

Annual Report 1998

**Christian Rural Aid Network
CRAN Friend Circle e.V.**

(March 1999)

We hope for what we do not see,
we wait for it with patience.

(Romans, 8:25)



spring 1998: young women are trained in sewing



Dear beloved brethren and members of the CRAN family,

this season presents me with an august opportunity to send special greetings to you in the blessed name of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. It is equally a good opportunity for me and on behalf of the entire CRAN staff and fellow-workers in Ghana as well as members in the village communities where we extend our effort to, to wish you a blessed and fruitful time. For us in Ghana, we do perceive this year 1999, being at the brink of a new millennium, as a very historic one in which the Lord will be preparing us for greater tasks and responsibilities ahead. As the words in 1 Corinthians 3:9 state „for we are God’s fellow-workers, you are God’s field, God’s building”, God surely expects greater responsibility from us especially concerning his work and the welfare of humanity in the years ahead. For this reason, it is important to better tune ourselves to him and be sensitive in the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

As the Director of CRAN Ghana, I also wish to express our deepest appreciation and gratefulness to all members and sympathisers constituting CRAN friends circle who over the years continue in an enviable steadfastness to support the work of CRAN in Ghana. Your constant gifts and donations as well as prayer support have been the source of not only aid but also of immense encouragement to us. By the constant expression of your kind gesture and charity, we have been able to make some modest achievements by way of transforming rural life in the villages in which we operate. For instance, you have enabled us to provide access to basic education for at least 500 children so far in the three villages of Abakam, Shama- Kedzi and Sanka. This means hope for these children, something which otherwise would not have been possible at all. CRAN Ghana is indeed most grateful for this and also convey to you the indebtedness and gratitude of all our target communities where your charity and care are extended to. May the Lord bless you richly.

At the close of the millennium, the social, political and economic situation in Africa still remains critical as deteriorating economic conditions have become exacerbated by social and political upheavals and civil wars. Though Ghana is not at war (thank God), the daily battle for the vast majority of the people remains essentially how to obtain the basic necessities of life including food, shelter, clothing, health, education and employment. For this substantial proportion of the population residing mainly within the rural areas, these goals have become more or less permanently illusive. Poverty has become more widespread while social services like education, health, safe drinking water etc., are beyond the reach of a sizeable number of people in the villages.

The result is that NGOs including CRAN have come under immense pressure to fill the gaps, while also meeting the needs of the very vulnerable segments of the population. This situation no doubt presents a very big challenge to us. Nevertheless CRAN Ghana is ever looking forward with hope and great expectation (Romans 8:25, see the title), and taking appropriate steps to properly address itself to the situation. This is the time where we would require your charity, assistance and active partnership the most.



Our prayer and hope as CRAN Ghana is that this partnership between us, borne out of Christian charity and the love of God, will grow from strength to strength so that together we can minister hope to many who are in despair out of want, deprivation, poverty, hunger, nakedness, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, disease and affliction so that these can live also as people created in the image of God.

We know that our Lord is able to make all grace to abound. Peace and many blessings to you all

Patrick Agbesinyale, Director, CRAN Ghana

A lot of what is moving CRAN has been said in this word of greetings by the Ghanaian Director. To learn from each other and leave a range of decision as wide as possible within the country of our work: These shall remain core elements of our organisation. Thus it is really justified to start our German annual report with our African brothers' and sisters' words.

Their ability to flexibly respond to new situations has been challenged especially in 1998. Since October, Patrick Agbesinyale is staying in Germany for further studies, which means other staff from Ghana have to advance in responsibility. The conduct of activity is done now by his wife, Doris Agbesinyale. The separate branches like administration, finance, projects co-ordination are taken over by even newly appointed members with a stronger responsibility. The successful and smooth transition since clearly shows how the phase of foundation with a strong concentration on the initiators is over now and has changed into a phase of consolidated expansion. As CRAN friends circle we esteem the high motivation in Ghana and at the same time welcome Patrick to stay with us for a while.

General conditions

The financial situation in Ghana is still critical:

- rate of inflation: it is still very high and afflicts every project budget and necessary purchase, even in foreign currency, while meeting the local population still harder as they do not get any external income
- foreign debt: even with optimistic expectations about the results on debt reducing talks, maybe like demanded by the jubilee 2000 campaign to take place on the G8 meeting of heads of state in Cologne next June, any debt reduction presumably will not refer to Ghana anyway
- productivity: it was highly affected especially in spring 1998 by a lasting electricity shortage because of poor rain fall and thus a decrease of the Lake Volta water level. Even the local industry was drastically hurt by the stoppage



- VAT (value added tax): after long years of discussion it was finally introduced at the end of 1998 at a rate of 10%. How this will influence the balance of state income and expenditure will be seen only later. For CRAN, one immediate result is that staff salaries have to be adjusted if we do not want to let them alone with a general rise of prices.

