

## PM RECOGNISES GHANA EDUCATION PIONEER

A retired school teacher from Norfolk who has dedicated the last 23 years to bringing education to remote areas of Ghana has been awarded with a Points of Light award by the Prime Minister. Through the charity she set up – Wulugu Project - Lynne Symonds, has helped over a quarter of a million children in the most deprived districts of Northern Ghana receive an education and improved their chances in life.

Lynne first became involved in education in Ghana when she met Ghanaian co-founder of Wulugu Project Karimu Nachina in 1993 and heard of the challenges preventing Ghanaian children from getting an education. Initially she set up a link between the Wulugu Secondary School in Northern Ghana and Hethersett Old Hall Sixth Form where she was teaching, to send books and desks. The 'Lynne Symonds Library' was set up in Wulugu Secondary School and is still one of the best libraries in the district. The hostel she built for girls there has been packed since it opened.

Through Lynne's passion for giving every child the chance to have an education the charity, named after the first village helped, has grown and volunteers in the UK and Ghana have now:

- Provided an education for thousands of previously out-of-school children every year through:
  - Building or substantially repairing over 40 primary schools (age 6-12) in remote villages in Northern Ghana and provided desks for many more, increasing the numbers of girls in many schools to equal those of boys
  - Building 8 local Junior High Schools (age 13-16), making it more possible for girls to continue learning.
  - And 7 vocational schools for girls aged 16-25 with hostel accommodation alongside to allow them to learn skills that will give them a career. The first of these now has over a thousand students
- Provided accommodation for teachers including safe rooms for female teachers – vital in such deprived districts
- Given loans to women's groups which although small, replace the income a daughter would provide allowing girls to complete 6 years of education
- Set up loans for graduates of the vocational schools to allow them to set up their own businesses
- Worked with Biddick Academy in Sunderland to decrease poaching at the largest game reserve in Ghana through providing schools there to tackle poverty

While the primary and junior high schools are open to all children, Lynne's work is also focused on empowering women by offering them the same chance at education as boys, and the belief that by educating girls you educate the whole family. She is also aware of the importance of understanding the specific local challenges faced and working with local communities, not imposing solutions on them. Lynne has become so well respected by those she works with she has been made an honorary chief of three of the major Northern tribes who have benefited from the Wulugu Project.

Lynne is the latest recipient of a Point of Light award, which recognises outstanding individual volunteers, people who are making a change in their community and inspiring others. Each day, someone, somewhere in the country is selected to receive the award to celebrate their remarkable achievements.

**Presenting the award the PM said:**

“Every child deserves an education and, thanks to the dedication Lynne has shown for over two decades, over a quarter of a million children in Ghana have had the chance to go to school and the opportunity to build a better life for themselves. Gaining the support of local communities in Ghana - and, in many schools, getting as many girls as boys into education, are incredible achievements.

“Lynne’s service will benefit the people of Ghana for many years to come. The whole country should be incredibly proud of her. And I am delighted to make Lynne the UK’s 266<sup>th</sup> Point of Light.”

**Lynne Symonds said:**

“Our amazing volunteers in UK and the communities we work with in Ghana will be so very honoured by this award. All our work in Ghana is carried out by local volunteers who really care. We are well known for our stance against ‘hand-outs’ and for meeting the real needs. Even as I speak, the women in Kokpeng where we are building a new school are carrying raw materials and water on their heads to the building site for us. We are helped so much by the support of all sectors and all religious groups in Ghana.”

**South Norfolk MP Richard Bacon said:**

“Lynne Symonds is doing superb work in improving the life chances of over a quarter of a million children in Northern Ghana and I am delighted that her work has been recognised by the Prime Minister.

“I send my heartiest congratulations to Mrs Symonds on this well-deserved honour and I am very proud to have the Mamprusi ‘Chief of Enlightenment and Education’ as one of my constituents!”

Lynne was honoured by the Mamprusi people in 2006 by being made their first white woman chief – Chief of Enlightenment and Education. She was enskinned by Prof J.S. Nabila, currently President of the House of Chiefs. Lynne also works to improve science teaching across the Commonwealth.

Lynne is the 266th winner of the Points of Light award which has been developed in partnership with the hugely successful Points of Light programme in the USA and was first established by President George H. W. Bush. Over 5,000 US Points of Light have been awarded and both President George H. W. Bush and President Barack Obama have publicly supported the partnership with Points of Light UK which honours shining examples of volunteering across the country.

Regardless of whether it’s a doctor restoring local monuments in her free time, a father teaching young people life skills, or a local musician giving a voice to lonely people, the Point of Light award honours shining examples of volunteering across the UK.

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**Notes to Editors**

1. The Points of Light awards recognise outstanding individual volunteers, people who are making a change in their community and inspiring others.
2. To find out more about the Wulugu Project visit: [www.wulugu.co.uk/](http://www.wulugu.co.uk/)
3. The Prime Minister makes daily announcements of the winners to celebrate, encourage and promote volunteering and the value that it brings to the country

4. Groups and organisations that are demonstrating the Big Society in their work or activities will continue to be recognised by the Prime Minister through the Big Society awards.
5. If people know someone who could be a Point of Light they should write to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street.