

What a Year!

I am constantly surprised when I realise what we have achieved together - that's you, our friends helping to raise funding for the very tough projects we seem to tackle - the things that are too hard for others to contemplate. I know I keep saying this, but you should feel very proud indeed.

Perhaps someone is looking after us and helping from afar? Our survival on an internal flight in Ghana this year was something of a miracle—as was our survival on the road to Accra despite mud slips and the other fatalities we saw. And time and time again, when I feel so concerned about funding, realising just how much we could do with a little more, something turns up. Of course, random hope is no way to run a charity as important as ours, and the 'something' has often been worked and worried over. This is why I'd like to say 'thank you' to you all, very much including those who are able to make the regular monthly donations that help our planning by telling us how much we will have each month. And to those who are responsible for continuing to trust us with the larger donations that make it possible to build, to equip, and to maintain so many schools. These donations work together with those from individuals as a fail-safe recipe for long-term poverty relief. *Lynne Symonds*

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Together we are Building Education

w.w.w.wulugu.co.uk

CHANGING LIVES

We work in an area where facilities are basic, and where girls in particular have extremely limited opportunities: we report on how our work has changed their lives.

Mary's Story

The success of our work is usually due to wonderful people on the ground. One of these is Mary, who teaches tailoring at Savelugu Vocational School. She is rightly proud of her work to help needy girls. She has been paid for 8 months but worked for 2 years at the school without pay. She earns 270 cedis for 4 months. (approx. £100) In her own words:

"The girls way of life has changed drastically, since they are now able to read and write common sentences in the literacy classes offered to them every morning before dispersing to their various departments. Because of moral lessons they have been protected from ill activities such as stealing and fornication. For now they know their right from their left when they are heading towards a serious zone in life.

In our communities the older people are now relieved from the fear of poverty since, after their course, their wards have the ability to start a small business to earn a reliable living."

Mary gathers other girls from the streets in the evenings and trains them to sew. This is voluntary. She currently has twenty and teaches them in her shop in Savelugu. These girls can't go to the vocational school as they can't pay the small fees. Previously she trained girls in Tamale and UNICEF paid her a small amount. This experience meant she could apply to be a trainer at Savelugu.



Mary's evening class



Women sitting in front of the new Junior High School to learn about loans

Loans to help mothers

Following the success of similar schemes in other communities, fifty Gbenfu women have been given loans, each approximately £90. It has been explained that these are for one year and they must repay with interest so others can use it.

The women are divided into groups of five. Informal training is provided by peers and older women as none of the women are literate. There is a committee of five influential villagers in charge (selected democratically they say). They are monitoring the activities of the group members.

The women can use the loans to buy better seed and to enable them to avoid the problem of selling immediately after harvest when the prices are at their

lowest. Indeed, they can buy at a low price and store until prices rise. They trade in millet, groundnuts and sometimes cassava and rice. They buy cassava and process it to resell as gari (dry fried cassava); collect shea nuts to produce shea butter and then process the residue to sell as food; buy fish at the Black Volta and sell it on Bole market.

These women are now much more likely and able to send all of their children to school regularly, and pay for food, uniforms etc. The girls will be less needed for growing food. The families are less likely to be hungry during the lean season and healthy children learn better.

Although the women are illiterate, none having had any schooling, they are often very clever and determined to improve lives for their families. Each has signed a contract (with thumb print). This adds to the perceived importance of the repayment within the agreed time. Their committee has been very strict that the loan must not be longer than a year. Interest at 5% will be ploughed back into the capital for new loans.

CHANGING LIVES Contd:

Our 'Graduate' Loans

The success of our pilot programme of starter loans to vocational 'graduates' is reported fully on our web site (www.wulugu.co.uk). With our help 'graduates' are able to start their own businesses providing a sustainable future and helping many to improve their lives and stay out of the poverty trap. The following story about Amina shows how a little help in the right place can change lives:

Amina Wusa left Buipe in 2009, age 20 her loan was only £150. She set up a weaving enterprise. Without our help it is likely that she would be married with three children by now, and the hope of her own children attending school would be remote.

Amina found a second-hand loom and her cloths sold well. With her income she rapidly repaid the loan, to be passed on to another new graduate. We are told that:

'She helps her family very well. She helped her uncle to buy a 2 acre farm. He grew maize and, in the first year, produced 16 bags of maize which he had never had before. Eight bags fed his family for the year and the other 8 he could sell to buy more seed and to care for the needs of his family. All 6 of his children are now at school regularly, even the girls.'

How Wulugu adds value to change lives

So much of our work has acted as a springboard, seeming to open doors for locals to move further towards helping their own communities. Some recent examples include:

The promise **by Buipe District Chief Executive**, where we have a vocational school and hostel and have built and repaired schools, that:

'In two years time you will see your baby become a huge elephant. The whole country was suffering from lack of vocational training. We are looking at the numbers of teachers needed to 'beef-up' the school as the government has categorised teachers and given a quota to pay them.'

The **Buipe District Chief Executive** is budgeting for maintenance of the schools: maintenance is a very new concept in Ghana!

In **Old Buipe**, where Wulugu has improved schools and given desks, the District Assembly is building teachers' quarters at our school **at Miekpigu**. This will maintain the high quality of teaching and promote recruitment of women teachers as role models.

In **Walewale**, another District where we have several projects, the catering students in our vocational schools are running a lunchtime 'chop bar'. This feeds passing traffic, provides work experience and funds for the school.

Having renovated the Junior High Schools in **Yaraba** and neighbouring Kubori in 2009 the number of students, including girls, completing the course have grown so much that Ghana Education Services is building a Senior High School in Yaraba. John Razak, the present head of Walewale Vocational School has been given the headship. He will be missed in Walewale but he is leaving a strong team.

At Sawla, our most successful Vocational School, the district has built a new enlarged hostel for the girls and our hostel has been turned into much needed extra classrooms. Wulugu Project started Sawla Vocational School but now they understand its value, the district is taking over. This makes it sustainable. We must let our babies go.

In **Gbenfu**, the industry of the students for years and the recent building of primary classrooms by Wulugu Project has encouraged Bole District to supply teachers and equipment for a new Junior High School in Gbenfu. With our new buildings the school will be fully functional for all the students in the area.

OUR VISIT TO GHANA: JUNE 2012

As Lynne mentioned in her introduction our trip to Ghana this year was eventful! However, it provided an opportunity to see for ourselves some of our life-changing investments: the following three articles below give a flavour of our visit. Leo, Lynne and Jane

Life in Transformation at Gbenfu



Lynne with Pupils

After a long five hour journey we were greeted by the Gbenfu children who were gathered round their new primary school sign. Though they never met Peggy Ellis we know that these children will greatly benefit from the three new schoolrooms that she has provided. Peggy Ellis, Lynne's first teacher in Sunderland, left £14,000 in her will for us to use as we wished. The community at Gbenfu had asked us many times to help. So we have built them a primary school in Peggy's name.

This has been an amazing year for the people of Gbenfu: in addition to the arrival of the three new primary school classrooms, complete with teachers and desks, a new Junior High School (funded by the Eagle Foundation) and teachers' accommodation have been built. This means that for the first time pupils can obtain the first nine years of education in the village and prepare for High School entrance exams. These

opportunities are especially precious for the girls.

The teachers quarters are very important to encourage good teachers to stay in the village. They are occupied by qualified teachers who are committed to their work at the new Junior High School. They are very happy to have rooms, an important factor in their decision to work here despite the deprivation of the district. They are all Gonja people (i.e. from the tribe local to Gbenfu) and so are able to use the local language when necessary and have a good understanding of local culture and practices.

When we visited, the village celebrated the new schools with a "Durbar" - a traditional gathering of dignitaries from the district assembly and villagers. This involves the whole school, the village and dignitaries with loud

drums, singing, dancing and a play with a message on the value of girls' education. There were many impassioned speeches! Details of two are reported below:

The District Assembly made a commitment to monitor and maintain their new buildings, but we will monitor the monitoring!

Karimu Nachina, our Ghana project director, in his speech said:

'After attending Junior High, the children may go to boarding school and there will be an end to hardship here. We are appealing to the Director of Education that they should make sure the teachers stay in Gbenfu and do their work here. Poanaba (Lynne) and her team will be very happy if you all send your children to school. We will visit and watch their progress. When electricity comes to the village we will put lights into the teachers' quarters. We thank the District Assembly for helping transport the materials here. We thank the women for carrying water.'



Teachers' accommodation



Some Junior High School boys watching the Durbar in front of their new school



Leo with Javi the proud Year Four teacher



The Chief, in the pale blue robes, is surrounded by his elders and Lynne, watching the entertainment.

Lynne: Queen of Peace and Friendship

During our gruelling visit Lynne was honoured by being "enskinned" (initiation ceremony for a new chief) of the Dagomba people. For this honour to be given to a white woman is special. It is in recognition of the work Lynne has done over many years to help neglected communities to move out of the poverty trap.

The ceremony took place in Karaga where we had provided a Vocational training school for girls together with a hostel.

The ceremony was long and hot. Lynne was dressed in splendid cloths and the tribes-people danced, played very loud music and celebrated with rifle salutes.

After the enskinning, the chief decided that he should inspect 'His School'. So he, with his entourage of illiterate elders, the musicians, and the teachers, piled onto our vehicles to drive the mile up the road to visit

the new school and hostel. The Chief's approval is very necessary to ensure sustained enrolment at the school.

