
ANNUAL REPORT 2006/2007

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Annual Report 2006 – 2007

INTRODUCTION

Chairman's Message

At the start of the year we had several objectives; formalise a relationship with the local KEEA Education Office, complete the JSS classroom block with the community of Brenu, develop a more consistent stream of volunteers and a coordinated programme that they can take part in, and finally but by no means least, raise money and awareness about what we are doing.

I think anyone would be surprised to hear that all these objectives were met! We certainly came very close though. The team in Ghana gelled fantastically to achieve a great many things with volunteers, the communities and the Education Office. This was largely due to the massive efforts of Sadie Davies, herself a past volunteer to Brenu, now turned Country Project Manager. The development of relationships with other communities requesting support evolved under her careful attention and now volunteers are living and working in three local communities – Brenu Akyinim, Besease and Egyei Krom.

The curriculum education programme received a massive boost through the efforts of many volunteers; particularly noticeable was the contribution of those who were able to volunteer for a full term or more. Liz McQuillan, not only completed her Masters in Applied Linguistics and Postgraduate Diplomas in Inter-cultural Communication and Marketing, but also authored Year One of a Kindergarten Phonics syllabus called the 'Sounds Together Programme' that volunteers have been working from in Ghana.

Work on infrastructure development took a massive step forward with two building projects moving ahead at speed. A kindergarten building rose out of the ground to window level in Egyei Krom and the Junior Secondary School at Brenu Akyinim got its roof on.

I will never tire of saying this, but the hard work of so many individuals has contributed to a fantastic year and to all of them we are very grateful.

This next year will be an even bigger year with me moving out with Louise, the boys and the dog to work with Sadie in Ghana. Dominic Bond now finds himself in the fantastic position of being able to work more regularly for Sabre on a part-time basis and Liz McQuillan will be doing the same. The aspirations are huge with many new projects in the pipeline and funding streams being developed for each of them. I look forward with anticipation and excitement at our new life in the front line, so to speak.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Brenu JSS

This flagship project has been a huge sustained effort from a great many people, the patience of the community and their lack of involvement (for various internal reasons) has meant the build process has taken much more time than we anticipated. However, with some positive influences from the new Elders in the community and a renewed burst of enthusiasm from the workforce the building has been completed and will be inaugurated in February 2008.

Besease

Seven years ago the elders and community members began building two classrooms to house their kindergarten school. A year into the project, which was run and managed by the community members, funds ran out and the building has remained incomplete. With the help of several volunteers, funds have been raised and given to the community to continue with the building including enough to add an additional classroom to the plans..

This has come as a huge relief to the elders as some 90 children have been occupying one Primary School classroom for the last seven years. The impact of volunteers has provided a huge boost to moral and now even more children are attending school.

Egyei Krom

Early in 2006 a volunteer from Marden High School in Newcastle visited this rural community and left motivated to assist them to build a kindergarten school. Their children are currently being taught in a local community member's house.

After several months of fundraising by the students of Marden High School, enough money was raised to begin the building. The community contributed money, labour and materials and over the course of the year the building grew out of the ground to window level.

EDUCATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Sounds Together Programme

SCT was extremely blessed, as Esther and all of the Brenu Akyinim Community would say, to receive the talents, warmth and enthusiasm of Mat and Morri for the first three months of 2007. In the first term of the year, Mat and Morri introduced the Phonics teaching programme to KG1 and KG2 with fantastic results. They trained the teachers, produced charts, introduced word games, and ensured every lesson was fun and progressive. So much so, that the Primary One teacher who received their pupils in September 2007 was overjoyed at their English reading and

writing ability. The children's literacy skills were significantly better than any other year. The foundations Mat and Morri had laid were continued by the teachers and subsequent volunteers. Together they reinforced the programme and integrated a wide variety of subjects that extended the Kindergarten pupils vocabulary and comprehension of concepts prior to entering the Primary School.

Besease Kindergarten is a long way behind Brenu Akyinim because of a lack of basic school accommodation, consistent teaching staff and lack of classroom resources. SCT were able to support the early years teaching for the first time in 2007 with the teaching skills, energy and determination of long term volunteer Julie, Lisa and Erin. All of the volunteers contributed enormously to the children's increased interest in learning. Despite difficult and challenging circumstances, the volunteers made significant progress in the pupils English speaking and writing comprehension. Julie who worked with the children for 7 months established a good classroom routine. This discipline and repeated structure led to the children writing the alphabet and comprehending spoken English and speaking in simple sentences. The volunteers increased the range of teaching and learning materials and improved the confidence and teaching ability of the resident Ghanaian kindergarten teacher.

The combined efforts of all of the volunteers has made a significant impact on the pupils, teachers and communities during 2007 and has been appreciated by all, especially Sabre Charitable Trust.

