finance and direction. This may or may not be possible.

Development plan – action for 5 years from May 2004

Construction of JSS new block

1. Confirm Location and design
 - 1.1. Confirm Appointment of Contractor/Foreman
 - 1.2. Set date for intended completion
 - 1.3. Confirm liaison with Govt regulations

Community centre

2. Use current JSS block
 - 2.1. Staff room refurbishment
 - 2.2. Add shelving units
 - 2.3. Use of lockers from the Brenu Beach changing rooms
 - 2.4. Chairs for staff
 - 2.5. Fill gap between class and roof
 - 2.6. Complete installation of windows, doors and locks
 - 2.7. Provision of staff resources such as paper, pens, card and general stationary
3. Construct new block
 - 3.1. Limited funds currently available
 - 3.2. Time frame for usage
 - 3.3. Comply with Govt regulations
 - 3.4. Propose it as an example of using renewable energy for sustainability

Primary Block

4. Complete construction of staff room
 - 4.1. Cement floor
 - 4.2. Plaster walls
 - 4.3. Build roof
 - 4.4. Paint and decorate
5. Complete fitting of windows, doors and locks on all current school buildings

KG Block

6. Complete fitting of windows, doors and locks on all current school buildings
 - 6.1. Confirm status as to remaining at current site
 - 6.2. Refurbish to improved useable standard
 - 6.3. Paint internally throughout
 - 6.4. Complete clear out of storeroom 1

- 6.5. Commence clear out of storeroom 2
- 6.6. Lower wall runners to useful height

Medical centre construction

- 7. Location
 - 7.1. When to begin construction
 - 7.2. Usage of current funds raised by the community

Community funds

- 8. What are the plans for existing funds
 - 8.1. KG spending so far
 - 8.2. KG Shelter needs completion
 - 8.3. Floor plastering
 - 8.4. Black board
 - 8.5. Floor mats
 - 8.6. Dustbin
 - 8.7. Playground area marked
- 9. Joint bank account for Sabre Trust and Community

School structure and developments

- 10. Teaching Resources
- 11. Teaching methods
 - 11.1. Sanitation and Hygiene
 - 11.2. Washing bowls for all classrooms with soap
 - 11.3. First aid medical kits for staff to administer minor wounds
 - 11.4. Food and Health
 - 11.5. Introduce a meal programme for the KG block in conjunction with a registration system for all students attending.
 - 11.6. Relate food issues to a healthy diet, train and employ several cooks to provide healthy food for the students.
 - 11.7. Introduce a de-worming programme for all children and staff at the school every three months and develop a programme of health education.

Sabre Trust within the community

- 12. Accommodation for volunteers
 - 12.1. Requisition of land for building accommodation
 - 12.2. Use current primary block for volunteer accommodation after January 2005
- 13. Understanding of what the volunteers are and why they are here
 - 13.1. Long and short term volunteers
 - 13.2. Teaching and building work volunteers
- 14. Storage room for materials

Brenu School Development Committee (BSDC)

Aims and Objectives

Sabre Trust Advisor- AMG
Sabre Trust Acting Advisor - TMG

Chief – Jacob – owner of the community guesthouse
Chief – John Eshun
Teacher – Esther
Head Teacher – John Arthur

Committee Chairperson
Committee Secretary
Committee Deputy Chairperson

The committee will:

1. Facilitate the development of the school in the best interests of the teaching staff and students by:
 - 1.1. Sanctioning the application of job sheets swiftly.
 - 1.2. Liaising with the contractor/volunteer on a regular basis
2. Coordinate the spending of the Sabre Trust and Brenu Community funds with at least a 40% matching scheme from the community fund.
 - 2.1. The value of a labourer is 15, 000 Cedis per day
 - 2.2. The value of skilled labour (carpenter, electrician etc) is 30,000 Cedis per day.
 - 2.3. The value of a contractor is 40,000 Cedis per day
3. Act as a link between the school and the community elders and the parents of the school.
 - 3.1. When a job is completed arrange for the elders and the outside advisors to visit, inspect and where appropriate, officially open the building or site for use.
 - 3.2. Encourage the community to visit the school on selected days.
 - 3.3. Support the PTA

Conditions of operation

John and Jacob represent the elders and chief.

Mr. Arthur and Esther represent the school.

A decision must be unanimous and the signatures of all four committee members must be present on the funding approval sheets before funding is granted.

Job Sheets will be presented with the intention of the job taking place. If there is any doubt as to whether the committee will sanction a particular job, it is vital that the applicant be informed immediately.

The committee must take an active interest in the jobs being done. Regular site inspections are necessary.

There must be weekly meetings either on Sunday or Monday. (Meetings must be out of school working hours). The aim of the meetings will be to approve job sheet applications for the coming week and monitor progress of existing jobs.

If you are seen by the community to be affecting change and development and encouraging the elders to spend the community money wisely for the benefit of their children, you will receive their support and respect without hesitation.

This is a trial run for the period 24th May – 02 August 2004

Process of operation

Job sheet application form received from contractor or volunteer

The contractor/volunteer may hand the application form to any one of the committee members. An acknowledgment of receiving this should be issued to the applicant.

The application must include:

- An accurate breakdown of the materials and labour required
- Length of job
- Potential source of materials and labour
- Signature of applicant contractor or volunteer

These forms will be submitted before the next meeting with regard to work planned for the coming week. Therefore it is imperative that the committee reach a decision and return it to the contractor/volunteer as soon as the meeting is ended.

Once a job sheet has been signed it needs to be given to a contractor/volunteer and presented to Liz McQuillan who will then release the funds in the absence of bank account.

Each job then requires an accounts form to be filled; this will be completed by the contractor/volunteer and will provide an accurate breakdown of expenditure.