



VPWA

VOLUNTEER PARTNERSHIPS FOR WEST AFRICA



***2011
Annual
Report***

Contact us

www.vpwa.org

Telephone:

233 30 2937040

233 24 3340112

Fax:

233 30 2928245

Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa
P. O. Box OF 75
Ofankor-Accra
Ghana

VPWA Head Office
House No. 6 Hotel Junction
Dokua Royal
Pokuase Ridge
Accra, Ghana

VPWA Eastern Regional Office
No. PLT 2&3, BLK V
Darmang Anhuntem
Nsawam-E/R, Ghana

VPWA Operational Office
and Microfinance Centre
House No. 3
Amasaman Zonal Council
Office Complex
Amasaman- Accra, Ghana



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Our Mission and Objectives

Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa (VPWA) serves underprivileged communities in Ghana. With a special emphasis on young people and disadvantaged groups, we offer solution oriented advice and engagement to lift up the peoples of West Africa. Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa works to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) initiated by the United Nations. VPWA strives to:

- Reduce human poverty
- Foster democratic governance
- Promote sustainable education and reduce illiteracy
- Advocate for green energy and environmental policies
- Strengthen resources to prevent and respond to crises
- Fight devastating diseases like HIV/AIDS and Malaria

Through experiential learning, training and cultural exchange VPWA empowers and encourages agents of pro-active change within local communities.

Chief of Darmang village visits VPWA site



Volunteers working at the VPWA head office



A Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

2011 was an exciting and productive year at VPWA, and it couldn't have happened without our hard working board members, staff, individual and corporate donors, and especially the volunteers who have supported the organization in so many ways. Together we have demonstrated again and again the power and strength of the human spirit.

This past year will be remembered for the very real impact VPWA had on communities across Ghana. None of this would have been accomplished without the amazing and hardworking individuals from around the world who volunteered on our projects. Their contribution was acknowledged in 2011 by the United Nations, which recognized VPWA, and our volunteer Yolanta Cwick from Canada, as one of nine organizations to be honoured on World Volunteer Day. This marks the second year in a row that VPWA has received a volunteering award from the UN (Rui Oliveira, a VPWA online volunteer from Portugal, was recognized in 2010), and reaffirms our commitment to the power of volunteerism.

At the start of 2011, VPWA moved into a modern office space. The new office has allowed us to host staff and volunteers from Ghana and a variety of other countries who come here to work on our diverse development projects. Whether it is developing new partnerships as part of our Green Ghana Initiative, expanding our Micro-financing programs, or continuing our health and education service programs, VPWA continues to work to improve the health and well being of children, youth and adults throughout Ghana and Africa.

As we move into 2012, I want to thank God for our successes, and on behalf of the Board of Directors, I present this outline of our activities for the year 2011.

All the best,

Hayford Siaw, VPWA Executive Director

Who We Are

Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa was founded in 2007 as a volunteer-driven development organization. Volunteers contribute labour and expertise to a wide variety of VPWA projects including the VPWA Children and Youth Centre, the Harmony Kids Camp, and the Green Ghana Initiative. VPWA has a number of ongoing programs, and volunteers have provided crucial support to the Micro-financing

New Partnerships in 2011

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (Africa)
Architecture Sans Frontieres (United Kingdom)
Earth Day Network (USA)
Invest Africa (USA)
Green Crusader (Canada)
Canadian Carbon Offsetters Association (Canada)
Dispy International (Netherlands)
Alphaction (France)
Rev. C. F. Johnston Foundation (Canada)

programs as well as the Deworm Ghana initiative.

VPWA funded more than half of its 2011 activities with individual donations and small-scale fundraising events.

At the end of the year, with a growing number of new projects, VPWA's Board of Directors approved plans to develop new funding opportunities through external grant applications.

VPWA was officially incorporated as a Limited Guarantee Company in 2008 with Registration number G-24, 222 by the Registrar General; as a Charity by the Social Welfare Department with number DSW/3932; and as a tax exempt company by the Internal Revenue Service with number ACLC 114251 under category 9191.

