

MISSION 2011 TO GHANA

The world is really growing at a faster pace and many young people in Ghana, with so many dreams and aspirations wake up each day to an increasingly challenging life. These are people with so many expectations but how many of these ones live to accomplish their dreams?

THE LIFE OF A CHILD IN GHANA

In Ghana, a number of children are living with single parents and mostly reside in compound houses. The child will usually help with house chores like sweeping, fetching water, washing utensils, etc before getting ready for school. Some children will however have to go selling to raise some money before going to school. There are still quite a number of children in Ghana who are still out of school. Some are involved in menial jobs on the streets/ helping their parents with businesses.

Those children in school usually go to school on foot and close by 2:30 pm. Most of them get back to help their parents with house chores or go to sell on the streets to support their families. They return so late that they are unable to make time for their books. Those children who have some time to spare often move to play with other children in the community. They are usually involved in activities like playing football, video games, watching T.V., etc.

THE TARGET GROUP

For a much more focused discussion, I wish to crave your indulgence to have a closer look at the situation that pertains in the Gbawe Methodist Primary and Junior High Schools (JHS). The school is located in Gbawe, a fast- growing town in the newly created Ga-South District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Gbawe has actually grown so rapidly over the past few years, with the population shooting from about 837 (in 1984) to about 28,989 (in 2000) based on the 1984 and 2000 population census. It is now estimated that the population has grown to about 55,000+ with about 45% as youth. The growth in population alongside other factors has placed enormous demands on the available resources, most especially educational facilities.

DIFFICULTIES AND HOPES

Governmental interventions in the educational sector have led to a massive rise in enrollment in basic schools in the community, particularly the Gbawe Methodist Primary and JHS. The Gbawe Methodist Primary School was started on 26th February, 1945 and after almost 50 years a JHS was introduced. From its inception to date, the school has been battling with so many challenges. It has had to go through times where classes were held under trees, using benches belonging to a church. The P.T.A. (Parent-Teacher Association) helped to get some additional structures in place which are still inadequate.

The school, with an initial population of about thirteen (13) pupils has grown extensively to a three (3) stream school, leading to the introduction of the shift system (half of the students attend classes in the morning from 7 a.m.-12 p.m. and the second half from 12.30 p.m.-5.30 p.m. in the afternoon alternatively). There is serious congestion in classrooms; with close to hundred pupils in each class. On the whole, the teacher/pupil ratio leaves so much to be desired as about thirty- five (35) teachers have to take care of over two thousand (2000)

pupils. There are several parents who come knocking at the doors of the Head teacher, seeking for their wards to be enrolled. But the head teachers have no other choice than to send them away since the available facilities in the school can no longer permit any additional intake. You can imagine the number of young people whose aspirations/dreams for the future are being blown away and shattered just because they cannot get access to education.

Even the existing structures, especially the main classroom block which has seen very little renovation since it was constructed, is now very weak and the roof leaks anytime it rains. Also, the school has been struggling to furnish its small library with additional furniture and books. Plans by the P.T.A. to get a computer laboratory in place have also not been an easy task at all. The school compound is open and not connected to electricity so is prone to all kinds of people involved in social vices. Smokers, drug addicts and all sorts of people do several nasty things on the school compound at night.

There is no staff common room for teachers to relax when there are no lessons or even to sit and mark pupils' exercises/assignments. They place their chairs and tables on the verandah or under trees and run for shelter whenever it rains or when the sun is scorching severely. The existing toilet facilities are now death traps so most parts of it has been closed, forcing the over 2000 school population to use about only two toilet pits.

These and many other factors which cannot all be mentioned now affect the lives of young people in the Gbawe community, and more specifically the Gbawe Methodist Primary and Junior High School.

An urgent and timely intervention is therefore needed to salvage the situation. We need to touch these young lives, redirect their focus and shape their dreams. I would be most grateful if you could assist in some or all of the following ways to alleviate the difficulties these young ones are going through:

1. Rehabilitation and expansion of the existing school building.
2. Library books to stock the small school library.
3. Building of a Staff Common room.
4. Construction of a vocational school for the pupils who have completed Junior High School and cannot further their education due to financial constraints.
5. Forging of a sister-school relationship.
6. Supply of computers and educational materials.

Coming for this mission in Ghana is definitely going to be worthwhile. I believe these many young lives that are waiting to be impacted would be so excited about this. A warm welcome awaits you by the Gbawe Methodist Church as well as the chief and the people of Gbawe.

Sincerely,
The Rev. Dr. Bart-Plange
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Ghana