
ANNUAL REPORT 2005/2006

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Annual Report 2005 – 2006

INTRODUCTION

Chairman's Message

Well, another year passed rather too quickly! So many changes in our personal lives meant that it was often difficult to keep focused on what we are trying to achieve with Sabre. For me personally Sabre Adventures was taking too much time and not really working. Trying to run it on my own, getting malaria too often, spending months at a time in Ghana running trips, coupled with our family move to a new house and the arrival of a baby boy, meant I was unable to sustain the company

So it was that gradually the Charitable Trust became the main focus again. Much of what happened the previous year was down to a lot of effort directed through Sabre Adventures, but it became more and more clear that Sabre Charitable Trust needed to find it's feet as an organisation in its own right.

To do this will take time, but the steps taken this year have laid a solid foundation for this to happen. Relationships with the other organisations both in the UK and in Ghana have been cemented allowing other parties to take on certain projects. This obviously has been a huge relief for both Liz McQuillan and me.

It is an interesting situation because the Trust is completely run by volunteers, both in the UK and in Ghana. No-one at present receiving an money on a permanent basis for what they do. Esther is full-time teacher, I work for a travel company and Liz is studying hard for her Masters. Aggrey does receive some remuneration for the work he does as he is a self-employed salt farmer. Given this fact, I am so grateful for the effort put in by these people and others, Stan Moffat and Simon Froggatt for driving the truck down to Ghana, Sophie and Dom Bond, Anne Evans, Aggie and many more, for the physical and verbal support they give.

The lessons learnt from this year have certainly focused our minds on making the Trust a more solid organisation. – one that can work with a variety of organisations on many levels. The next couple of years in Ghana will certainly be a very exciting one as word of our achievements and what we are capable of spreads. Already more communities are interesting in forming relationships with us and more schools in the UK are keen to support those communities. All in all, very exciting news.

BRENU SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Background

Between August 04 and July 05 the Brenu Project directly received several thousand pounds of funds. This may not seem much and in comparison to what we need for the future it is not! However we have managed to make this money do so much. This has largely been down to the shrewd approach taken by both Esther and Aggrey who seem to know instinctively which corners to cut and where to get the best deals!

Area 1: Improving the Existing School Buildings

Not much work has taken place in the existing school buildings except for the KG block and Primary School Library (up on the new site). Wonderful decorations have been painted on the walls of all classrooms and the library, which has obviously revitalised the look of the rooms. The main emphasis of course is on the completion of the new JSS.

Area 2: New Junior Secondary School

By the end of July 2006, the new JSS building was up but unroofed. The main structure was in place – a major achievement by Aggrey and his team in Ghana. The final push now will be putting the roof on, fitting doors and windows and plastering the entire building.

Area 3: New Teaching Methods and Teaching/Learning Materials

Liz McQuillan undertook a Masters degree, in fact two Masters' degrees in Linguistics and Phonics. The idea being that writing a new KG syllabus would compliment the work the government is doing. The rumours are that late in 2006 all Kindergarten schools will come directly under the Ghana Education Service management. We are in a great position to work closely with the KEEA District Education Director in setting a solid foundation for children to learn.

Area 4: School Management

It has become increasingly clear over the last couple of years that Brenu School was lacking one vital thing, a solid leader. On two separate visits, both Liz and I visited other community schools in the KEEA district. It became very apparent that there were huge differences between Brenu and other poor performing schools. Successive meetings were held with the Education Office and as a result the Director made a decision to replace the Headmaster in time for the new academic year.

PROJECT & PARTNER SUMMARIES

Volunteers

Volunteers always have a big part to play in the development of what we are trying to achieve. Without the funds received from volunteers progress would be negligible. Esther continues to look after the needs of the volunteers with her usual enthusiasm and passion what would we do without her?!

