

Dear friends of CRAN!

In the September issue of the German magazine „Family“ we could published an article about CRAN. This article was not focused on CRAN, but on the life of an ordinary Ghanaian family. Since most of you will not be familiar with living in a rural village, you will find an English translation of this article below.

I'm thanking all members and friends of CRAN for all support in 1997. Without all the hands, hearts, gifts and prayers the help would not be possible. We praise our Lord that he had blessed the work of CRAN.

News from Ghana

The school project Shama-Kedzi makes great progress. You will find a summary below.

We plan to establish a training center for women in Duakor. The project proposal is now available. There will be courses in tailoring, hairdressing and some short-term workshops. Teaching of literacy skills and development education will be included in all courses. The training site will be near the parish hall. The financial amount for building and fitting will be 27.600 US\$. For financing the building we are currently looking for a partner organization, the recurring costs will be covered by the regular income and CRAN Germany.

From the last year proceeds (Christmas cards, necklaces, miracle balm) CRAN bought mills for Liati-Wote that will be used for processing palm fruits and Cassava. So the women of the village will no more have to transport the fruits to the next city and the products will be cheaper. As soon as the diesel engines are bought, the village development will benefit from the income.

News from Germany

In October we had our meeting this year. Important decisions are:

- Starting with 1998, we will separate member assembly and travel report in order to have more time for conversation and discussion. So the next assembly will be in spring 98 in NRW (Dortmund, Aachen). An annual meeting with slight show etc. is scheduled for fall. This meeting might take place on an other location (Hamburg?).
- we will raise the annual financial support from 18000 to 21000 DM.
- the executive committee remains as is

In the end of November Mathias Rusert and Hans Wallhäuser met with Mr. Zielniok, chairman of Ghana Aktion e.V. This group works in Ghana for 15 years and has got extensive experience concerning the coordination of development projects. Their activity centres on eye-diseases, -medicine and optics. Other projects are similar as ours, as are incoming generating projects with the participation of the village people. By the way: In several German cities opticians collect used glasses that are refurbished in Ghana (e.g. in Keta- Dzelukope/ southern Volta Region). For further information please call Tel 02271 / 767540 or mail to ghana-aktion@t-online.de.

Child Education Sponsorship Scheme: Currently we have got 13 sponsorships / parenthoods, but we are still looking for 12 more sponsors that are willing to support an child with 20 DM per month for education.

Hans Wallhäuser, chairman of CRAN Germany

Preliminary report on the Shama-Kedzi school building project

SHAMA KEDZI SEA EROSION SITUATION

The sea erosion situation at Shama-Kedzi has grown precariously worse to the extent that the Central Government has decided to resettle the people of the village. The width of this elongated coastal settlement straddled between the River Pra (Ghana's second largest river) and its flood plains and the Atlantic Ocean was roughly 1km when CRAN made its first contact with the village in 1993. Today, the width of the settlement is on the average 150 metres between the sea and River Pra. Much of it eaten away by the sea. It is predicted that the entire settlement would have been gone by the year 2000 and beyond.

However, resettlement in this case only means, government providing land for the people so that they can move to inhabit this new patch of land. Yet over the few years there have been very little incentive to attract the settlers whose livelihood derive mainly from fishing, to relocate or resettle on the central government provided land. The proposed resettlement site is on the average 3.5 km from the old settlement, and this alone discourages the villagers from moving out on to the new ground.

What they are doing presently is to shift their housesteads from one point to the other so that they can squeeze in as much as possible in the „old settlement“ despite the ominous threat posed by the sea.

As by now no single household has moved out into the new site, as the people want to keep close to the sea as much as possible for obvious economic reasons.

Given such a development, the siting of the school project (building of new classrooms) became quite a complicated issue which required some time and wider consultations for it to be resolved. For instance, while the villagers want the school to be sited as closest as possible to them so that their children would travel less distance to go to school each day, the central government wanted and in fact had directed that the school be sited at the proposed resettlement place. This generated a long drawn controversy between the government and the villagers which in fact took the last 5 months to resolve.

Finally a compromise was reached in that the kindergarten component of the project was to be constructed on a site about 1km away on the average whilst the others, Primary and JSS blocks are to be constructed on the resettlement site about 3.5km away on the average.

Construction work on the school project commenced officially on the 19th August, 1997. This however, was preceded by field geodetic surveying and architectural design works. The first project to be tackled was the kindergarten.

This involved a two room classroom block with an office and store, and a toilet facility.

CRAN was able to mobilize over a hundred youth volunteer workers from the surrounding towns and cities under its voluntary workcamp programme for a one-week construction work at the KG project site at Shama-Kedzi.

The kindergarten school block which took less than 5 weeks to construct is almost complete now and the children will move into it any moment from now.

The construction work on the Primary and JSS blocks has delayed because there been the need for heavy earth moving machine (bulldozer) to level and prepare the ground for construction to commence. The earth moving work was completed only on the 17th September 1997 paving the way for construction work which should follow soon.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The new developments with regards to the proposed resettlement of Shama-Kedzi and the central government directive to place the school within this proposed resettlement area carry with it some implications.

The most conspicuous one being that the Shama Kedzi school project has become located at two separate sites, with KG at one location and the Primary/JSS located at some other place.

This obviously has brought about some cost implications with regard to the construction. The location of the KG a bit closer to the villagers was necessary given that children under six years will find it rather too difficult to walk about 5km to school and back each day.

On the other hand however, the location of the Primary/JSS school at the resettlement site would no doubt make school much more accessible to several children in outlying villages namely Krobo, Fawomaye, Nyamibechere, Duachimiasse and others where schools do not exist at all. It is anticipated that the school facility would extremely benefit several out of school children in many of these villages. This indeed makes the school project a more than Shama Kedzi project and which of course local authorities have become very interested in.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community involvement and participation in the project so far can be described as very good. The Shama-Kedzi community led by their chief Togbui Tekple Garikor I who is also the chairman of the local school project committee have greatly mobilized themselves for the project. The community currently contribute labour mainly by the provision of sand, stones (to supplement what is bought) digging of trenches, drawing of water, carrying of blocks and other relevant yet non-technical or specialized jobs in support of the construction work.

It must be stated that for the technical construction work however, expert technical men have been hired and are being paid accordingly. The Member of Parliament for the area who is also a Deputy Minister for Land and Forestry is also very happy and helping to mobilize the community.

It has already been stated that CRAN mobilized about 100 young voluntary workers from among the towns and cities in the region to undertake a one-week construction work at the project site (from 1st - 24th August). Mr. Hans Wallhaueser of Aachen, Germany took an active part in that programme which was organized to formally launch or commence construction work on the school project.

We know that our Lord is able to make all grace to abound. Thanks.

George Tokpo & Patrick Agbesinyale

Behind the palm leaves fence

The following story wants to give some insight into how ordinary Ghanaians live and feel. This story in reality never happened. The plot and the persons however are so true that everything could have happened exactly like written down here...

The Coastal highway leads westward from Cape Coast right along the shore. Palm trees are lining up, and coloured fishermen's canoes give a beautiful picture. Small settlements with simple huts mad of clay and thatch roofs are clustering at the other side. It is a Sunday morning in August, first week of our visit to Ghana, and we are on our way to church service at Abakam. When in the fade of fog discovering the silhouette of Elmina Castle, the oldest slave castle with a dark and bloody history, we stop the car. Well known drum beating sounds through the village, and walking the narrow path through the village we already like to join the singing as God is so happily and lively praised. Soon we have reached the kindergarten where the church is gathering. Gabriel Amevinya, the Catechist greets us with welcome and hallelujah. He came to know us during our previous visits and now officially introduces us to the church members. That is part of the protocol, somehow strange in a situation now familiar to us. However, we notice the church has grown to 100 members by now. How much of that may have been achieved by Gabriel's personal and never tiring commitment?

Today he himself is preaching. „Christ came and preached the Good News of peace to all - to you Gentiles, who were far away from God.” That is a good message for this community. „Remember how we acted in former times”, Gabriel calls upon them. „We prayed to idols. You still see the altars placed in front of our compounds. But we always were afraid of doing wrong things in their eyes. That God himself came onto this earth, for us, we did not know.” That was just five years ago. In 1992, Christian Rural Aid Network came to the village, for the first time preaching the gospel. The first Bible study group then met in the Amevinyas' place. One man of the first hour has matured into a good church leader.

After more than three hours church service ends. „Today you have to visit me. We have prepared some food”, he invites us. Hospitality is an always overwhelming character of this society. „But first we need to have a glance on the school’s development.” Lucy, their youngest daughter of age 10, goes to class 3. „Two rooms have been built within the last year. Just in time of the new academic year starting they were ready. For a long time we could not move on because of lack of funds, to pay for roofing sheets, doors and blackboards.” Government does not care for education in every village. Thus there was no school for the 400 children. As well as there is no electricity, no running water, no health service, no formal jobs. The school now is built by CRAN, growing year by year with the kids. Gabriel serves as local project officer. He is one of the just 5% of adults in Abakam who have learnt to read and write, and even was trained as a carpenter in the Cape Coast vocational school. „This bench here has been made by my Dad.” Lucy shows it to us as we ask her where her place in the classroom is. Well, she is proud of her Dad just like the village is proud of its school, the strongest building of the village. What means a sign of development and progress to the parents, means to the children like Raphal (8) and his cousin Antoni who is staying with their family: No daily walk of several kilometres passing the dangerous highway. If else they would ever go to school...

Slowly we are walking to the Amevinyas’ compound. As long as there is no rain life happens outdoor. Two rooms of about 27 square metres are not too much. One bedroom for the parents, one bedroom for the five children living here. That means, two beds, one table with all their belongings, some chairs. The cooking is done outside, close to where Gabriel does his carpentry work and where his wife Rebecca has got her fish processing facilities. An area of about 30 square metres is roofed therefore with the locally available construction of bamboo and palm leaves, just the way the fence around the compound is built. Now we are asked to have a seat in the court. We find a bench there, and Wilson (16) and Thomas (12), the eldest boys, bring some other chairs. Traditionally you should be offered a glass of water for your welcome now. „Not for you Europeans, you can’t stand it.” Two years ago Gabriel dug a water hole in his compound, but the quality of the water is just enough for their own use. Wilson arrives with coconuts as a substitute, freshly picked high in the tree that he climbed with acrobatic ease. Hex, that is really some great alternative! He professionally cuts the nuts with his feary 80 centimetre machete, and here you have the milk drink.

Rebecca needs more work then. „You will have to wait for an hour. Today we will have Banku - we can grow maize and cassava for it on our small plot of land.” The fish that goes with it fills the air with a spicy and enchanting odour. She knows that very well. Nearly all men of Abakam are fishermen, and nearly all women smoke fish and sell it afterwards, as their part of income. „So how is the fishing season?” „Fairly bad, like in recent years. The fish stay more in the open sea now where the canoes don’t go. Thus I process less fish, thus I will earn less. How shall we gain so much until December that it brings us through to the next season starting only in June?” she complains. Together they earn one million cedis a year. If they had to buy all the food, it would not be enough just for that. „All the prices have climbed up to 150%, compared to last year”, Gabriel illustrates the economic difficulties. School fees are 5000 cedis a year. „Without paper, pens, books, and transport for the older ones who go to secondary school in Cape Coast. It is a miracle how we can go through.” By CRAN, Gabriel has been given a used bicycle last year, for his church work. At least he can easier visit the surrounding villages now. Sometimes people from the church give them clothes. „God brings us through! We fully trust in him.” What sounds so simplifying to our Western ears is a practical experience of life here.

After lunch we ask them about their future hopes. Wilson would like to finish school and then get professional training. His father adds, „my own story tells even that is not a guarantee for a job. I do the carpentry work just from time to time.” „Everything you could do needs some capital to start with. Which we don’t have”, Rebecca says. She benefited from a micro credit programme and used these 30 US\$ to give her enterprise a better base. „We don’t have land. Cape Coast, that is modern Ghana, lies right in front of our huts. But I have never been

to school, so they won't give me any chance. Hence we have to learn new things because too many will not get a good earning sticking to the old ways."

„Christ says, look, I will make everything new". Gabriel changes to his favourite theme, Bible and church. „That is not only important for your body but also for your soul. To live as a Christian has become the foundation of my life. You know, formerly we were full of so many fears when the fetish priest told us not to do this or to do that. Parents did not like their children to go to school because that would lead them away from tradition. We kept to the old things and became poorer and poorer. Some other villages developed, had their success and yet did not suffer their forefathers' curse. Jesus sets us free, and slowly we discover we ourselves can become active. To see others discover that, too, that is why I work in the church." And that is really intense work. Every afternoon or night during the week is filled with Bible study, evening service, prayer meeting, youth group. In between he goes to visit neighbours. to meet them as a spiritual leader. „Well, there is no other programme for leisure in our village, But we have our community, our music and songs." All the commitment of a young and dynamic Christian is present in him. And his family shares it. „Of course that is what we have to do, as my husband is out so often", Rebecca ensures. „Both of us have their work, and the children are helping in the household. The most important thing of life however is how is our relationship to God. That is what we respect as a family. And it is our concern to see our village and the ones around us do the same. Together we will stand for that."

Leaving in the afternoon we are filled with deep impressions. Inflation, structural adjustment, democratization and decentralization are the headlines of our development concepts. The committed and persuasive life of the Amevinya family gives a clear example of real change. Their hope may infect us. And we share their wish for a future of growing quality of life and justice.