

# Friends of Ahotokorum

Edition 30 December 2014

Registered Charity-DMJ 232421

## A Journey to Ahoto

*Two of our supporters, Georg and Franziska recently travelled to Ahotokorum. George is an IT and media specialist and Franziska, a medical doctor. They stayed for 1 month and this is part of their story.*

"On arrival we were greeted like the Royal William and Kate! We were asked to sit in front of the whole community; everybody came to us dancing and singing and shaking our hands saying "akwaba", which means welcome. Georg had to give a little speech about our mission. We were undeservedly taking credit for the work of the many parishes at home that have been providing funds for many years through their faithful work and dedication to the project.

Ahotokorum is like an oasis in the middle of nowhere! The centre is surrounded by very poor villages which you have to pass through via a dirt track road with many pot holes and water up to 20cm deep. A typical village house is very basic, built directly on soil. Each village seems to have hundreds of gorgeous little children playing amongst goats, hens and kittens all running around together. Everybody who is able to sell something does so: eggs, melons, papaya, water, peanuts - these precious goods would be carefully arranged in a huge metal bowl and elegantly balanced on the head.

The poverty is visible everywhere: meals may only consist of rice, or root vegetables and sauce. People often do not have access to medication that they desperately need. Life expectancy is only 61 years and 1 in 68 women will die in labour, as per Unicef's statistics. Yet, despite all the material poverty, the happiness, friendliness and beauty of the people is simply amazing.

During the first days we started to have chats with Ahoto management

team to see where we could be of to them. Georg then took first steps to give a daily computer course for the kids, many of whom have never have used a computer before. This was often interrupted by the fact that the electricity supply breaks down almost every day from minutes to hours. Georg was busy enough anyway. He taught maths while the kids were doing their homework in the village centre and truly there were some very bright children as well as those who struggled with basic maths tasks.



Georg with senior students

Franziska's first project was to tidy and update the medication and dressings stock in the Sister's house. From the second day onwards she suddenly found herself surrounded by kids with high temperatures caused by simple infections or malaria. Luckily she could spot the ones who were pretending to be ill as they were only curious about the new doctor on the compound! Also other people used the opportunity to drop in for dressings or general advice which made Franziska feel like a little GP.

She then started spending the mornings at the Special Needs Unit with the smallest children, aged 2-6 years. They face all kinds of medical conditions including

Down's syndrome, Cerebral palsy and severe mental and physical disabilities following prenatal problems like prolonged labour and lack of oxygen during child birth, infections or strokes.

Franziska was asked by the carers and teachers to assess each child medically and to develop social, academic and development goals with the team. They were very interested in all sorts of medical topics, so they arranged training sessions about epilepsy, hydrocephalus or Down's syndrome.

Both Georg and Franziska were astonished how open and welcoming everybody was and how much they were keen to learn and to discuss their challenges with them. It made them feel like equal partners and together contribute to support the work of Ahotokorum.



Franziska's workshop

The trip taught us that happiness is not dependant on material wealth. We admire the Ghanaian culture, which is based on interpersonal relationships and mutual support of families. The politeness of children and teenagers towards guests and senior people is amazing. The hospitality is overwhelming. We have never experienced anything comparable. The people's smile, their positive view, their trust and confidence in God's providence will hopefully make us complain less if we face challenges!"

To make a donation please send a cheque (payable to DMJ Friends of Ahotokorum) to:  
The Treasurer, Holy Cross Parish, 208 Sangley Road, Catford, London SE6 2JS

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## A Message from Sr. Mathilde

My name is Mathilde Mwangaza. I am from Congo Democratic Republic. My first language is Swahili and my second, French. I was asked to travel to Ghana in 2013 and join the community in Ahotokorum, which I was pleased to do. I received a very warm welcome and am very happy, but at first I was rather lonely as my English was (at that time) very poor. However, my English has now improved and I am very settled. I am also learning the local language 'Fante'. I have made friends in Ghana and they are teaching me Ghanaian culture.

I am doing my Apostolate in Child Care. I like working with the children; they are teaching me a lot. I was working with Sr. Pat in Child Care but she has now been transferred to Uganda as Provincial of the African Congregation (of the D.M.J.'s). Sr. Pat was like a mother to the children and they are missing her!

I am now working with Sr. Monica and am undertaking duties just as Sr. Pat taught me. I pay attention to all of the children, trying to make them happy and feel at home.

As you know Child Care is for young children, so we have transferred 3 older boys - Thomas, Kobi and Kojo Patrick up to St. Clare's, because they are now grown adults but still in need of care because of their disabilities. They share a room and are happy there, with a TV in their room! Kojo is becoming more paralyzed and he can't do much for himself but he enjoys the company. They attend our Training Centre every weekday as they are unable to undertake independent work. Other young adults such as Solomon, Mary and Richard have also recently left Child-Care and returned to their villages. We are still supporting them in their new surroundings as part of our outreach program. There are always newcomers and at the moment we are waiting for two boys who have just lost their parents; they will be coming to stay with us from

next week.

In Child-Care we work together with the children teaching them domestic chores like cleaning, washing up dishes, cooking. They are also trained to make the palm crosses which are sent to England for distribution to various parishes for Palm Sunday. This enables a small income to be generated. After school we help the children with their homework and especially with subjects that they might be struggling with. I teach them French every Saturday. We also eat and play together like any family would. I enjoy working with the children. It is a joy to see them growing up happy and doing well.

Thank you for your support.

**Sr Mathilde**

## Christmas at Ahotokorum

Special Needs Unit practicing for the Nativity



Play

Christmas is a very special time for all at Ahoto. The children dream of it for months beforehand and preparations start early. On Christmas Day over 150 people, young and old congregate at Ahoto for their lunch and a gift is given to **each and every child**. It is a fun day – a real highlight of the year. Before Christmas the children in the Special Unit hold a well-rehearsed Nativity Play, presented to a large, enthusiastic audience. **All at Ahotokurom thank you for your support & wish you a happy & peaceful Christmas.**

## Rainham Parish

### Scholarship Scheme

For over 12 years now, loyal supporters from Rainham Parish have enabled Ahotokurom to support young people through **vocational training scholarships**. Lives have literally been changed as youngsters have become qualified carpenters, cooks, mechanics, tailors, farmers etc. With a qualification they can gain work and then go on to support their families. This gives them a future and enables them to break out of the cycle of poverty that can arise in a family affected by disability.

Recently the team at Ahoto were happy to be able to welcome Fr. Justin from Rainham Parish to see the value of the work first hand. We thank all supporters for the real and lasting change that has taken place.

## Malaria & Ebola

Malaria is a very serious tropical disease, prevalent in Ghana. It is spread by mosquitos infected with the malaria parasite. If not diagnosed and treated promptly it is often fatal. In fact, the World Health Organisation's report stated that in 2012 there were 207 million cases in that year alone with **627,000 deaths** - a startling statistic. It is a very unpleasant disease to suffer from. At Ahoto the team watch carefully for symptoms and, if malaria is confirmed, treatment starts at once.

Although Ebola has not hit Ghana, the Ahoto team have also had to discuss contingency plans in the event that it does spread from neighbouring countries. The fact that Ahoto supports such vulnerable people means there is a high level of risk of severe illness and death from infection. **We hope & pray the country will remain unaffected by the virus.**

[www.ahoto.org](http://www.ahoto.org)

for more information about any aspect of the work of Ahotokurom please contact

[tkilcullen@live.co.uk](mailto:tkilcullen@live.co.uk)

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