



The Gateway

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Join our social media:



Five year old Rosanne, daughter of Mrs. Dieneke Holstein happily playing with children at Adom Day Care Center in the Hills. Mrs. Dieneke travelled with her two daughters, son and family friend. You can call it "home away from home."

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A clan sprinkling kpokpoi on the streets in James Town – Accra.

Accra celebrates Homowo Festival

The native people of the Greater Accra Region are the *Gas*. They form the Ga State which is led by chiefs. The month of August is the month that the entire Ga State celebrates the *Homowo* festival.

Howowo means “shame to hunger.” The festival is a remembrance of a period in their history in pre-colonial Ghana when an extreme famine hit the entire Ga State. The seasonal rains that had stopped resumed and there was a bountiful harvest later on, hence the name *Homowo*.

The festival moves from town to town as each chieftaincy area takes their turn to celebrate. Traditional rites and rituals are

done before and after the main Homowo day for each of the towns – James Town (Ga Mashie), Osu, Labadi, Teshie, Nungua, Tema and a few others. On the day of Homowo, a special food called kpokpoi is prepared. It is made from fermented maize. It is milled, steamed and mixed with palm oil to give it a yellowish orange colour. The food is eaten with palm nut soup.

Chiefs and family clan heads in their attires move from house to house and street to street to sprinkle the sacred food for the gods and ancestors. This “wasting” of food is symbolic of the abundance of food in such a manner that the people can afford to waste it.

In Labadi for example, several activities are carried out through the festival period. From the catching of a ceremonial big fish through the cleansing of sacred stools and shrines to the racing of wooden wagons, one cannot help but appreciate a cultural heritage mixed with fun.



James Town on the other hand celebrates the festival of twins. This festival celebrates the gift of giving birth to twins and triplets and believe it or not, their traditional belief has it that most twins become possessed by their own souls and are hypnotized immediately they carry a concoction of food, yam peels, water, salt, leaves and coins. They are held in check to avoid the bowl of concoction tilting over as they carry the bowl to a shrine from their various family houses.



Others take the opportunity to blend tradition with fun as they stage interesting processions amidst war songs.

If you want to see all these interesting activities and more, make a date and travel to Accra next August to have a feel of a new culture and tradition.



View more photos [here](#)

2 Week Specials

Cape Coast



Cape Coast received the last batch of volunteers on our 2 Week Specials programme this summer. They were enthusiastic thirteen high school students from the US, Japan, Holland, Belgium and the UK.

They were given an insight into the Ghanaian culture – the use of the right hand, sharing food, Ghanaian greetings as well as basic terms in the Fante language. At their placement – Children's Home of Hope Orphanage at Aseibu – they assisted with manual work on the community clinic building site. They helped fill the floors with sand. They planted trees in front of the clinic. The clinic is a multi donor project to bring healthcare, specifically HIV testing, counselling and treatment services to support the members of the community.

The volunteers spent quality time playing and learning with the children of the orphanage. They brought toys, balls, balloons, story books and other items and donated them to the children. They were treated to a cultural troop performance.



Summer is over! We say a big congratulations to all our 2 Week and 1 Month Specials volunteers who spent an amazing time doing amazing work in Accra, The Hills, Kumasi and Cape Coast. It was inspiring and amazing hosting you in Ghana.



“My children play with all the children here and they are playing the whole day with nothing, but they are happy, and they are singing, jumping...”

- Mrs. Dienneke Holstein

It has been the childhood dream of Mrs. Dienneke Holstein to travel to Africa. Now a mother of two adorable daughters and a sixteen year old son, she did not hesitate to travel to Ghana after she heard that Projects Abroad had a programme for families wishing to travel with their children who are older than three years.

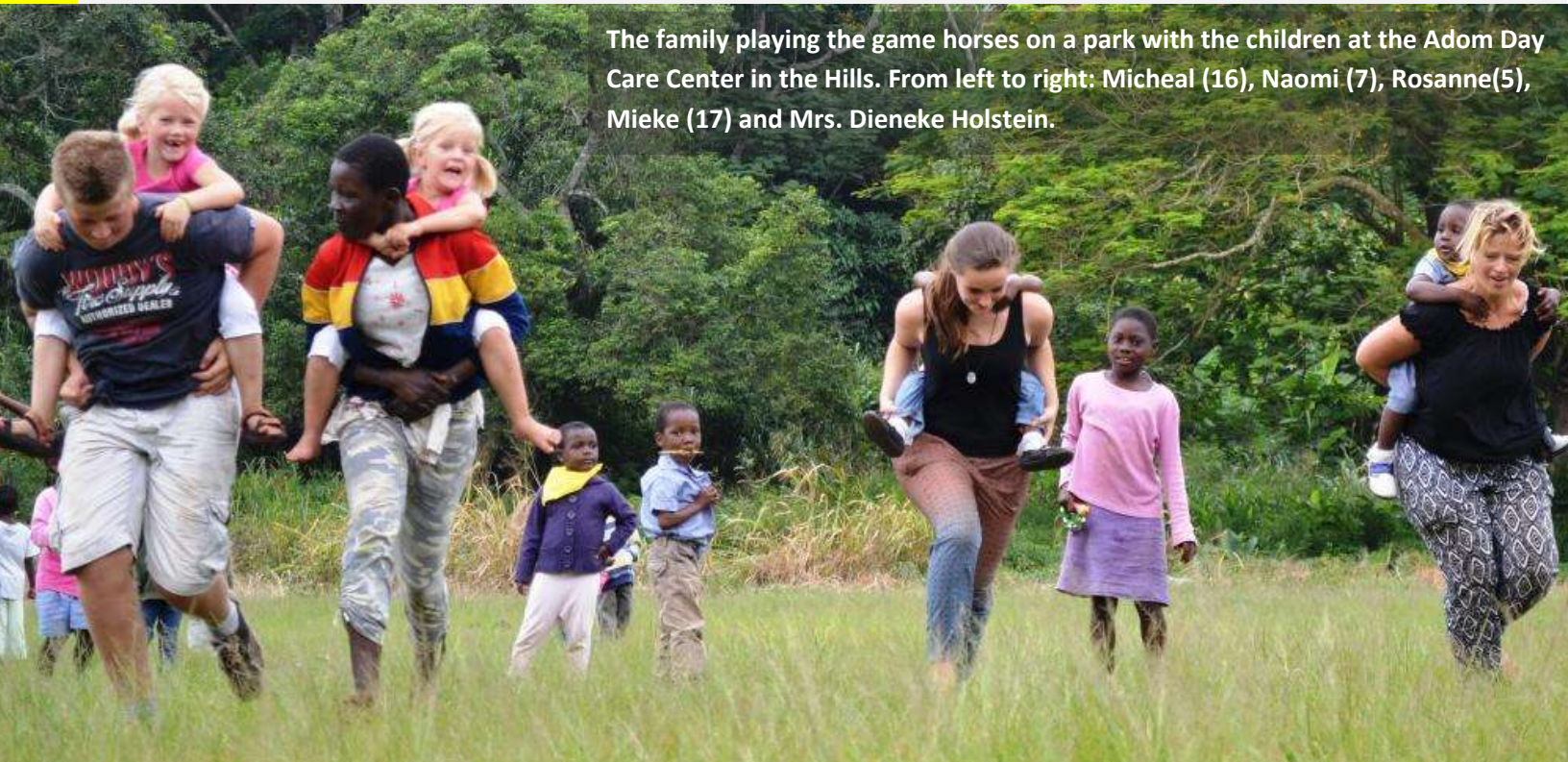
After a brief discussion with her husband, all was cleared to see a new and different continent. The biggest priority for the family was to travel to a safe country and Ghana did not fall short of that.

The family worked in a day care centre in The Hills. The placement was an important choice for Dienneke because she wanted her daughters to mix with other children and play. At the Adom Day Care Centre, she and her older son and family friend Meike Blankesteyn cared for the children of the day care; they changed their school uniforms into their casual clothes and helped the teachers with their lessons for the children.

They painted the classrooms. They played with the children a lot and they helped the children sing songs, rhymes and poems.

They did not limit the time with the children at the centre. They reached out to someone who lacked so much. “She does not have a house. We helped her with three chairs and a table, some food, summer trousers and she was so happy. When we walked on the road and we met her, she was singing. She was really happy. That’s a good memorable experience to take back,” Dienneke remarked.