WEBSITE AND ONLINE PROJECTS

Sabre Charitable Trust

It was pointed out more often than not, that our website lacked not only information but colour and photographs! Over the years we have tried to develop the site with the help of volunteers and my time. The final product now is one we are all very proud of and we hope you are too: www.sabretrust.org. Being able to categorise everything that we do has been a huge challenge as there are so many different areas we have been developing. However, 2008/9 will be a year of consolidation and development of what we have already started and the website truly reflects our aims, ethos and beliefs.

Support Our Project

Back in January 2005 I wanted to create a website that would present to the general public a simple and effective way to donate to a specific project they wanted to support. The idea being that they would know exactly where their donation was going and once the project had received the money it needed, no one else could donate to it.

It has taken two years of our time to plan and implement, to keep costs down we worked with a company in India to develop the site which has at last been completed.

We now need to tell everyone about it so they can either fund projects themselves or if they know of projects that need funding, they can apply through the website. Check out www.supportourproject.org and help us to spread the word!

Volunteer Ghana

As we have been working in Ghana for nearly 5 years and developed a huge range of contacts and potential communities that need/would like volunteers, we felt it would be appropriate to create a website that advertised a whole variety of local projects that international volunteers could work with. See www.volunteerghana.org.uk and the volunteering pages on the main SCT site.

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Contributions

There have been a great many achievements/contributions by the international volunteers. We've only space to mention of few of them. One of the biggest areas volunteers have enjoyed getting involved with in 2007 is arts and crafts. It's something that is rarely introduced by the Ghanaian teachers due to lack of materials, inspiration and experience. There have been some fantastic art projects introducing children to new ways of learning and thinking as well as lessons packed full of fun and pictures to take home to show the family. Examples are boat collages, mask making, hat making, a tree made of cut outs of the children's hands, finger puppets, wind chimes and pictures of people, animals, shapes and beach and farm scenes made of everything from glitter and sand to buttons and leaves.

Brenu

Testing was carried out by volunteers in both KG1 and KG2 to identify areas they needed more help in and to create a detailed record to help with consistency between years and volunteers. This included recording their strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing, drawing, alphabet and number recognition and maths. Records included reports on each child's behaviour and attitude as well as any concerns for the child's progress or well being. KG1's log also includes assessments of the student's exercise books. They are both excellent logs that benefit teachers, volunteers and the children themselves.

Every volunteer formed an attachment with a different child and some of these relationships have had long lasting effects on the child's progress. One volunteer singled out a rebellious student who was 8 yrs old but was in Nursery 2. She gave the student extra support and got her moved up to KG2 with her own age group. The student is now doing well in P1 of Primary School and has an excellent attitude to school. Sometimes it's possible to have an impact on just one individual but that effect can be profound.

We had a volunteer who specialised in construction management and was able to support our Buildings Project Manager in scheduling and driving home the last leg of the JSS build.

Several of the volunteers this year have offered to donate some money toward the sponsorship of people who wish to further their education. The beneficiaries include students, teachers, people who work at the beach and people who formed friendships with volunteers or lived in the compound.

Besease

As a new community and one not accustomed to western ways, volunteers received an incredible welcome ceremony.

The kindergarten classes in Besease were not anywhere near the level of the children in Brenu. Volunteers had to teach children how to hold pencils, how to write each letter and number, where to start writing on the page and where to continue writing when the end of the line is reached! This was real back to basics and it was a constant uphill battle for the volunteers with very little support from teachers. Compounding the problem was that there were over 150 children in one classroom. This problem was rectified as additional premises were sought, nonetheless, the award for the largest number of students in the class in one day goes to Tom Ashworth with 78 children.

A catalogue of worksheets was created by volunteers over the year mainly focusing on the shapes of letters and the combination of letters and short sentences. A volunteer in Besease who specialised in Maths created some excellent maths worksheets that have been continually used in both communities. Other English and Art worksheets were also tailored specifically for the level of the students at Besease.

A stunning mural was painted in KG1 brightening up a very depressingly gloomy classroom. Julie Clark has made an astounding contribution to Sabre and more importantly to Besease and the Kindergarten. As the first into a new community it was an uphill struggle but she laid an incredible foundation for future volunteers. Her children were unable to hold pencils when she arrived and they were writing sentences by the time she left. Through her warm personality, her hard work and determination and the extensive portfolio of work she compiled, Julie's time here will have a long lasting effect and reinforces the benefit that volunteers can have.

Egyei Krom

This was another new community not used to hosting international volunteers, but an equally warm reception was laid on by the community. Volunteers worked closely with existing teachers following the government curriculum. Volunteer in KG2 worked with teacher in expanding on curriculum and creating additional lessons in English.

The most important thing that a first time volunteer in a new community can do is to establish as many good relationships with children and members of the community as possible. This has an incredibly positive impact on the community.