Newly started: The micro credit programme

Facing the general problems of finance, CRAN has drawn its view on the monetary needs of the project areas of Central Region, too. Some time ago there had already developed a timid initiative for a credit scheme. But soon it became clear that a clear concept is needed as well as suitable co-workers for monitoring and caring for the clients. Meanwhile, small scale credit schemes are widely accepted in their positive effect both by the government and multinational organisations. As the villagers with whom CRAN is in contact have energetically forwarded their will to use savings and credit chances, CRAN gets ready for this new challenge. A concept has been developed how such a system can be implemented basing on the traditional Ghanaian „susu” system. In charge of this branch is CRAN’s financial manager, supported by the office administration, and in contact with the clients are „field officers” from the villages who have been employed for that special purpose. The programme has started in April 1998. During the first half-year period 300 clients have joined it. Their savings now are circulating as loans for those whose wish for more capital to strengthen their economic activity never would be answered, on conditions that are quite favourable in relation to the interest rates like they are common in the country and in relation to the small amount of an average loan. The expansion of the programme clearly needs solid funding. Foreign partners for that are still to be searched for.

(A special description of the programme is available.)

Walking forward

In Liati- Wote, Volta Region, some things are moving on now. Some time has been used to think about income generating activities in that community, but lack of funds and lack of staff were hindering a serious implementation. In spring 1998 however a training course in sewing for young women took off. 15 female participants are taught the necessary skills. As the village is not provided with electricity yet, but people expect that „soon”, we are happy to have obtained sewing machines that at least partially can be run both electrical or manual. Some of them have been acquired in Ghana, some were donated to our friends circle. Thus a first lasting training course was started, with trained teachers and nice „school” uniforms.



A second step forward is made up of the mills project. Around the village and its area several agricultural products are planted, mainly for subsistence purpose, but surplus yield is sold in the nearest market towns without having been processed further on. For that the technical equipment is not there, and as the village is situated in an inconvenient distance to the main road, which holds traders back from visiting the village for just a small amount of goods. The mills project idea means to process cassava to gari (flour) and to crack palm kernels (a basic substance for oil production) with simple technical means. Two mills, designed and produced in the country, and a diesel engine from abroad have been bought. Some land has been released by the community to erect a shed for the mills enterprise that shall be undertaken by a women's group in the village. Customers pay to have their products processed, the profit is to be invested in village development activities. The direct gain for the farming families lies within the increased value of their crops. Because of the easier processing it is expected that more crops will be cultivated. After the funds for the project are available now, the project will get running towards the second quarter of 1999.

The end is reached

for the school building in Shama- Kedzi, Western Region. However just for starting another phase: Despite an escalated budgetary deficit the primary school could officially declared open in September 1998. Several factors have contributed to difficulties in the building process: inflation and energy crisis, the constant threat of the old village by sea erosion and a shift of the school location to the new place for the village, all of which brought along increasing cost on transport and material. Being planned as a school meeting the governmental standards for integration into the public education system, provisional solutions as they are accepted for informal schools will not be accepted. In the same way several factors have contributed to the final success: a high commitment of the local population to help for the school, even with their own compounds threatened by the sea, a second youth camp with voluntary work at the construction site, some helpful co-operation with the local authorities. In total, a lot of needs are not met yet: completion of toilet facilities, furnishing and procurement of learning / teaching material will accompany our contacts to the village for the years to come.

Knowing each other

After in 1998 our friends circle has been existing for five years, in which time we have come to learn about several branches of development work by own experience our demand is rising to have some exchange with similar groups to use each others knowledge, share our observations and experience and gain easier access to specific information.



Thus we are engaged in the (German) „Ghana network” initiative with active collaboration. With the overall charge taken by Ghana Action Germany / Bergheim on the one side and Ghanaian Nationals Council / Dusseldorf on the other side, this joint work underlines how the common interest in development promotion shall be jointly borne, corresponding to the close partnership between CRAN Ghana and CRAN Germany. The „Ghana network” is but a network of groups and organisations engaged in Ghanaian - German relationship, and does not constitute an umbrella organisation, instead leaves their independence to all groups involved. There is soe service and exchange according to the active interest of the groups. We hope to be able to introduce concrete results of how to implement this co-operation within the year 1999.