The family playing the game horses on a park with the children at the Adom Day Care Center in the Hills. From left to right: Micheal (16), Naomi (7), Rosanne(5), Mieke (17) and Mrs. Dienneke Holstein.



Meike compared children in Ghana and those in Holland. “The children here are playing with nothing. They don’t have toys but they are laughing and dancing. That’s really special,” she said. Dienneke continued: “My children have a lot of toys. Too much I think. My children play with all the children here and they are playing the whole day with nothing but they are happy, and they are singing, jumping... we can’t believe it. It’s very nice to see that.”

They were happy about the friendly nature of the Ghanaian people and the sense of safety they had while they spent time in The Hills.



Quick Read

Culture of greeting

Greetings are taken very seriously in Ghana. When entering somebody’s home or office, you may be considered rude if you do not say hello and shake hands with everyone who is present. When approaching a person on the street, perhaps to ask for time or directions, you should begin with a polite “good morning, how are you”? Simply walking up to someone and saying excuse me, what is the time? will be seen as rather blunt.

Remember when you greet a Ghanaian you should not use your left hand. This is also true when giving and receiving items and eating. The left hand is reserved for the toilet.

Summer School

The Hills



Basic schools were on vacation in Ghana throughout the month of August. This presented five of our volunteers the opportunity to contribute more effectively to the learning of the children of the Apostolic Basic School in The Hills.

They taught the children English, mathematics, science, creative art and creative writing. The volunteers used innovative and fun approaches to engage the children. They also planned the class lessons and tasks. The children were visibly excited to come to school on vacation and have both fun and good academic exercises.

Henry Job, a volunteer from the British Island of Jersey spent a month teaching the children Math, English and creative art and writing. He enjoyed having his own class. "It's been good," he remarked.

In maths he taught them how to calculate the mode and mean. In creative art he did water colour painting with them and in creative writing he gave them a sentence writing task using connecting words. "I made them write about themselves on postcards. They've really enjoyed the activities since some of the activities are different from what they are used to."

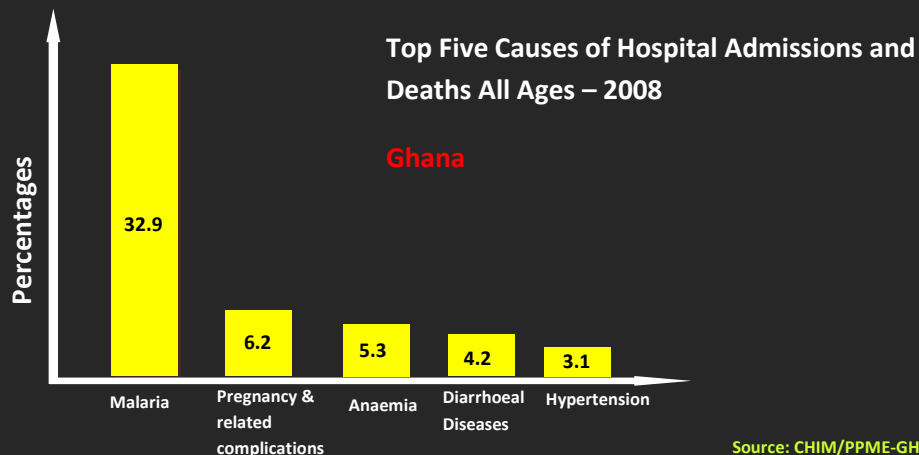
The volunteers brought new ideas into teaching and learning in the school. For Henry, this was a remarkable experience. "I want to be a teacher. This experience broadens your mind on the work of a teacher. Now I definitely know I want to be a teacher."



Henry Job teaching some girls in a class at the Apostolic Basic School



Henry's class throwing paper planes to see who's plane travels farthest.



Fact file

Malaria has been a major cause of poverty and low productivity accounting for about 32.5 percent of all OPD attendances and 48.8 percent of under five years admissions in the country.

(NMCP annual report, 2009)

It was recognized that malaria cannot be controlled by the health sector alone therefore multiple strategies were being pursued with other health related sectors in Ghana.

Projects Abroad in Ghana engages Pre-Med and Medical volunteers to run free malaria tests in hard-to-reach rural communities since early detection of the parasites inform early and effective treatment

The Cape Coast pre-med volunteers and staff send medical assistance to a poor yet naturally gifted village that lies on a sand bar between the sea and a beautiful landscape of lush green vegetation on hills and a meandering lagoon. The village, Ahuna, is part of the Moree town.