The community gave an impressive thank you ceremony with all the elders, chief and community in attendance. They made outfits and gave jewellery and shoes. During the evening programme KG teachers and children sang, there was a JSS cultural troupe, speeches, dancing and youth drumming; which was laughed at by the crowd so the original village drummer (now 90yrs old) came out of retirement for a one off performance.

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 impossible. Esther continues to look after the needs of the volunteers in Ghana with her usual enthusiasm and passion – what would we do without her?!

Chesham High School Partnership

This partnership is now developing hugely with a group of students from Chesham planning on visiting Brenu Community School in the summer of 2008. The aim of the visit is to work with pupils from Brenu to complete a variety of projects during their three week visit.

Several cross-curricular cultural projects are under way, covering such diverse topics as fabric design, football and history! These projects have engaged both sets of students and we are working to ensure their potential is maximised in the long term.

Marden High School Partnership

This partnership is in its embryonic stage, but a formal application is being written to the British Council by Marden High School to visit Egeyi Krom in 2008. We anticipate this will be successful and Marden has committed to raise funds to complete the kindergarten school in 2008 with matched funding from the SCT.

It is hoped that over the course of next year a visit to Ghana by students of Marden will become a reality for 2009.

Bradfield School Partnership

With the hugely successful input of Tom and Katy Ashworth at Besease plans are underway to formalise a cross-curricular partnership with Besease Community School. So far the students of Bradfield have raised over £2500 that will be spent in

2008 on several different projects that they will select through the Support Our Project website.

We are very excited about the prospect of the Bradfield students also visiting Besease in 2009 with the aim of completing a waste management project that has been requested by the elders committee. Bradfield is an Engineering Specialist School which potentially makes this project a huge part of the curriculum.

GVI Partnership

This partnership goes from strength to strength with GVI working hard to provide volunteers for all the communities. In addition we have seen the inclusion of the Green Turtle Conservation programme

Twin Abroad Partnership

As a language training centre Twin has branched out in to providing volunteers for unique overseas projects. We are proud to be short listed as an in country partner and look forward to working closely with Twin as they recruit specialist volunteers to work in the community schools.

Green Turtle Lodge Partnership

Over the years the SCT has been formalising a strong relationship with the Green Turtle Conservation project in the west of Ghana. Run jointly by the tourism development committee and Jo and Tom Miles this is a fantastic initiative to preserve one of the world's endangered species.

Having developed a volunteer programme and community re-education programme with the Ghana Wildlife Division, Jo and Tom are hugely excited about the prospect of long term support making a huge difference to the local environment.

Dragoman Partnership

Another successful couple of visits from the passing Dragoman truck and volunteers saw Brenu School transformed as a huge welcome ceremony was organised. As usual the Truck brought with it much needed specialist supplies from the UK, this time in the form of Science equipment donated by LabAid.

LabAid Partnership

LabAid is a UK registered Charity that provides Science equipment to developing world schools. Through the connection with Chesham High School, Moyra Zaman introduced us to LabAid who swiftly collated a much needed list of resources to enable the science staff at Brenu to teach the subject practically rather than theoretically. With the evolution of our School Bus Run Challenge, we hope to develop this relationship over the coming years.

KEEA Education Office Partnership

The work done by Sadie in Ghana has been hugely efficient in developing our relationship with the Education Office. The channels of communication are very open and we are in a strong position to respond to district wide issues. The pilot of the Sounds Together Programme has been a huge hit and 2008 will bring with it the implementation of a Training and Resourcing programme to complement the Ghana Education Services' commitment to developing kindergarten education.

PLANS FOR 2008

This is shaping up to be our most exciting year yet, during which we plan to develop the following projects:

- **Cultural Masterclasses** – this is a series of specialist learning opportunities for schools and colleges in the UK to take part in developing and exchanging their personal skills in a different cultural environment.
- **The School Bus Run Challenge** – this programme aims to solve the age old problem of children and teachers getting to school! We plan to buy a school bus in the UK, collect the much needed teaching aids and materials from partner schools in the UK, gather together a group of volunteers who will drive the bus to Ghana where it will be donated to and managed by the newly created Sabre Charitable Trust (Ghana) charity for the benefit of the KEEA district schools.
- **The Techno Truck** – This project has enormous potential for breaking down cultural barriers and shattering misconceptions about the developing world. Using up-to-date technology we plan to share not only the every day lives of Ghanaian and British communities, but also school lessons. Through an online portal, students from all over the UK will be able to take part in a Ghanaian Fanti lesson. Equally, Ghanaian students can take part in UK school lessons when the Techno Truck visits their community.

All of these programmes are designed to raise funds and awareness. If you are inspired to get involved in any of the programmes or projects then please contact us directly.