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Development plans are being drawn up for three Ashanti villages under our *Adopt a Village* project, while potential adopters are discussing adopting three others. Meanwhile, activities ranging from low level preparatory work to major borehole drilling have begun in another eighteen villages.

### **Adopt A Village**

Barrie Coates, representing Leigh Rotary Club, recently spent a week with us in Ashanti. He visited several villages to find out about people's lives and needs, and selected Bimma, population 2,500, as his preferred candidate for adoption. Bimma is a farming village, whose principal crops are cassava, plantain, corn, yam, groundnuts and carrots. The land is poor, but a modest loan would enable the villagers to rent more fertile land and establish a farmers' cooperative. Better still, they would benefit from the national shortage of cassava in Ghana.

One of Bimma's boreholes has run dry, and the pump on another has broken. The women told us how they spent many hours fetching water from the stream. When we asked if they boiled the water, they didn't understand the purpose of the question. Most said they had between five and ten children while a further three to five had died in infancy, usually from water-related diseases. Ghana has recently set up a National Health Insurance scheme providing that babies are inoculated against some illnesses at birth but people have to pay or have National Insurance coverage for other medical treatment. Most in Bimma can't afford either option.

As for food, the villagers said they eat small quantities of dried fish once or twice a week, but chicken or goat only at Christmas. They pay for the fish with hens' eggs, which they sell in the market. Generally they have two meals a day, the first being porridge. Most said they were hungry all the time. There is no electricity and roads are poor.

Some of Bimma's buildings, including the school, have collapsed. There are no teaching materials, and on leaving school only about one in ten children is able to read and write. While adults work on their farms, pre-school age children are left to their own devices and sometimes hurt themselves. There is an urgent need for a nursery school.

The village has several community institutions, including a Chief and Elders' Committee, a Unit Committee (equivalent to a parish council) and a Water and Sanitation Committee. This last is barely operational, and consequently the refuse dump and water pumps are badly maintained. It will be a condition of working with Bimma that the WATSAN Committee is reconstituted.

The village is very religious. There are churches for the Moslems, 'Christians,' the 'Harvest Church,' the Pentecostals, the Methodists and Seventh-Day Adventists. The villagers pointed out with pride that there was no fetish priest in Bimma.

Finally, the villagers told us that their main wish was for secure work, and they would value technical training to enable them to achieve this.

Many of Bimma's problems are not hard to remedy, and we are hoping the Rotary Club will agree to tackle them. If you would like to know more about Bimma, please contact Barrie Coates on [barry.coates@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:barry.coates@blueyonder.co.uk). If you are interested in Adopting a School, Youth Group, Womens' Group, Church, Football Team or any other kind of group, please contact Ashanti Development.

### **Other Work**

Last year Vicky Coy and Catriona Neath of Ove Arup spent many months working on a groundwater assessment in Ashanti, in hope of providing for a higher success rate for borehole drilling than the current average of one in three. On the basis of their report, we are embarking on a round of secondary geophysical surveys in some villages and borehole drilling in others.

The work is being carried out or supervised by our local partners, ProNet, a NGO which was set up and trained by WaterAid, and with the help of Simon Sholl, a volunteer hydrogeologist who is currently living in Gyetiase village, Ashanti.

ProNet are also administering training in health and hygiene in several villages, and supervising the construction of over two hundred household latrines.

### **In the UK**

Our next fund-raising event will be a Candelmas Poetry Reading at All Hallows by the Tower, Byward Street, London EC3 on Friday 30 January at 7pm. Tickets are £7. Wine is free, and the Ghanaians living in London will sell wood carvings from Gyetiase's wood carving school. There is more information on the website.



*We are immensely grateful to members of the Royal Ballet, and Henry Roche in particular, for organising a Gala Evening in aid of Ashanti Development.*

*The picture shows Mara Galeazzi, one of the dancers, in rehearsal. There will be another Gala Evening on Saturday September 26 next.*

*We also want to thank Zoe Cunningham and Sue Vincent for organising a sponsored walk for Ashanti Development.*

We are very grateful to Nana Oduro, Chief of Gyetiase Village, for promising a gift of land so that we can extend Gyetiase's existing farmers' cooperative. We look forward to receiving it.