The small village has around a thousand men, women and children and the community relies on the sea, lagoon and the rich vegetation for their livelihood through their farming and fishing economic activities. The community does not have electricity.

The volunteers with the support of our medical staff run malarial, blood pressure and sugar level tests to duly advise the community members on healthy lifestyles.



The entire community came in their numbers to access the free health care brought at their doorstep. The children who had cuts, wounds and ringworm were also treated free of charge.

Lisa Fell, our volunteer from Australia on the pre-med project remarked: "I like it better at the outreaches than going to the clinic. All the kids are happy to see you. The landscape here is so beautiful."



"I loved it. This experience made me happy. It's nice to see everyone with a smile on the face," says Jodie Moss from Cheshire in England.

The community members thanked the team for bringing medical support to them.

Microfinance

Koforidua microfinance volunteers disburse small loans

The microfinance project made significant waves in communities in Koforidua. Our volunteers Bettina Schütz and David Hessels with our staff paid a business visit to Akwadum community to assess the businesses of prospective clients/beneficiaries of the micro-loans by Projects Abroad.

They organized basic accounting quizzes for the traders who applied for the small loans in order to rekindle their basic record and book-keeping skills. The microfinance team did a business analysis of all the small loan applicants and designed a repayment scheme for those who qualified for the loans. The petty traders received small loans and others repaid.

In several communities in rural Ghana such as Kwamoso, Akokoa and Akwadum, petty trading is a key economic activity that sustains the livelihoods of the village people. From selling plastic wares to trading in fish and food stuffs, one can achieve less to nothing without business and financial support. One tried and tested approach to economic empowerment of local traders is through the provision of small loans to small businesses. Thanks to the active engagement of the volunteers, businesses for the small scale traders are improving.



Participants solving the basic accounting quiz.

Building in Kwamoso

The Hills

Projects Abroad has been consistent in its quest to provide more learning space for children in adopted communities in the Hills. With the active involvement of the building volunteers, a two-unit classroom block is currently under construction for the Ebenezer International School – a Projects Abroad adopted school.



Weekend Trips?

Wli Waterfalls



Discover the Wli Waterfalls in the tropical forest near Hohoe in the Volta Region of Ghana. The waterfall is the highest of its kind in Ghana. It serves as one of the best destinations for nature lovers and tourists who flock in week after week to see the falls and its lush greenery and spectacular landscape.

Volunteer with us!

Ghana is an exciting and popular place to spend some time on a volunteer project or work experience placement.

Projects Abroad has many projects available to volunteer in Ghana, based in Accra, Cape Coast, Koforidua, Kumasi and the Akuapem Hills.

Volunteers in Ghana work on a wide range of projects including Teaching, Care, Community – including Building and IT Projects, Medical & Healthcare Projects – including Medicine, Physiotherapy, Nursing, Midwifery and Dentistry, plus Journalism, Veterinary Medicine, Sports, and Human Rights.



The FLAP Center building under construction. The building will have a medication room and a mini-conference room for education programmes and presentations.

People inside the building from left to right: Listowel Teye (Slum Coord.), Edward Tetteh (PAHO Manager), Kristine (Vol.) Frederick (Exec. Dir. WISEEP) and Jennifer (Lawyer/Professional vol.)

FLAP by PAHO Old Fadama - Accra

Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) makes significant progress and impact with the Fadama Legal Assistance Programme (FLAP) in the slum community in Old Fadama - Accra. The human rights team of volunteers and staff have been creating awareness and empowering the community to know the rights of suspects caught up in the middle of the law.

The slum has the propensity of constant arrests of individuals who are suspected of crimes including possession and use of illegal drugs, robbery and theft among others. They introduced a group of men to basic human rights. They explained the conditions under which police arrests must be conducted with or without arrest warrants.

The men learn that in cases such as one caught in the act of a crime; someone preventing an officer from doing his work; one running from lawful custody;

one possessing deadly weapons without licence and other situations; the police can arrest without a warrant.

The volunteers explained what illegal detention means and the fact that if any of them was held for more than 48 hours without bail or arraignment in court, then that constitutes illegal detention. They also explained to them that women and children have safe guards and special protection if they get arrested and that they the men should know that and demand that the police respect their rights.

