

FRIENDS OF AHOTOKUROM NEWSLETTER

December 2009 Edition 19

Page 1

Registered Charity DMJ No 232421

St Clares Home

St. Clare's Home is a long term residential home for elderly, multiple handicapped former leprosy sufferers. The elderly people there have been struggling with leprosy and related problems for many years with consequent deformities, gangrene ulcers and amputation etc. Most of the old people at St Clare's have become disabled in this way with many also losing their sight as the leprosy attacks the nerves in the eyes.

The facility has a 20 bed capacity. Currently there are 17 residents including one young man of 30 years who has a severe mental disability, as well as a young woman who is former leprosy sufferer and also physically and mentally disabled. The facility also offers a rehabilitation programme for Buruli Ulcer sufferers.

St. Clare's also offers outreach and day-care programmes for those who cannot cope totally on their own. The work here can be best described as providing a "peaceful serene environment" for people who have suffered so much. What is certain is that each individual at St Clare's is provided with love, care, dignity and respect, until the end of their days. Evidence of the work at St Clare's reaffirms how the Sisters are sharing their charism as instruments of mercy.

The Sisters have organised major improvements to the facilities. All the rooms now have ensuite facilities, kindness of a grant from Misesan Cara (Irish Aid). At the same time the opportunity was taken to enlarge the windows for better ventilation. This together with a small extension and re-roofing the Chapel /day centre, was undertaken with the help of funds raised from Friends of Ahotokurom.

It is wonderful to see the residents have the independence to bath themselves in their own facilities and enjoying the refurbished chapel/centre.

Deaths

Sadly, Peter Asampana, the general helper at St Clare's for many years, died recently, as did Agonan and Naomi Kwakyia. In November, Masses of Remembrance were said for all those who have died - benefactors, staff and residents alike.



Sister Pat after Remembrance Mass at Ahoto.

St Elizabeth's

The staff at St Elizabeth's Special Needs School and Training Unit are really doing wonderful work. The faces on the trainees will tell you that. It's absolutely exhilarating to see the improvement, some big and some small in each one of them.

The trainers are great with their patience and perseverance because being hands-on with a child for 8 hours per day is hard going - but with a severely handicapped child it is far much more demanding.

Top marks go to all Friends and supporters for helping to provide this facility. In a new development a small farm has been established and all at Ahoto soon hope to be eating a meal a day from this little farm! (the rains, the animals and human thieves permitting!)



A winner at Ahoto.

Enyindakorum

10 years after starting on the first houses, Ahoto needed to look once again at maintenance. The houses have been refurbished with funds provided by Friends of Ahotokurom. The toilet blocks were completely renovated and now look very smart. Gates have been replaced and shutters repaired. Where needed, mosquito

nets were provided. The next project, when funds are available, is to provide each family with their own shower area (a private area you can use a bucket – not hot and cold running water as here in the UK!). It is hoped this can be achieved in the not too distant future.

Food Aid Stops

The CRS American funded food aid programme has come to an abrupt end, which is a \$35,000 loss. It means that the Sisters have had to stop their nutritional food programme for disabled and poor people in the area. The residents are working hard on their farms trying to make up for what cannot be provided this year. Everyone is pulling together in this crisis and Ahoto hopes that with the farming initiative starvation will be averted.

Childcare

All are busy with the latest arrivals to childcare. Baby triplets and their badly malnourished toddler sisters have been admitted in order that they have some chance of survival. So - once again the children's home has 10 children under 4 to feed! Milk powder costs alone are £30 a week – so all help is gratefully received!

New Year – The Crisis

Whilst the recession has hit Ghana very hard the Ahoto residents are still content. Donations and food support is down by 47%, so it has meant turning down a lot of support to those on the outreach programme who genuinely need it. All this is a sad reality but hopefully 2010 will bring about an improvement.

The Sisters thank each and every one for their love prayers and financial support.

There are many more stories of activities at Ahotokurom on our website Please take the time to look at

www.ahoto.org

**To make a donation
Please send cheques/postal orders
made payable to
'DMJ Friends of Ahotokurom'
The Treasurer
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Gillingham, Kent
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Page 2

A little piece of "Heaven here on earth"

Ten years on.....

In our last newsletter we looked back ten years to the inspiration that led to the building of a new village called 'Enyindakurom' (translation – The village we did not expect!)

This unique self-build housing project was to re-house 80 families affected by leprosy who had lived in the poorest of conditions out in the 'bush' hidden away from the communities they felt rejected from.

In this edition we want to see what difference the housing project has made to the older people of the community.

Back in 1999 I spoke to Mama – a lovely calm, very elderly woman, always smiling, despite the cruel blow that contracting leprosy had dealt her in life. She was rejected by her family, disfigured and disabled and yet she was full hope and anticipation.

The housing project was nearing completion of the first houses to be occupied and she was due to move in. She said to me "if I live one minute, one hour in one of those new houses, I know that I will be in heaven here on earth".

Sadly, Mama did not live long enough for her dream to be fulfilled. But it was almost as though the new life and love she experienced in knowing that people cared and that life was to be changed had already lifted her into a better place. She died happy.

It is these older members of the community who say they have benefited most from the project. Previously life was impossibly hard.

There is no welfare state, being disabled they could not work. Having been rejected by their families there was no one to look after them in old age. Their disability was such that they struggled to maintain the mud huts they lived in. Roofs leaked, mud walls fell down in the rain. Mosquitoes, mice, rats and snakes lived in the thatch – often their numbed and sore infested limbs would be chewed in the night and they

could not even feel it in order to protect themselves.

So to live in a real house, with concrete walls, a concrete floor and a tin roof was absolute luxury.



Each house has one secure room, a verandah, a separate roofed cooking area and a concrete path connecting to a road network. Crutches and wheelchairs can get around safely and there is a small patch of land outside to grow a few vegetables.

The tropical rains in Ghana are always a problem and this year 2009 was no different. Floods have destroyed homes all around the area and sadly a local 9 year old boy lost his life when the room he slept in collapsed.

But at Enyindakurom there was much agreement from everyone that, their situation has improved greatly in the last ten years since the houses had been built.

Senior, now 63 said "Before the new housing development, I was not confident and happy. Now I am happy and enjoying my new house. The trench rain this year was no trouble with the new house even though most of the crops got spoiled".

Isaac agreed "I am happy with the new houses, at least I have clean and nice home. Great improvements in last ten years; look at the rains we have had and yet everything was perfect in our houses." "The mud house which was covered with thatch roof was unbearable. During the rainy season, it was not possible to live in the mud

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house. Now it is much better. I really didn't expect such good houses (I send great thanks to our friends in England)".

Mr Sackey was a village elder at the time the project was started and instrumental in getting it all off the ground. He agrees "the present time is much better than when everyone arrived here first". "When we arrived there was no hope! But the new houses have been a gift."

Approximately 160 of the people living at Enyindakurom are older people affected by leprosy. Through the housing project these people have been brought some comfort in their daily lives. More than that though, they have gained greater acceptance by society. They are proud to live in a nice clean house not hidden away and living in squalor because of their disabilities.

Next time we will focus on the hope and transformation for those who were children 10 years ago – but in the meantime we leave the last word to Mr Sackey.....



"Thank you, for allowing yourselves, to be used by the Almighty God, to answer our prayers."

For further information on any of our activities please contact:
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