Visit to Karaga Vocational School

On our last visit to Karaga, in late 2010, the site of our new school was marked by a huge pile of sand and an acre of scrubland at the edge of the town. We returned to a Vocational School (opened September 2011) with classes full of girls working on the sewing machines making clothes, completing their 'portfolios', weaving complex patterns and tie-dying. Others had produced a display of Mango jam, and Hibiscus cordial and other local produce some of which was included in the meal they had prepared for us. It was a hive of activity.

The Head teaches the students some literacy and numeracy. Many of the girls had no previous education and are learning to write so they can record the names of customers etc.

We saw an admirable **catering class of 20 students**, taught by Alice Gilgu-Denueme with some of the neighbouring Senior High pupils joining our students. The students were dressed in proper catering attire.

The fashion and design class was yet again very popular and a buzz with the sewing machines being shared by the fifty-five students taking this course, some with babies asleep on their backs. They work very hard and also make clothes for each other or their babies.

Girls doing weaving are learning a very skilled trade with real opportunities to set up in business and earn money.

The tie dying/batik students again learn a skill which can convert cheap local white cloth into the brightly coloured prints so loved by the women.

The girls at Karaga, many of whom were illiterate when they arrived, have learned self respect and self worth and to have fun. The skills gained lead to the chance of setting up their own business and earning good money.



Weaving is highly skilled and very mathematical

Stop Press!! We can report that in October 2012 we have 34 girls doing tie/dye, 58 tailoring, 55 catering, 36 weaving and 18 hairdressing and the hostel is full! They will need more equipment!



Lynne with catering students

OUR SUPPORTERS

Our wonderful supporters are at the heart of "Wulugu"

A personal note from long-term supporter: Stephen C. Palmer

I started supporting the Wulugu Project sixteen years ago when I read an article in 'The Times' about a lady, Lynne Symonds, who had been named an honorary chief of The Mamprusi Tribe, Northern Ghana, in recognition of the work she'd done to improve access to education for girls, as well as equipping a very large library. I contacted Lynne, and ever since I've been an admirer of the great work she and her team perform in the little-known area of Northern Ghana.

The reasons I support Wulugu are simple. It works in an area of the world where facilities are very basic, and, without education, girls in particular have extremely limited opportunities.

The charity is run on a shoestring, so I know that virtually all the money I send will actually be spent on-the-ground in villages. And it's a small charity, so I can directly identify with those who run the project, and the schools, etc they are establishing and supporting.

".....I know that virtually all the money I send will actually be spent on-the-ground in villages."

We stopped sending Christmas cards, and sent the money to Wulugu instead. Sometimes we were able to help specific projects, like desks for a classroom in one of the many schools where Wulugu has improved education. I began giving lectures on art and travel topics. If there was a fee, what should I do with the money? To Wulugu, of course! To my surprise, this lecturing activity has increased. So I now have nine bookings, and each one will contribute a useful sum to Wulugu. I wish I'd thought of this earlier, because I know I'm supporting worthwhile projects in an area which has so little.

"...it's a small charity, so I can directly identify with those who run the project..."

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E-Readers from "Yellobric"

Gavin Paterson, of **Yellobric**, a charity providing e-readers with educational material to the developing world, generously provided a yellobric (named after its yellow dust cover) to Walewale Vocational School. Loaded with text books, an encyclopaedia, work sheets and novels it was much used: staff used it to plan lessons and students just read and read from it. In a village where paper books are very limited it opened so many opportunities. Yellobric hope to give more e-readers to more schools, after Gavin's visit to Ghana, in the New Year. For more information go to: www.yellobric.com



Thank you Lynda

Lynda Vincent has been part of our committee for years, as well as holding the position of secretary and web-controller.

Together with her husband Mike, she has made a tremendously valuable contribution to our work, and even visited some of our projects in Ghana. Lynda is moving on. We will miss her patience and accuracy, and need others to fill the gap. If you would be willing to give just a small amount of your time and skills (main requirement is common sense) please call us – we won't put you under any pressure but we can explain more about what is needed.

A long walk for Wulugu

Henry Speer was Chair of Governors at the school where Lynne taught when her work in Ghana began. He has been a strong supporter in many ways, but recently took on a considerable challenge to raise funds for us. This involved a **pilgrimage to Santiago di Compostela** when he joined his 'big sister' Jo, on the 200km trail. Henry reports that:

"...initially fairly straightforward vineyard country, with some nice wines...but we progressed to a lot of climbing, and sometimes worse, steep descents...I was spurred on by the fear of having to return the money already donated...."

He has raised over £2,500 already for Wulugu Project but he would appreciate any further support, which should be directed to:

<https://secure.purecharity.org.uk/cgi-bin/csp.py/project?ProjectRef=295>



OUR SUPPORTERS Contd

Thank You All

We rely so much on you, our loyal supporters. We hope you all know how important your help is to our work, however small it may seem to you. The wonderful Ghanaian friends who we work with are well aware that funding is tough for us, and they work hard ensuring that nothing is wasted.