After they created awareness, the volunteers distributed the names and contacts of institutions that they can call in order to get legal assistance from them. They used the opportunity to introduce the FLAP Center which is under construction this month and advised that the people in the slum should not hesitate to contact them when need be.

The men who participated thanked the volunteers for coming to give them valuable information on something they face almost on a daily basis. The participants bemoaned situations where the police request money from them



when they want bail. Some also recalled times when they have witnessed suspects spend more than 48 hours in police custody without court or bail. According to them, this is a normal practice by the police.

After the programme, the volunteers paid a visit to the building site of the FLAP Centre. The building was a result of fundraising and donations from Jennifer Croker, Kristine Mikkelsen and Jennifer Mill.

Medical Outreach

UCC – Accra

The Accra medical team of volunteers and staff visited the children at the Underprivileged Children's Centre in Teshie - Accra. They offered basic treatment to wounds, cuts and other skin infections affecting the children. They educated the children on HIV and AIDS.



Lottie Lahiri, a 2Week Specials volunteer writes to us:

To everyone involved with Projects Abroad Ghana, I would just like to say a massive thank you to everyone for making my recent experience on the two week special so amazing.

The opportunities I was given each day to fully immerse myself in the Ghanaian culture from teaching in the summer school to the trip to Safari Beach were life changing, and this experience has given me a taste for volunteering and are two weeks I will never forget. Thank you so much!

Ursinus College graduate Kristine Mikkelsen volunteers at a Human Rights Project in Ghana

23-year-old Kristine Mikkelsen, from Lebanon, New Jersey, had always wanted to travel to Africa. Perhaps working on Barack Obama's presidential campaign the previous year ignited her passion to see Africa from a Human Rights perspective.

As a Politics and International Relations Major with a Pre-Law focus, Kristine was driven by the desire to see tactile change, a desire that brought her to Ghana's capital Accra to volunteer at the Human Rights Project offered by Projects Abroad.

Over her 3 month stay, Kristine worked together with other volunteers on the same project: "We would receive projects and we would, as a group, decide what to do. We took a lot of initiative. We, the volunteers, give an outside perspective on human rights which is not inherent in Ghana."

Kristine believes Projects Abroad is making a significant change in Ghana through Human Rights volunteers like herself: "From making a change for a boy in the remand center to the legal assistance we provided in the slum, we are making palpable change."

During her time volunteering, Kristine had a lot of responsibility, working on three different projects:



The Fadama Legal Assistance Program, the Community Advocacy Program, which focused on research and education, and the Human Rights Journal – an inhouse publication for all activities of the Human Rights Project in Ghana.

She is convinced that she has gained more leadership skills while working at the Human Rights Project and believes the impact the volunteers are making in the slums of Old Fadama in Accra is "incredible."

Admittedly, she acknowledged that things are slower in Ghana than the US; and even if she wanted to avoid it, she couldn't.

However, she enjoyed the warmth from the people. "The people – everybody, are so wonderful and friendly."

Asked whether her volunteering experience will be useful for her future she answered: "Absolutely! It is no different from what I want to do. The journal is very useful; I can send that to employers in the future."

After her 3-month volunteer adventure, Kristine will remember many exciting and empowering moments: "Meeting with the chiefs, getting the Human Rights Journal out and meeting a woman who came to us for help after been beaten and abused for over a decade were a feelings of triumphant elation."

We hope great stories like these inspire others to help Projects Abroad continue to make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.

Social Media



Our social media platforms remains a powerful tool that connects volunteers, friends and family of Projects Abroad though status updates, tweets, pictures, blogs and videos. Our Facebook groups were as active as always in providing information on volunteer experiences and that informs the expectations of volunteers who are coming to Ghana and prospective volunteers as well. Our different Facebook groups – [The Hills](#), [Koforidua](#), [Accra](#), [Cape Coast](#), [Kumasi](#) and the [Projects Abroad Human Rights Office](#) were active throughout the month of August.

An opportunity to relive

For many of our volunteers, our social media platforms provide the opportunity to continuously relive the valuable moments they once had in Ghana and it becomes their space for expressing the heartwarming satisfaction they gained from volunteering to affect the lives of people in need.

Visit us:

