



**CHRISTIAN RURAL AID NETWORK**  
**FREUNDESKREIS e.V.**

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Dear Friends of CRAN!

Even though our newsletters may often deal with "projects" and "activities", the work is fundamentally being carried and gaining by the efforts of the people contributing to it. One of our helpers is Ms. Heike Braeuer. Her report on six months at CRAN in Ghana is attached below, with a foto of Sanka where she mainly stayed. Ms. Natalie Perkins from Canada also left CRAN Ghana after two years of voluntary work in Cape Coast and Accra. Her fundraising efforts made substantial financial aid available and helped in establishing important contacts. Moreover, she contributed to many different project activities and to the establishment of CRAN Ghana's own newsletter. At the same time, there are many local voluntary supporters, be it as qualified members of the Board, or be it as helpers during community events. We thank all of them for their commitment and wish and hope that we will receive such commitment in future, too.

Here in Germany, there are also many people being involved. They provide us with information and recommendations, with donations and with a variety of activities. I thank you in the same way; we all are part of the CRAN - family, and there are many ways and many opportunities that give us the chance to share and to contribute what we want to give.

As it was mentioned in our newsletter of August, the planned visit of Seth Adzadi was cancelled due to visa problems. Answering to our request for information, the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs replied that they regret the incident, without going further into detail. We are not really content with that statement, but at least it is more than nothing...

In Ghana, we are currently in the process of expanding our geographical scope with a stronger focus on the Volta Region. This newsletter deals with approaches that are partly planned, partly already realised. As usual, it also provides you with information on several project issues. Additionally, apart from the internship report already mentioned, I included an article extract from the journal "Der Ueberblick" (the overview) about the roles of NGOs (Non-Governmental-Organizations) working in the field of microfinancing. Its questions and assessments therefore are of concern for CRAN, too. (The journal as such is very recommendable; if requested I will send you the article in full length.)

I wish our readers a good and beneficial Advent season..

*Hans Wallhäuser*



## CRAN in the Volta region

Since several years CRAN is active in Liati-Wote, a village in the district of Hohoe, located close to the Togo boarder. The distance to CRAN's main office in Cape Coast is a one-day travel, which is too much to go beyond smaller project activities and single visits. However, CRAN wants to expand its work in this region.

The Volta region has a very rural character und belongs to the poorer regions of the country. Especially the northern areas are remote and difficult to reach. The city of Hohoe is a kind of gateway to this part of the country. There is demand for support and there are opportunities of development for the people. Therefore, CRAN wants to build up a second regional basis in addition to the project sites that are in reach of Cape coast. This will offer the possibility to introduce appropriate working fields and approaches in a more systematic way.

As a first entry, the previous experiences and contacts in Liati-Wote are a very useful basis. The workshops dealing with avocational agricultural works (such as cultivation of bees or snails) have already attracted participants from outside the village. The informal training facilities (tailoring) are simple, but useful. Moreover, the mill works have served to introduce the issue of income-generating production at least in a modest way.

The German EED (Evangelic Development Service) approved funding for the expansion of the Liati-Wote projects already for this year. The overall concept is a coherent program for development in the Volta region. This autumn, the EED has conducted a meeting for several partner organizations in Ho (the region's capital). In the course of these contacts, CRAN and EED finalised a partnership agreement for the duration of four years, offering new and concrete perspectives.

Even before, CRAN engaged a project manager for the Volta region. Mr. Cosmos Abiwu, a well-educated Master in Agricultural Management, has already proven in the past months that he has a practical sense and the capabilities to revive and promote the project development in Liati-Wote.

A focus is set on the strong promotion of agricultural production, in order to enhance the income situation for the peasants making up the majority of the rural population. As part of the projects, training in a more economic way of agricultural production will be provided: profit-oriented working, manufacturing, first approaches of labour division in village teams. To give a concrete example: In short training courses, the participants would acquire knowledge about mushroom cultivation. The region offers favourable conditions (rice hulls, sawdust and elephant grass as materials are available, in addition to a very warm and humid climate), the courses would be conducted by NBSSI, seed could be bought at the Food Research Institute Accra that offers good conditions, and the market situation is favourable. However, if one does not trust in such "new ground", an alternative way in doing reliable business is to expand the palm oil production. With the installation of a second mill to grind the palm oil kernels (the first mill serves to crack the kernels), a further step to produce palm oil more easily is done. Oil palms and buyers are at hand, so that the establishment of a small enterprise carried out by five to ten women could be a possible next step.

For the realization of such plans, especially for an expansion to more villages, setting up a regional management is a necessary precondition. The past has already shown that the Cape Coast office has difficulties in implementing even small project measures because of the distance and lacking means of communication. Wote, on the other side, is not a suitable place to host a regional centre as it is too remote itself. Therefore, CRAN plans to set up a branch office in Hohoe, serving as a management centre for all projects in the Volta Region.



The Friends of CRAN have been requested to provide funding for the new branch office. Estate and construction works are estimated at 20.000 DM at least, which CRAN Ghana cannot pay from its own capital resources, and which are naturally not part of funding approvals for projects and programmes. The equipment - particularly computers and means of transport - could be provided by the Cape Coast office that has free capacities.

As this is a strategically important and conceptually promising innovation, we would like to meet the request from Ghana, subject to further financial considerations. Although it is not a program with easily assessable impact, and although it is not a "classic" social project like the construction of a school, it provides the fundament for the effective and efficient expansion of CRAN that makes good sense. Therefore we hope to receive your trust and understanding for this new step, and for the additional efforts it will take.



## Reports from the Projects

### Parish community Work

Even one year after losing its previous provisional parish centre, the community in Bantuma still does not have a permanent place to meet. However, they bought an estate recently (as the ownership relations in and around the village are not clear in any case, they had to pay off two owners who both had acquired the respective land rights - which is not unusual in situations of doubt or controversy). It remains to be seen when things will develop.

Comparatively much better is the situation for the parish community in Duakor. They can use rooms in the Women's Training Centre, so that this building also serves as the centre of the EP Church in the Cape Coast Region.

After some first meetings in spring in the village of Anlo Duch Komenda (which is located half way between Cape Coast and Shama), a small parish community of about 20 adults was established there. The EP Church actively helps to further develop it, and Doris Agbesinyale and George Tokpo often visit their Sunday church services. We wish the parish community joy in God's good doings.

### The school in Shama Kedzi

In September, the secondary school took up its work with children of the 7th grade. They even found enough teachers, though most of them are not well educated and therefore do not get payment from the state. So, now as before, CRAN has to contribute to their salary. It is helpful that the donations for the education sponsorships are not only used for the concerned children, but also for improving the conditions in the classes and schools respectively. What good would it be if school money could be paid but not a second teacher for two classes (each of about 50 children in the village)? However, a permanent solution has to be found. In between, the FAWE - program in Ghana sent teachers for a month twice. In particular, they conducted a training for the local teachers, sharing their experiences in teaching methods and practice.

### Sanka

Our previous newsletter already informed you about the successful implementation of the project "water pipes". In the end of September, the official opening was celebrated (see photo) and attracted great interest; even former village people participated who had moved away "to the city". The primary school uses a building that was sponsored by the EU, as agreed by the District Assembly (that has a good relationship to the village community). The school is integrated in the public system; therefore teachers are sent and paid by the state. Though the school has only three rooms, it already serves for four classes. CRAN itself is not involved, but there are considerations to provide support for the furniture. There are no desks, so that the children have to sit on the ground. Heike Braeuer's report below informs you about the activities in the kindergarten. The building was well finished inside before. 70 children belong to the two groups: "When the women bring their children in the morning before working on the fields, we cannot send a part of them back home" is the comment at site..



## **Micro credit Program**

Much power, staff and money has been invested into this sector. Its development so far shows that these efforts are worthwhile. The number of clients has increased up to more than 1.000. In normal times, micro credits of about 20 million Cedis (about 7.000 DM) in total are allowed per month. At the beginning of the fishing season, which is the time of highest demand, it can be twice as much. The technical installation of the professional "micro banker" software program is ready, but the transfer of data has not been finished yet, as well as the training of the staff responsible for the financial administration. But in general, the many advantages of the new program are recognised and welcomed. At present, CRAN Ghana is searching for a departmental manager on a full-time basis. Up to now, George Tokpo has done this work avocationally with great commitment and success. But he has become overburdened given the fast expansion of the program. His professional work at a bank does not allow him to extent his activities for CRAN, but to the extent given his support will go on. None the less, there is the urgent need for additional well-qualified and committed staff.



## **Bankers or development aid workers?**

(Extracts from: Der Ueberblick III/ 2001. Author: Dr. M. Bruentrup, freelance expert)

Long since the 70ies micro credits have been regarded as a particularly effective part of the promotion of the private sector as well as of poverty reduction. Because even the poorest turned out to be micro entrepreneurs who are capable to invest micro credits efficiently, and who are willing and able to save money.

For the implementation of micro finance programs it is of utmost importance that the credit interests fully cover the costs, including staff, administration and capital costs, as well as reserves to compensate the credit and inflation risks. The core dogmas are: finance institutions only make sense if they are self-sustainable; and the poor are really able to use the bank system efficiently. A common savings-pool from which the participants can get credits to bridge situations of shortage, e. g. the repair of the house, illness, payment of school fees, is of incontestable use. Then the micro-credit system becomes a micro finance system.

An argument often heard is that poverty is a multi-layered problem. But the better the financial situation, the better the chances to enforce one's right before the courts, to go to schools or to use health services. The perhaps most important side-effect may be growing self-consciousness. The collective peer-pressure promotes more individual autonomy and more individual efforts within the target group as well as within the micro credit donors.

Many NGOs are based on a socio-political philosophy and on the personal commitment of their founders, carried further by the motivation of their staff. A typical NGO activist is expected to be creative, to have social skills, a sensitive understanding and the capability to motivate the target group to participate. On the other hand, the personal profile and the requirements that are expected from a banker - even if he deals with micro financing - are reliability, accuracy and trustworthiness.

The fact that the poor by themselves are ready to pay the costs for micro finance services is seen by many as an already sufficient indicator for their usefulness for the target group, and therefore for development. Indeed, it is an unusual demonstration of appreciation, rarely found in other development sectors. But does a financially self-sustainable program already prove a general impact on development? Usually development cooperation is understood rather as a kind of international social welfare system, helping the weakest in the world community to live in human dignity, and which, in principle, should be covered by money transfers from countries of the North to those of the South.

Do micro credit programs promote social development? Critics are contesting such a point of view. The structural causes of poverty could not be reduced without investing in technology and infrastructure, and without promoting functioning markets and legal security. In the end we come back to the fundamental question: What is poverty? Is its nature rather material or rather social? NGOs and donors should think about this question again and again. In any case it would be the wrong answer to set all hopes on micro finance as the only means to reduce poverty.



## Half a year voluntary work at CRAN Ghana

(Internship report, Author: Heike Braeuer)

I was staying in Cape Coast for almost six months, from March to September 2001. There I had the opportunity to get to know CRAN Ghana's work, and to help in the office. It was a very special and valuable time for me. Long since my studies I have had the wish to spend a longer time abroad. Unfortunately the circumstances - I studied pedagogics in Cologne - did not allow to go before I finished. At that time I had not yet specified my plans in more detail - the only thing I knew was that I would go to a country outside the western-oriented developed countries.

Searching for an opportunity to realise my plans, I heard about CRAN for the first time in summer of 2000. Through my work within the SMD (students' mission Germany) I met Matthias Rusert, who introduced CRAN to me. The work and the development process of the whole organization caught my interest, and I made up my mind that I would like to work for CRAN on a voluntary basis. Therefore I must say that actually it was some coincidence that brought me to Ghana - or maybe the very opposite. At least, I found that "my way" to Ghana and in Ghana was traced out for me somehow.

After Matthias and Wolfgang introduced my application to CRAN Ghana, everything developed in a quick and uncomplicated way. I talked with Hans Wallnhäuser about the concrete areas in which I wanted to work, and these were agreed by CRAN Ghana. I wanted to become acquainted with the work in the head office and to assist in the micro-credit program - this seemed to be useful as in my studies I had specialised in adult education and economics. After the last exams in March I went off. Previously, Ghana had been a country as unknown and strange to me as any other country in the world - it was my very first travel to a developing country you know.

Though I had been looking forward to my travel with good expectations, and though I would assess myself as being physically and mentally rather robust, particularly the first time was not so easy for me. I was not staying as a guest at CRAN but as a part of the staff for the next six months. In addition to all the new conditions in an African developing country, the situation was made more difficult by the fact that, for the time being, the office did not seem to offer as many working opportunities for me as I expected. One reason may be that at that time, the micro credit - program experienced considerable restructuring measures. On the other hand, I could feel free to engage myself in everything I was interested in. At first, I learned to know any project around Cape Coast and was looking for suitable working areas.

I found my actual field of activity in the cooperation with Natalie Perkins, the CUSO-worker from Canada. For a time of two years, she was responsible for fundraising and for coordinating the small projects of CRAN. She was happy about a helping hand. As a first task she instructed me to organise small school libraries for the CRAN schools in Abakam and Shama-Kedyi and for the Sanka kindergarten. I catalogued 350 books, distributed them and overhanded them to the schoolmasters, together with suitable bookshelves. I also explained how to handle such a library. We hope that in February/ March of 2002, a similar book collection campaign can be organised, and to win donors for yearly book donations so that the libraries would successively grow. Apart from many smaller tasks Natalie delegated to me, the Sanka kindergarten became my "own" project. Since a longer time donations from Germany had come in, but had not been distributed yet. At that point of time, the kindergarten building was in a very bad condition; neither furniture nor teaching or playing material did exist, and



the children went there in ragged clothes. I learned how to write a project application, established contacts to further donors in Ghana, and together with Natalie I planned and organised the renovation of the building and the construction works in Sanka. I enjoyed this work very much. The challenges, the strengthening of the contacts to the village people and the task to promote their participation, became a big part of my valuable experiences in Ghana. Today, the building in Sanka is renovated and adjusted to children's needs. Furthermore, a cookies' manufacturer from Accra agreed to donate 60 school uniforms for the children in Sanka.

I was very impressed by the commitment with which several members of CRAN's staff are doing their work in the office. Even though they work overtime, many of them, especially Teye and Michael, supported me with helpful advice in carrying out my tasks. Not at least, the joint daily morning prayers in the office contributed very much to my experiences with God in that time.

Even though my activities at CRAN Ghana ultimately did not have too much to do with the original agreements, those six months were a very valuable time for me. All in all, I was able to make innumerable good and instructive experiences and was confirmed in my target to become a professional development aid worker. In spite of some difficulties, I spent a blessed time in Ghana that has changed me very much. Similar to many who lived in a development country for some time, I am looking at many things in our society from a new perspective now.

*Heike Braeuer*



Photo: In Sanka, official opening ceremony for the new water pipe.