Some of you would not want to be mentioned here - so we have chosen just a few to show the world the sort of wonderful people who are at the heart of 'Wulugu'.

For example:

- Muriel in Sunderland who says she doesn't spend much on herself and likes to share
- Stephen, who gives us the proceeds of some fascinating lectures
- David, who sells his wonderful poetry books, and gives talks
- Henry, who made a pilgrimage in Spain
- The Commonwealth Countries League of Friends which sent funds to cover schooling costs for a small group of bright but very poor girls.
- Bill and Greg, who were sponsored to run the Milton Keynes Half Marathon.
- Liz, Elsie, Sheila, Dorothy, Lilian and many others who simply send kind donations when they can



Bill & Greg

And the many, many others who gave time, made cakes, sold books, donated raffle prizes and attended functions to support Wulugu Project. We would be thrilled if you could run a small event to help us wherever you are. 'Ordinary' people - who actually are extraordinary - are the backbone of Wulugu.

The 100 club still raises over £1,000 each year and benefits from the extra generosity of the 'winners' who often return their prize money. **Do contact Mary 01493 750391 to join.** marydwilliams@hotmail.co.uk

WHAT'S NEXT?

We wish we could do more

Our team in Ghana look carefully at the many applications for help they receive. We wish we could do much more - maybe as Lynne has said in her introduction, something will turn up: we could do so much with a little more.

We have recently renovated a derelict primary school (for children four to fourteen), together with providing toilets and disabled access, at the very remote village of Kpatarigu. However, there is no accessible school for children after fourteen in Kpatarigu. This means - and particularly for girls, that without our help, there will never be any chance to study for exams that could lead to Senior High and really open doors. Our programme for the coming year will hopefully include building a much needed Junior High School for fourteen year olds at Kpatarigu.

This year we will ensure that all of our schools are in good repair. Prompt repairs save larger bills later.

We will check on equipment needs, particularly at our six vocational schools. Sufficient equipment is vital to help the increasing numbers of girls who come for vocational training from lives without hope or any schooling, into training for a future that has real hope and optimism. Girls leave our vocational schools with confidence that they can control their own future and that their own family will never be hungry.

Our experience shows clearly that our interventions increase enrolment substantially, particularly for girls. In those other, similarly remote, communities that we have helped, numbers of girls have increased to match boys. More significantly, attendance is much more regular.

We want to give more of our vocational 'graduates' small starter loans so that they can set up their own village enterprises.

FACT FILE THE NORTHERN REGION

Wulugu works in the Northern Region: the largest in area of Ghana's ten Regions. Occupying an area of approx. three times the size of Wales it has about 30% of Ghana's total land area.

There are twenty Districts in the Northern Region and we work in eight of them. Most of our work is in the areas referred to as "overseas" where flooding cuts off access for many months each year.

The Northern Region:

- is remote
- is sparsely populated
- has a harsh climate

Tamale is the Northern capital 650km from Accra on difficult and dangerous roads.

With average rainfall of 750cm, and summer temperatures in the 40's deg C the land (known as Sahel or Savannah) has scattered trees and bushes, dried up riverbeds, and small patches of crops, mainly yams, cassava, maize and in some places groundnuts, soya beans and rice.

Over 60% of the population live in poverty.

The Northern Region is roughly 350km W-E and N-S. The population is about 3 million (12% of Ghana's approximate 25 million population). Towns and villages mentioned in the text are marked on the map below.



**"...a whopping
98% of our income
will be spent in
Ghana.."**

A NOTE FROM OUR TREASURER

October 2011 to October 2012: income **£118,805** raised from individual donations, grants, Rotary Clubs, sponsorship, talks, 100Club, event fund raising, bequests and Gift Aid. In fact more than 200 people have donated. We have contained costs in the UK to £2,468. Thank you to all the supporters who have helped us 'in kind', advice, time etc all freely given all contributing to keeping Wulugu Project UK costs to just 2.1% leaving a **whopping 98%** to be spent in Ghana.

Patrons

Baroness Chalker of Wallesey

Baroness Shephard of Northwold

Oona King



* I wish to contribute to the Wulugu Project

*I wish to join the Wulugu 100 Club. I enclose a cheque for £12

*I enclose a cheque for £.....(Please make cheques payable to the Wulugu Project)

Mr/ Mrs/Miss
.....
.....

Please send your donation to **THE WULUGU PROJECT, CHURCH FARM, GREAT MELTON, NORWICH NR9 3BH**
Registered Charity Number 1060691

For more information on any of the topics in this newsletter or to make a donation of time or money please contact us at the Wulugu Project, Church Farm, Great Melton, Norwich NR9 3BH, visit our website or telephone the Chairman on 01603 453750.

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