VPWA Children and Youth Centre

In March 2011, VPWA embarked on a fundraising campaign led by its volunteer Andy Rosenhek. The campaign successfully raised \$31,000 in two weeks. Total funds reaching VPWA in local currency was ₵46,433.61. Supported by Architects and Engineers from Australia and Spain respectively, construction started on the VPWA Children & Youth Centre in the eastern region of Ghana.

The project is divided into two phases. The first phase is the Children's Centre, which we expect to be completed in March of 2012. VPWA aims to provide comprehensive care from shelter and education, to health services and unconditional love to orphans and the destitute in Ghana's eastern region. The project continues to meet budget targets, with funds spent as of the end of 2011 at ₵84,990.41 out of a total first-phase construction budget projected at ₵120,500. We expect construction to be completed in March 2012.

The second phase of construction will be a vibrant and exciting Youth Centre. The centre will serve youth who are driven by entrepreneurial creativity and innovation. At the centre, VPWA will provide life-skills training, business training, ICT training, and general education. VPWA expects to host a number of workshops for youth in what will be the only institution in the region focused on the needs of young men and women. With a budget estimated at ₵167,700, VPWA will be seeking grants and begin to organize fundraising events in order to complete construction. Our target is to have the centre open by mid 2013.

The VPWA Children's Centre takes shape below, great work!



VPWA Children's Centre Intake Assessment

While construction continues on the VPWA Children's Centre, VPWA volunteers Julia and Scott Roberts led a two-week children's nutritional assessment in December 2011. Since July 2010, VPWA has interviewed over 200 destitute and/or orphaned children in Ghana's eastern region to be the first residents of the new Centre. Based on psycho-social and socio-economic criteria, 10 children were finally selected for a current and comprehensive nutritional and health evaluation.



Julia Roberts with community children

Scott Roberts interviews and assesses children



Together with Simon Bobby, director of the Amanase Health Centre, Scott and Julia conducted physical assessments and interviewed the children and their caretakers on their eating habits in order to find any signs of nutrient deficiencies or serious malnutrition.

Following the assessments, a nutrition optimization plan was developed for each child. VPWA recognizes that safety, shelter, sanitation, and nutrition are keys to a child's good health. As the children move into the Children's Centre, and with the continued support of our volunteers, we expect them thrive in a nurturing environment and grow up to lead healthy lives.

Harmony Kids Club

In Ghana, support and care for children and young people with special needs is virtually non-existent. In many cases, children living with Down syndrome, autism, and related mental health issues face discrimination and maltreatment. Often these children do not attend school and lack support from the general community.

In 2011 VPWA organised its first holiday club for children and teenagers with learning difficulties and those who live with a variety of neurological



Harmony Kids Club, 2011

conditions. The Harmony Kids Club aims to provide these children with an opportunity for basic learning, socializing, and exposure to English in an environment appropriate to their needs, all while providing respite care for parents and caregivers.

Experienced VPWA volunteers with an interest in education and mental health successfully implemented the project, and raised awareness and acceptance for special needs children in the community.

Deworm Ghana 2011



Students at a Deworm Ghana event

Around the world, worm infections impact the health of over two billion people. The parasites cause a variety of ailments including fevers, vomiting, diarrhea, bloody stools, fatigue, swollen belly, and undermine the physical and mental development children. VPWA recognizes that children living in developing countries have a high risk of contracting worms, and in 2011 launched its Deworm Ghana project.

From July 12—21, 2011, thirteen VPWA volunteers from Ghana, the United Kingdom and the United States administered anti-worm medication to children at schools throughout Ghana's Akuapim South Municipal District. During the program, VPWA successfully treated over 3,900 children between the ages of 5 to 18.

Also, VPWA recognizes the importance of education to effect long-term health solutions and the volunteers used class time to talk to students about the importance of deworming, how to recognize the symptoms of worm infection, and how to prevent future infection.

Whenever possible, VPWA volunteers also met with parents to discuss health problems arising from chronic worm infection and the benefits of regular deworming. After a presentation, followed by question and answer sessions, parents also learned the importance of teaching and enforcing good hygiene practices to their children to ensure continued good health.



