

FRIENDS OF AHOTOKUROM NEWSLETTER

June 2008 Edition 16

Registered Charity DMJ No 232421

Father Philip

We reported in our last newsletter on Philip being ordained a deacon. Now we are pleased to tell you that he was ordained a priest in December at St Francis de Sales Cathedral in Cape Coast. He is the first person paralysed from the neck down to be ordained as a priest in Ghana.



Fr. Philip

Fr. Philip is currently still living in Ahoto. This year he organised and led all of the Easter ceremonies. A wonderful Holy week was enjoyed by the whole community, with the highlight undoubtedly being the particularly festive mass celebrated by Fr Philip on Easter Sunday in Atonkwa. He is saying mass regularly at Ahoto. He is also driven around to local parishes to say mass, supporting other clergy. It is a blessing for Ahoto to have a resident priest but we are expecting the Cardinal to transfer him to other duties soon.

Victoria -A successful scholar

Education can truly make a difference and enable people to climb out of a life of poverty. This has been particularly highlighted by Victoria's story. She is from a one-parent family. All her life she has been supported by her grandmother, a leprosy sufferer who often went begging to support her daughter and grandchildren, the family being very poor. Victoria's younger sister died last year.

Victoria had dreams, she wanted to make something of her life and was overjoyed to be accepted on the

scholarship scheme supported by the Rainham parish. She trained in catering. Whilst at vocational school she learnt how to make Soya bean kebabs. She taught her mother and they began a small scale enterprise making kebabs and sending them to market for sale. Victoria invested what they earned back into the business and a few kebabs soon became many! Last June the whole extended family was engaged in this enterprise – some making kebabs, some cooking them on a charcoal fire, others taking them into the nearest big town for sale. Victoria was proud to inform us that they had even been able to support her younger brother in going to school.



The kebab store

Victoria has now gained employment in a local Guesthouse where she cooks for visitors from all around the world. She continues to support the family in running the kebab business. Through her support she is enabling her family and the local community to transform their lives. She is a sensible young woman, with vision and compassion – we are sure she will go far, but what is more she is empowering others to do the same.

Ten more scholars have recently started at Vocational School, all supported by Rainham parish. This represents great hope for the future. We wish them all the very best and thank the parishioners of Rainham.

Afua Grace and baby Kojo

Afua Grace was rejected by her family and admitted to Childcare with leprosy as a young girl. In addition to her leprosy she has learning disabilities. Following a brief stay in hospital for surgery due to leprosy induced nerve damage, Afua grace returned to Ahotokurom; however it soon became clear that she was pregnant. The father disappeared off the scene pretty quickly and so Afua now in her early 20's was left to face this on her own.

Last Christmas, baby Kojo was born. The Ahoto team has supported both Afua and Kojo, trying to help her adjust to motherhood and learn the skills necessary to nurture Kojo. Being a proud mother Afua decided she would like to try and return to her village to be reunited with her own family and to raise the child in the village. Her family apparently welcomed her, although they had not even visited Afua since the day they left her at the leprosy hospital. Perhaps it was the arrival of a male child that interested them. Children and grandchildren with the potential to work are like having a pension. Anyway - within weeks it became apparent that the situation was not going to work. Afua could not cope and Kojo became ill and developed all sorts of skin rashes. They returned to Ahoto where proper care and supervision could be given.



Afua and Kojo

The issues are complex though; Afua has limited ability because of her physical and mental disabilities. What is going to be the best option for Kojo in the future, should adoption be considered, if not adoption, how can long term support be provided for both mother and child? What role should Afua's family have in addressing the problem?

All these things are being discussed as the future is decided, and in the meantime, with the support of all at Ahoto, Kojo is doing well.

If Ahoto was not there it is likely that he would not have survived at all.

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The Quads

As for the younger ones; the Quads are now into the "Terrible-Twos" and get up to all sorts of mischief...the odd Crayola-creation on the only newly painted wall here and sticky little hand prints there!

The infant Quads were near-death on their arrival. It is difficult to imagine that these four little healthy looking, bouncing, giddy babies could ever have been anything but happy.



The Gang

The Sisters have recently begun to set time aside for them in a 'makeshift' preschool area in an attempt to acquaint them with the idea of real schooling. They each have matching school bags and notepads so these little ones mean business!

The only boy, Little Kudjo-Gabriel is just about keeping up with the girls and is more than happy to assist in wreaking havoc!

Sister Clarisse- A profile

Sister Clarisse is one of the more recent DMJ sisters to arrive at Ahoto. She is a bright, bubbly sister always willing to help others.



Sr Clarisse is 28 years old and from Rwanda but was educated in Burundi where she studied medicine at University before joining the DMJ's. Her first duties as she started her religious formation included helping in an orphanage, and then she went to Cameroon for Religious Studies. After a brief spell in England helping with the elderly and helping the homeless she returned to Africa.

Sister Clarisse has made a great impression at Ahoto and we hope that she will be there for many years to come.

Food Crisis...

Spiraling oil prices have created problems for all of us - but the problem hits deep in countries like Ghana. A loaf of bread costing 40p in January is currently 92p. Incomes have not increased - so people are beginning to have to cut back on the basics like rice, bread, yams etc. We are informed that food is being grown, but the farmers can't afford the transportation costs to get things to market. The government has introduced emergency measures....but with an election year coming up and riots in all the countries surrounding ... the fear is that the county is entering difficult times.

Train Drivers' Calendar

Our grateful thanks go out to the drivers of First Capital Connect who raised £5,000 for Ahoto by producing and selling a most unusual calendar... 'Train Drivers in the Buff! It was all tastefully managed of course!

Final Thoughts

We have some words and thoughts from Orna McLoughlin who has been working as a volunteer at Ahoto. She describes her roles at Ahoto as a Kindergarten English teacher, a child-minder, an English tutor, an administrator, an older sister and a friend! Put simply she's been a part of one big, hardworking, amazing family.

The word 'inspiring' is used with general abandon, but that's the only word that she could use to describe the work that is done in Ahoto. Behind the smile of every child living and going to school in Ahoto there are stories of horrors that

one can't even pretend to comprehend. She has helped to bath, feed and care for little kids who were on the brink of death when they arrived in Ahoto. She has met teenagers who have lived through unspeakable trauma. The most amazing thing is that she had to be specifically told about the nightmare pasts of some of these children because one would simply not know the suffering they have endured...they are always smiling now.

Orna says "Thanks to the work that is carried out in Ahoto, these kids have been granted the life that they deserve: a life of love, laughter, learning and happiness. They've got life. That is inspirational. The amount of work and energy that is needed to allow Ahotokurom to save and change lives in this way is immense and I am full of admiration for all that work so selflessly to ensure that it can continue".

That is Ahotokurom. That is 'inspirational'.

She is proud and feels privileged to have be associated with Ahotokurom and to have worked with such tireless, selfless and inspirational people as the DMJ Sisters.

All the team thank you for your care and concern and hope that this newsletter will help you to understand the real difference that you can and do continue to make.

Our website is being updated. There are many more stories of activities at Ahoto. 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
2 Century Road, Rainham,
Gillingham, Kent
ME8 0BG**

For further information on any of our activities please contact: trudy@surefish.co.uk