Project visits like in the previous years could not be arranged in 1998. A German volunteer however was working for several months in kindergarten and primary school of Abakam, Central Region. During a stay in Ghana for some weeks (in different mission), a representative of CRAN friends circle could attend the opening ceremony of Shama-Kedzi primary school. In this way the contact remained fresh which is so essential for a sympathetic and inspiring partnership.

For 1999, we are planning a work camp in Ghana that will be connected to the CRAN Ghana work camp, thus will be serving by practical help. Target participants are mainly students, and the visit is jointly planned with the German Fellowship of Evangelical Students (smd). This will mean the first ever CRAN experience of a larger visitor group.

One public relations activity here in Germany has been the friends circle participation in the Westphalian Kirchentag (Protestant church meeting) by was of an information desk. Again we noticed how you can attract attention through ‘action orientation’ („we are sewing like in Africa”) which however cannot win some deeper or even lasting interest. The sympathy for the African reality of life that we hope one day will come true with our citizens needs a long time of caution and readiness of learning until it reaches maturity.

In so far personal contacts will remain most important for us. Nevertheless CRAN will present itself via Internet as well as through established media. We may point especially to a video reporting about CRAN’s education projects on the occasion of Shama-Kedzi school opening (available in English; duration 30 minutes).

**Jointly achieving
the common goals of CRAN - that is what we want further on.**

Abakam and Shama-Kedzi school blocks are fully erected or at least up to a certain grade. Providing the schools with teaching equipment still offers many chances for improvement. The need to build further main and side buildings will accompany us through the next years. According to an agreement with the village people and the local authorities Shama-Kedzi primary school shall be taken over by the district / municipality next autumn. The kindergarten might be excluded from that. This means to continue the Abakam model, though with a different partner. Again, our Child Education Sponsorship Scheme needs careful expansion. All of that shall ensure at last to enable the children



of our target villages to go to school in the long term so that reaching the aims of education in a motivating surroundings can be expected. For that we do not have a final concept. The conditions of African every day school life need to be understood by us people used to Western lifestyle. To implement a mediation of knowledge and values into a society that so far was neglected and locked out from modern life means a big challenge to our Ghanaian counterparts. So the steps to move on will be steps of learning.

In 1999, a training centre will be introduced in Cape Coast region. Sponsorship by EZE (Protestant Association for Co-operation in Development) was granted in 1998 for that part of „Duakor Women's Informal Training Centre” dealing with training in sewing. Further decisions on support and accomplishment will be taken only after implementation of this first phase.

Church building work still is done in intense co-operation with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The congregations in CRAN villages are more and more operating by taking up their responsibility. An example for that is the youth work camp which was to a large extent planned and organised by the village church youths themselves. These steps towards initiative and activity through the villages are especially appreciated by us.

Our friends circle in numbers

In the year 1998 our friends circle received income (donations) of 64 TDM (previous year: 52 TDM). A large portion of that was used to support the general work of CRAN Ghana; expansion of the organisation, staff salaries and allowances including the kindergartens and schools as well as maintenance and enlargement of running projects got 23 TDM. The Child Education Sponsorship Scheme received 7 TDM. Beyond that, some projects were specially supported: Abakam school with 10 TDM to erect the block for classes 4 - 6, Shama-Kedzi school with 11 TDM to guarantee a start in time with the new academic year, and the mills project with 11 TDM including the purchase for the diesel engine. In total, we could donate 62 TDM to CRAN Ghana (previous year: 37 TDM). Cost on administration and information within Germany figures up to 3 TDM and still is granted by determined donations so that your contributions are fully and directly used for the work of CRAN Ghana. (Project sponsorship by official organisations is done right off with CRAN Ghana and thus not included in these figures.)

Our thanks are meant here for all those who have helped us by donations or active involvement, and we appreciate your assistance and confidence.

Information about our work and friends circle interest are regularly (at least quarterly) sent out by newsletter (by December 1998: about 100 recipients). Further notice is directly published on our homepage.



Conclusion

This current year 1999 bears a character of „short before an end“. This is however just a convention by man. We do not want to concentrate too much on these ‘final times’ or ‘starting times’. God is not bound to dates like we are. And the needs of our Ghanaian friends are not changed by a change of millennium either. Well, of course, that would mean a real change if justice reigned global coexistence! Such a change however is farer away than our concrete hopes are going. CRAN is a small plant, still young in growth. Small by small we will bring things into existence, borne by patience, to actively bring more hope to some places. We will see for and talk about the general wounds of mankind living on this earth in that. Healing these wounds may be enforced by our prayers.

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