Deworm Ghana in action

The Deworm Ghana Program in 2011 was a great success. We are now looking for volunteers to participate in the program from July 6th—July 19th, 2012.

Earth Day 2011

VPWA's Green Ghana Initiative and the Earth Day Network, an international organization based in the United States, marked a "Billion Acts of Green," the theme for Earth Day on the 22nd of April 2011.

The campaign called on peoples of all nationalities to commit to help reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability. To help the Earth Day Network reach its goal of one billion acts of environmental service around the world, VPWA volunteers and members of the Ashalaja community planted over 20,000 Moringa tree seedlings valued at ₵100,000 to reclaim degraded land space.

The degradation of arable land in the Ga South Municipality has led to the loss of farms and employment opportunities for the region's youth, who often leave the region in search of jobs in urban areas. VPWA has high hopes that its tree-planting efforts will have both an environmental and economic impact, and are working to develop more projects to highlight the benefits of this versatile plant.



VPWA Green Ghana volunteers and community members from Ashalaja

VPWA Moringa trees ready for planting

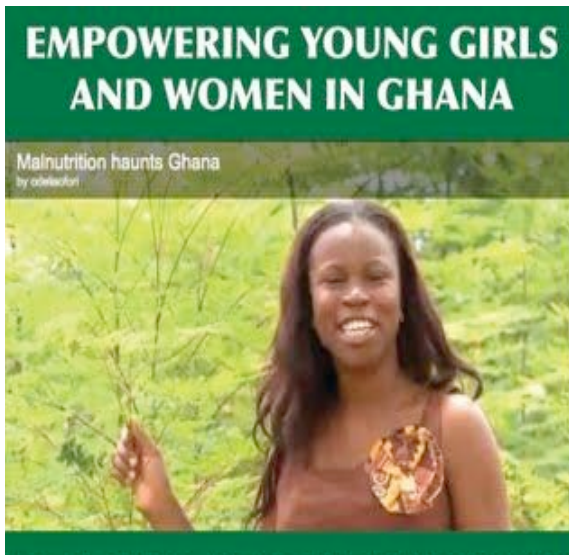


Degraded land area in Ashalaja



VPWA Moringa Tree Projects

VPWA's Odelia Ofori's Moringa Tree Development Plan



*Odelia Ofori in her video
for Project INSPIRE*

The environmental and economic value of Moringa trees cannot be overstated. In 2011, VPWA celebrated Earth Day by planting Moringa trees to reclaim degraded wasteland. In 2012, VPWA plans to build sustainable nurseries, develop a variety of Moringa products, and expand our Moringa tree outreach efforts.

VPWA is also excited to announce that a young woman from Ghana, Odelia Ofori was chosen as one of 10 finalists with a chance to win a \$25,000

(USD) grant from the Singapore National Committee for UN Women and Mastercard as part of Project INSPIRE, a life-changing project to empower disadvantaged women or girls in Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East and Africa.

Odelia is an associate of VPWA's Green Ghana Initiative and she flew to Singapore in August 2011 to deliver her presentation. Her Moringa Project was the only proposal from Africa, and aimed to address issues like malnutrition, poverty and climate change. Her goal is to build a Moringa processing plant (paying wages to women working at the plant), all while empowering 20 women farmers in Ghana to plant 16,000 Moringa seedlings to ensure a steady supply of this hardy and nutritious tree. Processed Moringa from the factory would provide nutritional supplements to schools and clinics at low-cost, while any profit would be reinvested to encourage more women to plant even more trees.

Moringa Tree Recipe Book

Through its Green Ghana Initiative, VPWA makes every effort to protect the environment and use locally available, low-cost resources to alleviate problems of poverty and malnutrition. In 2011 VPWA worked to encourage local communities in the eastern region of Ghana and those in the greater Accra area to take advantage of the many benefits of the Moringa tree (*Moringa Oleifera*).

As part of our Moringa tree initiative VPWA volunteers wrote a Moringa Recipe booklet to provide nutritional recommendations and sample recipes for women, including pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, infants, and young children. The booklet is a simple guide that can be used by health professionals and nutrition experts for cooking demonstrations, group discussions, and dietary counselling. It offers an overview of malnutrition and provides information on how to include Moringa products in the diet. There is guidance on food preparation and sample recipes showing the use of dried Moringa leaf powder. The recipes are adapted from local food traditions and take into account seasonal availability of key ingredients.

Moringa leaf is classified as a locally produced dark green leafy vegetable. Fresh Moringa leaves can be cleaned and added to meals, or they can be dried and milled for long-term storage. The dried powder provides a variety of nutrients and is a perfect supplement to a staple-based diet.



Marvellous Moringa leaves



Moringa leaf powder

VPWA and Architecture Sans Frontieres International Workshop

VPWA, in partnership with Architecture Sans Frontieres (ASF), organized an international workshop over two weeks in September 2011. The “Global Vs Local” workshop brought together architects, environment professionals, and post-graduate and Master’s degree students interested in sustainable development.



The completed seed bank

Together, we explored how a rapidly developing country like Ghana is increasingly turning its back on local building methods in favour of western techniques. While many believe this is essential to a modern, globalized society, VPWA believes it is important to assess both the costs and benefits of non-native building methods.

The concentrated two-week workshop compared traditional and contemporary construction in Ghana, and considered the social, economic, and environmental impact of changing building practices. The outcome of the workshop was a four-day hands-on design and construction practicum. Participants synthesized local and global visions for a sustainable future, and built a seed bank for VPWA’s Green Ghana Initiative.

Participants and VPWA’s Hayford Siaw work on the seed bank



International Symposium

Strategies for Sustainability in the Face of Rapid Development

On the 8th of September 2011, with funding support from UN Habitat and as part of the international “Global versus Local” workshop, sponsored by VPWA and Architecture Sans Frontieres, a symposium was held at the Novotel Hotel in Accra. *Strategies for Sustainability in the Face of Rapid Development* brought together thirteen speakers from across Ghana to speak on diverse themes related to sustainable development.



Participants at the Symposium

The many attendees and participants listened to VPWA Executive Director Hayford Siaw speak on creating sustainable economic livelihoods in the face of rapid development in Ghana. Other speakers included representatives from UN Habitat, Habitat for Humanity, the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan, and ASF.

Development Support for Amanase Health Centre

VPWA is excited to have established a productive partnership with the Amanase Health Centre. The clinic sees approximately 9,000 patients annually. Responding to the huge demand for healthcare services, VPWA, in collaboration with a community partner organization, submitted a grant proposal to the Australian High Commission. In February 2011, we were awarded a \$15,000 (AUD) for the construction of a patient's ward with fully equipped beds at the Amanase Health Centre. The facility was completed and opened in September 2011. Now, the clinic can admit 12 patients at a time and the new ward provides convenient working space for healthcare professionals.

Additionally, in April 2011, VPWA arranged to donate a badly needed refrigerator to the Health Centre. In the past, all perishable vaccinations were kept at a facility nearly 10km away. Now, with VPWA's help, the clinic can properly store vaccines and medical supplies and will be able to provide timely healthcare for the region's men, women and children.



Executive Director Hayford Siaw of VPWA with the Amanase Health Centre's staff



VPWA Executive Director Hayford Siaw with Mrs. Esther Asanga, the head of the Amanase Health Centre, and the Chairman of Amanase Health Committee

Health Insurance Program

VPWA firmly believes in social investment and we actively participate in the life of our communities. For three years we have provided a health insurance package for people with severe physical challenges. Our beneficiaries include orphans, the blind, the elderly, the physically disadvantaged, and even the caregivers of peoples in need.

In 2011, VPWA renewed its health insurance package for 120 individuals. VPWA's insurance fund aims to help the marginalised and poor who are unable to pay for health services. Now, beneficiaries have access to mainstream clinics and hospitals, where care is provided absolutely free charge.



Beneficiaries receive their insurance cards from VPWA Executive Director, Hayford Siaw

VPWA Means Business: Micro-finance, Micro-leasing and Micro-insurance Programs

Since 2009, VPWA has operated an ongoing micro-finance program in the Ga West Municipal District of the Greater Accra region. To date, over 60 women have taken advantage of the program, which provides funding and business training to entrepreneurs wanting to start or expand their micro-businesses.

Mrs. Addo, now running her seamstress business with equipment funded by VPWA



VPWA selects eligible beneficiaries based on a variety of economic and social criteria.

Our micro-finance project uses a Group Lending Methodology, which requires beneficiaries to form a 'solidarity group' with a maximum of four people. The group then joins other groups to form a centre (with a maximum of 5 groups). Together, the group members guarantee each other's loans.

Volunteer credit officers provide all beneficiaries with business training before they receive their first loan. Once approved, the borrowers repay the loan to the VPWA Micro-finance Centre on a weekly basis over a four-month period. The groups are only able to receive new credit when every member of the group has fully paid back their outstanding debt.

In 2011, in an effort to support even greater numbers of small business entrepreneurs, VPWA introduced a program based on micro-leasing. Currently running as a pilot project, micro-leasing shows great potential to help micro-business owners increase production and improve efficiency. In this program, VPWA buys equipment for a prospective beneficiary and over time the business owner repays VPWA the cost of the item plus a small interest fee.

Mrs. Grace Laar: A VPWA Success Story

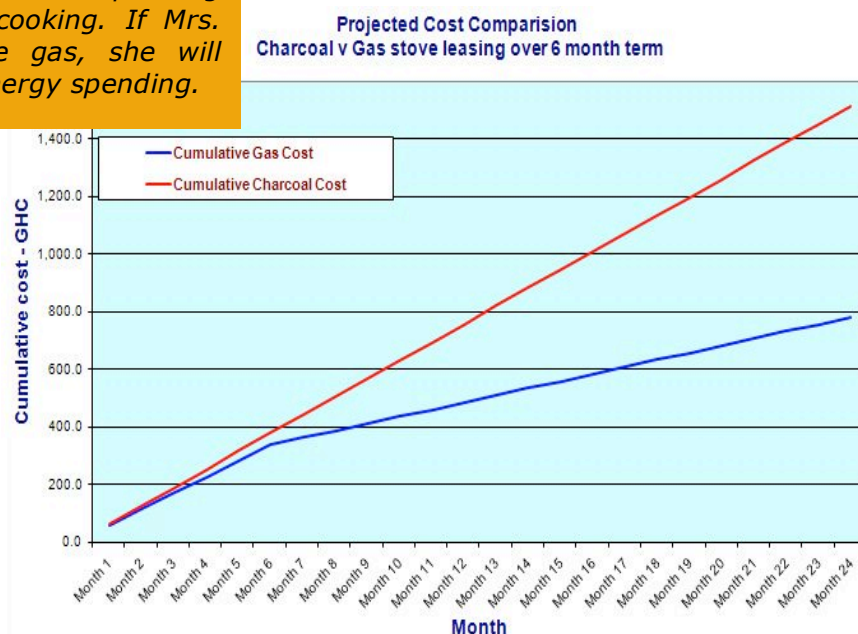
Mrs. Laar receiving her gas cylinder and stove from VPWA



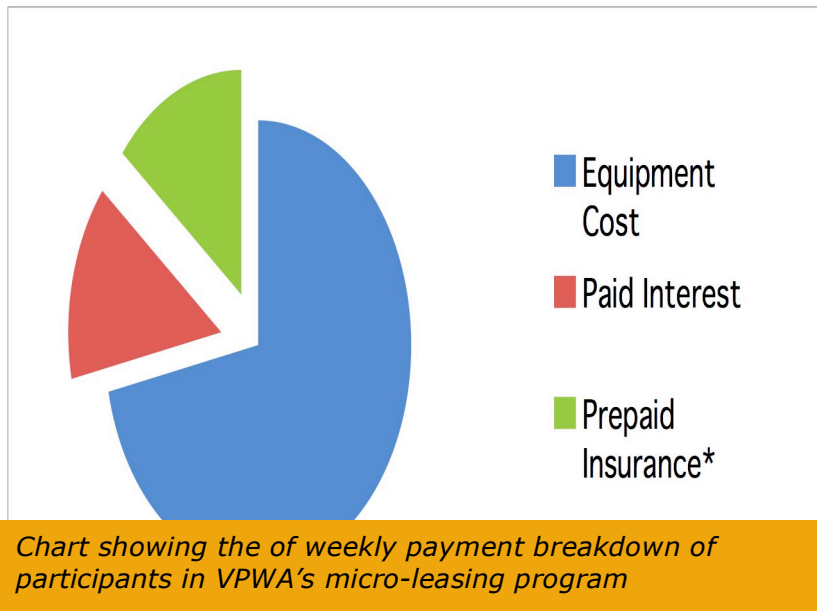
In 2011, Mrs. Grace Laar, from Amasaman, Ghana received a micro-lease from VPWA in order to purchase a gas cylinder and a stove for her roadside restaurant business. Previously, Mrs. Laar spent roughly 34 GHC per week to cook and heat her food items over charcoal. Now, she spends only 20 GHC per week using gas. The extra 14 GHC in savings has allowed her to expand her menu, spend more on her family, and start a long-term savings account.

Mrs. Laar has been very satisfied with her decision to change to gas, saying that cooking with gas is much more efficient than with charcoal. VPWA is excited to sponsor micro-businesses throughout Ghana. Not only are we having a positive impact on women like Grace Laar, who are able to turn their talents into a sustainable business, but also Mrs. Laar's switch from charcoal to gas measurably reduces pollution and has an impact on climate change.

This chart reflects Mrs. Laar's spending on gas and charcoal cooking. If Mrs. Laar continues to use gas, she will greatly decrease her energy spending.



Mrs. Laar is one of two women who have taken advantage of VPWA's micro-leasing program in 2011. One of the key features of the program is an initial micro-insurance payment to cover the reimbursement costs in the unlikely event of equipment failure. This is very much like a VPWA warranty program, with a major difference: at the end of the repayment period, the beneficiary can choose to cash out the micro-insurance payments and apply the money to a savings account.



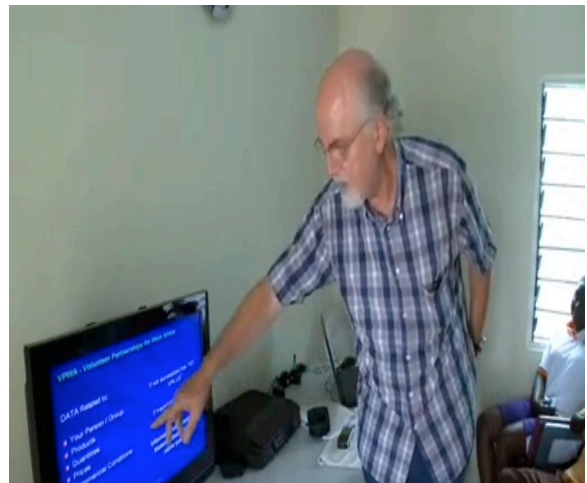
As our business programs expand in the future, VPWA hopes to provide technical support to other organizations that want to follow a micro-leasing and micro-business development model.

ICT Centre and Workshop in Darmang Anhuntem

Information and communications technologies (ICT) are a key element to future development in Ghana. VPWA is planning a low cost ICT Training Centre in Darmang Anhuntem as part of an effort to bring accessible technology training to communities throughout Ghana. Our goal is to provide innovative training and advanced computer skills for low-income groups in rural areas. The new ICT Centre will be a sustainable model for a future countrywide initiative.

Volunteer Rui Macdonald has worked with VPWA for over two years on ICT projects. In 2011 VPWA was excited to welcome him to Ghana for a series of workshops over two weeks on the benefits of information and communication technologies. The youthful participants, from communities in a rural region of eastern Ghana, learned of the importance of these technologies and their potential impact on their daily lives. VPWA remains grateful to Rui Macdonald and other volunteers for their efforts to launch this important project.

Rui Macdonald presents at the ICT workshop to an eager audience



In 2011, our research team conducted interviews with government agencies, local women's rights NGOs, and everyday Ghanaians. These interviews helped establish a broad picture of domestic violence in Ghana. Women who have experienced abuse made invaluable contributions to the team's research and VPWA will incorporate their suggestions into the project's design. Gender based violence is illegal and unacceptable. VPWA is committed to providing support for women in Ghana and looks forward to working on this new project.



Street Library Project

Outside of Ghana's capital of Accra, libraries are scarce and books are rare. In fact, the literacy rate for the country is an unacceptable 58%.

In 2011 VPWA collaborated with the French association Alphaction to launch a two-week Street Library project to raise literacy awareness and promote reading in Ghana's rural communities

Our goal is to help more children and the youth discover the pleasures and rewards of reading. This past year over 300 children, some for the first time, had access to nearly 200 books donated to the VPWA library.



Children reading at the VPWA Street Library



Local children with a Street Library staff member Romona Kundt from Romania

The VPWA Street Library is designed to be completely mobile, moving from village to village to reach people with limited access to reading resources. In each village VPWA volunteers pitch a large tent, lay carpets on the floor and display our collection of books for local children and youth to use. At the library, VPWA staff members read out loud and provide a number of literacy programs.

In 2012, VPWA is looking for volunteers to develop and expand the Street Library project to bring books, reading programs, and literacy services to rural communities throughout Ghana.

Malaria Report and Future Programs

In 2011, VPWA published its landmark malaria report, *Knowledge, Treatment and Prevention of Malaria in Rural Ghana: A Case Study of Rural Damang*. Malaria mortality and illness impact all groups in Ghana, and VPWA's thorough analysis of the disease in Damang points the way for future government and NGO action. The VPWA report recommends:

- ❖ The government of Ghana should budget more financial support for malaria research instead of relying on external actors.
- ❖ The government of Ghana needs to review current malaria prevention strategies. Resources must be allocated efficiently to ensure effective implementation of malaria interventions.
- ❖ Better public education on the cause, symptoms, treatment and prevention of malaria is needed.

- ❖ Every citizen of Ghana should have the right to free public healthcare, including qualified malaria care within reach of every patient.
- ❖ Implement higher training standards and tighter service controls for pharmacists.
- ❖ The danger of parasite resistance should be taken seriously with mandatory RDTs both at health clinics and chemists.
- ❖ Improve access to basic malaria prevention methods such as repellents and sprays for rural communities are needed.
- ❖ Further research into the use of aerial spraying must be conducted.

VPWA's report provides a roadmap to improve access to healthcare and malaria treatment facilities. There is no doubt we need to continue our research on the impact of malaria on the Ghanaian population and implement education programs so people can recognize the signs and symptoms of malarial infection. In 2012, with the help of its volunteers, VPWA intends to further develop its malaria prevention programs.

Sanitation Project for Amasaman

VPWA is responding to a crisis in the Amasaman Township where one of the three sanitation blocks has collapsed. Many homes in the area do not have toilets and these facilities are essential to preserve clean water and prevent the spread of disease. Even before the collapse, these public toilets were overstretched. VPWA is raising funds to rebuild and improve the collapsed sanitation block.

VPWA Partners and Supporters

VPWA programs succeed because of volunteers, individual donors, business sponsors, and the global community of nonprofit organizations, all of whom give their time and resources. Many thanks!

Our Collaborative Partners

United Nations Global Compact
Canadian Carbon Offsetters Association (CACOFA)
SEND Ghana
Airwolf Research Institute
NGO News Africa
Alphaction
Alliance for African Women Initiative
United Ways Ghana
Coalition for International Criminal Court Office
International Peace Commission
World Toilet Organization
Shape Lives Foundation
Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE)
Commission on Human Rights & Administrative Justice (CHRAJ)
Ghana Health Service
GA West Municipal Assembly
Amanase Health Centre

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