Chesham High School Partnership

Moyra Zaman has been working long and hard to set up the partnership with Brenu. I had the pleasure of accompanying her to Ghana in May 2006. The aim of the visit was for her to establish the aims of the partnership with Brenu School meet the Headmaster and the Education Director and see for herself what the potential was.

The visit went very well. As usual the time available was not enough, but we achieved more than half the things on our list – this is always a good sign! One of the key aims of the partnership was to set up a fabrics project. The idea behind this is to teach students in Ghana how to make batiks and tie-dying the obvious benefit is that they learn a skill that could earn them an income after school. The good quality fabrics would then be brought to Chesham High School where the students would explore possible avenues for selling them. The funds generated would be ploughed back into the project so that eventually it would become a cottage industry. Further initiatives would involve the UK students sharing their marketing ideas with the students in Brenu who would then explore ways of adapting and implementing them in Ghana

There are a range of other little projects being considered at present but they will all be confirmed when the Headmaster visits England in November 2006.

Marden High School Partnership

Linda Grinton volunteered with Sabre in January 2005. She works at a school in Newcastle and on her return felt compelled to get involved and support a new project in a new community called Egei Krom not far from Brenu. Her enthusiasm rubbed off on her students and they raised just under £2000 to start building a new KG school that the community had requested.

During May 2006, Aggrey and I visited the community meeting with the Elders and a development-community already in place to discuss how best to progress. A realistic plan was agreed and the community wanted to take ownership of the project from the start. We all agreed that Aggrey would act as a sort of consultant to the building work and it seemed a logical step to have an external person – someone that we know and trust- overseeing proceedings. By July the rains were in full flood so little work had taken place, but the foundations were dug for a four roomed classroom! As is usual, this is a grander plan than the initially agreed three rooms!

GVI Partnership

With the demise of Sabre Adventures, we needed to find another source of attracting volunteers. There is obviously no shortage of volunteer organisations/companies in the 'market place', but a very good friend of mine worked at one in particular. She and I travelled to Ghana in 1999 in an old landrover, and since then had talked a lot about it's wonders and it's problems. Interestingly, she had recently become the Director of Global Vision International (GVI) a well respected volunteer organisation with projects all around the world; but not, as it happens in Ghana. The fusion was therefore inevitable. In April 2006 the first group of GVI volunteers headed out to Ghana - and we trust they will not be the last!

In reality this partnership means that the Trust does not have to worry about sourcing volunteers, which is great news as it means all money raised through their payments goes directly to running the charity and supporting the projects rather than on marketing. We look forward to the coming months and hopefully being able to sustain our commitment to Brenu by providing volunteers throughout the academic year without breaks.

Dragoman Partnership

The partnership with Dragoman also grew out of the demise of Sabre Adventures as suddenly we had no way of getting supplies out to Ghana! Dragoman was also keen to support a project in Ghana and as I already had contacts within their organisation it seemed a sensible solution to both parties to join forces. Now the Dragoman trucks carry carefully selected supplies to Ghana whenever they leave England.

KEEA Education Office Partnership

Central to our aim of influencing educational opportunities to Ghanaian and indeed other African schools, is working alongside other organisations. It would be foolish for Sabre to set an agenda to bettering the standard of education in Brenu without working closely with the Ghana Education Service.

In April 2005 a new Education Director was appointed to the KEEA District. Her vision and passion for education seems to fit perfectly with ours and it is with great pleasure that we met several times to discuss joint ventures. Supporting other communities through providing volunteers and resources were key factors in her plan.

Liz's work with the KG syllabus has been greatly welcomed and Brenu will be the official trial school of the programme for the academic year 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2006/2007

The future seems so much more positive, real foundations have been laid and other avenues opened. The key to it all I feel is to get more volunteers involved. People who have been to Brenu already, have a relationship with the community or certain individuals within the community are best placed to support the new and ongoing work. This support can be through fundraising at home or promoting the work we do through schools.

School partnerships have to be our next major focus, not only for the educational benefits but also for funds raising possibilities that arise from the association..