

Ashanti News 5

Only one in three boreholes are successful in the Sekyere West District of Ashanti, making drilling an expensive occupation. Last summer consulting engineers Ove Arup seconded us a hydrogeologist and a geochemist through their charitable wing, ArupCause, to find ways of tackling the problem. Vicky Coy and Catriona Neath spent several months on desk research, half in their own time and half in Arup's, and followed this with a site visit.

Their report has just arrived. The main findings are that there are no easy answers to the problem, which is due to the complex geological structure of the ground. Recommendations include technical methods of raising the success rate in drillings and a suggestion that different ways of providing water, such as rainwater harvesting and infiltration galleries, should be tried. The report also contains detailed information about the situation in some twenty villages. It is available electronically to anyone who would like to read it.

Before we had this report, we were at a loss to know how to bring water to new villages. We have now been able to commission drilling and pump repair in three villages comprising 4,000 people, accompanied by training in health, hygiene and latrine construction; and preliminary research in two others. We are immensely grateful to ArupCause and Vicky and Cat in particular, and to Ove Arup for all their help including for financial support.

Eye Care

Twelve professional staff from SpecSavers will visit Gyetiase at the end of May. They will work with and train Ashanti Development's two eye healthcare workers while dispensing second-hand spectacles, setting up a record system for the eye health of local people and screening the population for eye disease, including cataracts for later operation. In 2006, only 519 cataract operations took place in the whole of Ghana. We carried out thirty-one last year and hope the total for 2008 will be much higher.

We are very grateful to SpecSavers and hope this will be the start of a long relationship between them, the villages and Ashanti Development.

Agricultural Co-operative

Meanwhile, fifty-five men are taking part in the agricultural cooperative we set up last month to farm 35 acres given by the Chief of Tadiesa in gratitude for the water we'd brought to his village. The men have divided themselves into three groups: the Christians, the Tadiesa residents (as distinct from Gyetiase residents) and the witchdoctor's group.

When Martha visited in April, the main planting season, she bought seed, tubers and tools for each group. These are now considered as loans, to be repaid with fifteen per cent interest, a rate determined by the village without our intervention. If any individual defaults on his debt, his group becomes liable. When all debts are repaid, the men will continue to pay a small rent, which will be used for the village's benefit, and the initial loans will be re-lent within the community.

John Humphrys very kindly offered to provide a cassava-milling machine and a shed to house it for the women of Tadiesa from his Kitchen Table Charities Trust. This means they will be able to process cassava produced by the co-operative and trade in milled



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cassava. We suggested the women might write and thank him, and tell him what changes the machine would make to their lives. Below is their response.

'We, the entire women of Tadeiso (Ghana) will seize this opportunity to thank you so much for your help. We do not know how to express ourselves. At this moment we all know that our lives are going to change, because of the job that you people have created for us.

'Most of the time we have to get up very early with our children walk for three miles, with the firewood on our heads to sell them in Mampong before going to our farms to work and use the money to buy meat and salt. We can not buy our children proper cloths due to insufficient money. With this cassava machine we all know that our lives are going to improve thank you, we can now live a better live. Also, we know that we can send our children to school and feed them well because most of our husbands are jobless, palm wine tappers and farmers.

'May the Almighty God bless you all and replenish your purses for all your contribution in Jesus name Amen. Once again thank you very mush.'

Education

We are enormously grateful to Judy and Jeremy Keep for donating a new school building to Gyetiase. At present, the primary school is housed at two sites which are quite far apart, causing problems with teacher changeovers. Worse, one of the buildings is structurally unsound and looks near collapse. Thanks to Judy and Jeremy, this building will now be abandoned and a replacement built near the others. This means that in class the children will no longer be drenched by rain or in danger of falling beams.

We have also received several applications from prospective volunteer teachers, and hope several will soon be helping the children with English language, reading and writing.

Fund Raising - Ghanaian Durbar

Ghanaians living in central London are staging a durbar as a fund-raiser for Ashanti Development. A durbar is a term introduced by the British colonialists and means a conference with visitors followed by a traditional festival with dancing.

It will take place in Coram's Fields, Guilford Street, WC1 on Saturday 19 July as part of the King's Cross County Fair. The Fair is very child-oriented; please come and support the durbar.

- and Slavery Concert

Meanwhile, musicians and dancers working at the Royal Ballet are planning a concert with dancing at 7.30pm on the evening of Sunday 28 September. Its theme will be Slavery, and it will be held at the Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon Street, London WC1H 0AH. Tickets cost £25 and cheques should be made out to Ashanti Development and accompanied by a sae.

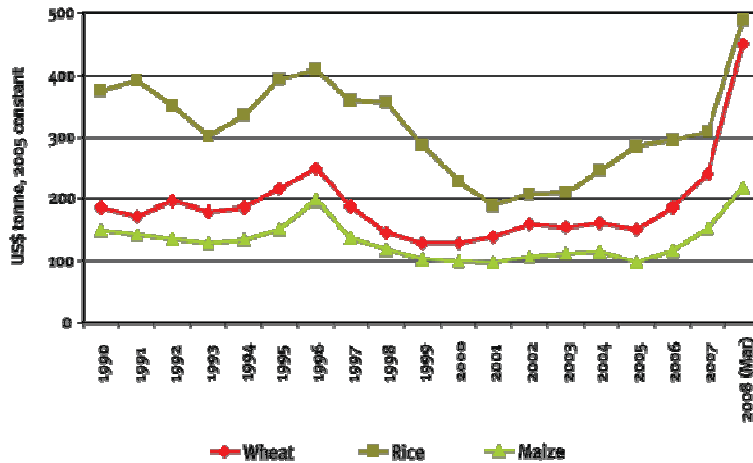
Patrons and Trustees

Rodney Bickerstaffe, President of War on Want, has kindly agreed to become a Patron. Our new Trustees are: Vicky Coy and Catriona Neath of Ove Arup; Albert Antwi, a Housing Officer from the London Borough of Camden; and Tom Weekes, a barrister.

Food Prices

The table below shows the recent steep rise in wheat and rice prices, which are now 89 and 60 per cent higher respectively than they were in 2007. Ashanti Development feeds some 180 under-fives in Gyetiase, and we are told the money we have supplied for the spring term will soon run out.

Most of our income must be spent on specific projects, and we are very pushed to make good this shortfall. If you have a little spare cash left over from the end of the financial year, it would be very gratefully received.



Source: IMF Commodity Price data, downloaded 12 March 2008 from <http://www.imf.org/external/np/res/commod/index.asp>.
 FAO report for Mar 2008. Prices deflated by the US GDP deflator.



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Donations

If you'd like to make a donation, please make your cheque payable to 'Ashanti Development' and return it to 21 Downing Court, Grenville Street, London WC1N 1LX. We'll be happy to send you a Standing Order form.

Please 'Gift Aid' your donation if you can, by filling in and returning the following form. Provided you pay at least as much Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax as the tax we reclaim on your donations in the appropriate tax year, we can then reclaim 28p in each £1 you donate

Gift Aid Declaration

Name: (caps)

Address:

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Post code:

I want Ashanti Development to treat my donations as Gift Aid donations until I notify otherwise. This applies to all donations I have made since 6 April 2000 and those I make from now on.

Signature:

Date: