

## Christmas Party 2015

We do not have the resources to hold a party every year but we did manage to hold a wonderful party in the small village of Abotsia for 43 delighted children.

Every child received plenty of food and drink and there was much dancing and singing. The photo show the children washing their hands before we would feed them. The teacher, Innocent, was visiting us from our sister charity in Tema and kept the children entertained for hours with his enthusiastic style of song and dance.



### CHRISTMAS CARDS 2015

As this newsletter is coming to you around Christmas time, it is timely for me to ask you to remember your sponsored child. We will be distributing the cards in January 2015 when school resumes following the break. Please try to send a Christmas card again this year. It will probably be the only one the family receives and by putting a £5 note in with the card, you really help the entire family and the local economy. Please address and post your cards as follows anytime before 5 January. We endeavour to photograph every child receiving their cards and gift.

(Name of Child)  
 (Name of School)  
 TEABAG  
 Unit 1, Lyndon Yard  
 Riverside Road  
 London SW17 0BA

### DONATIONS FORM

Regular donors, under the educational sponsorship scheme, will be sent their annual invitation to renew with this newsletter. As this newsletter is read by other people, this form is included to attract new sponsors and to encourage general donations towards the work of TEABAG. Please make your cheques payable to "TEABAG"

I would like to sponsor the education of a school child in Ghana for a year (minimum donation £15 please) £ \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if you would prefer a BOY or a GIRL

I enclose a donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_ to be used for other TEABAG projects.

Name: .....Tel: .....

Address: .....

.....Post code: .....

Email address: .....



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### Water Bore Hole Project

Our big project this year is to supply a very much needed pure water supply to the village of Mankoadze. This system is designed to supply perfect drinking water both to the TEABAG Vocational College and to the residents of the village.

Currently, most of the water used in the village comes from open muddy ponds, shared with the animals, and is usually a dirty muddy colour. The health risks are pretty obvious. There is a piped water supply but this does not work most of the time, the water is not treated and it costs more than the villagers can afford.

Collecting the water is another job mostly left to the women and children of the community and consumes much of

their time. I am a big guy and I find it very difficult to carry these large bowls of water for any distance - but then I have never mastered the art of head carrying!

This is a huge financial project for TEABAG to tackle on its own and we have enlisted the support of the Rotary Club of Tooting and have applied for more help from Rotary In London. We still need to raise as much money as we can in the hope that it can be match funded by the Rotary International movement. The local Rotary Club in Ghana, the Rotary Club of Apam, will help to oversee the project and give local advice. Please consider any opportunities that you may have to raise a little towards this project in your own circles, churches, clubs and amongst your friends. The specifications of the system are as follows:

#### Project Summary:

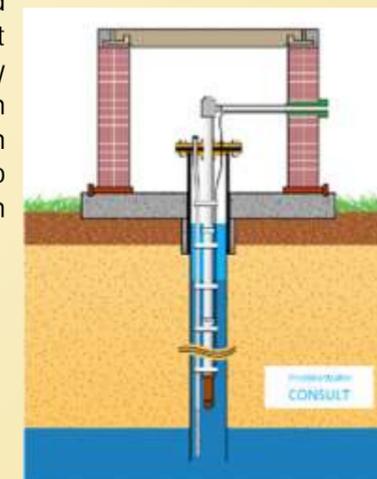
The Mankoadze Water Project is comprehensive 'guaranteed water' project where underground water(untreated) is



tapped and transported to a first storage point and then forwarded to a solid reverse osmosis treatment plant which processes the water to a standard quality after the manner of W.H.O. The treated water is then transported through banks of cartridge filters into an overhead tank. From here, the water is distributed to the school and community access point for collection and consumption.

The project would have the following components:

1. Automated Panel
2. Fully-constructed Borehole water source:
3. 2-Point Storage Tanks
4. Tank stand with electrical circuitry cubicle
5. Reverse Osmosis Treatment Plant
6. Access Point



## Dear Supporters

It has been a hectic and successful year for TEABAG thanks to the support of so many people. Our big projects have been to update and re-equip our Vocational College facilities and seeing Ebenezer through a difficult and life-saving operation. We have kept over 200 children attending school and continued educating nearly 200 young adults at our college, not just in their chosen vocational subject but also in English, Maths and other academic subjects.

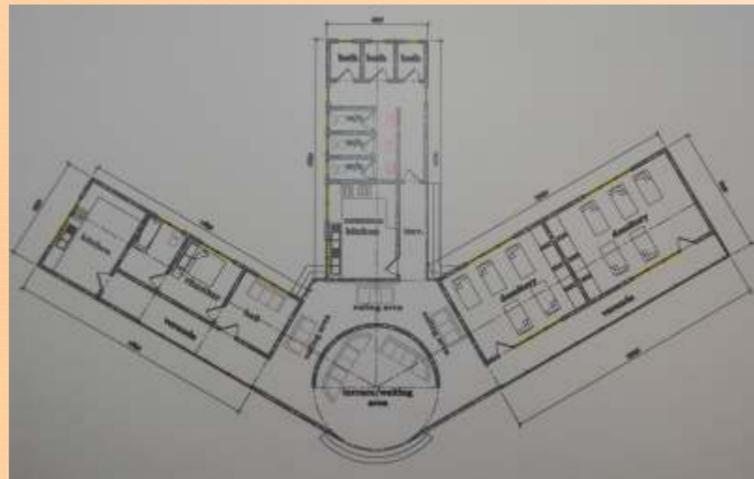
Our big projects for 2016 include the building of the first stage of a hostel building and a very exciting project to install a bore-hole and water purification plant to supply clean drinking water to a village.

Our new Treasurer, Mr Chris Moller, has recently completed the mountain of paperwork to get our charity registered with HMRC (quite a different process to registering with the Charity Commissioners) so that we can now claim Gift Aid on qualifying donations. If you are a tax payer, we really do need you to sign a Gift Aid form for us.

This year, quite a number of the sponsored school-children have left school, some going on to enrol in our college and other moving to senior secondary school away from our villages. Many thanks to the sponsors of these children who have helped to give them a better chance in life and I would also like to express my appreciation to those sponsors who have agreed to sponsor another child in place of those who have finished their schooling.

As a small charity, we do desperately need your continuing support and we, the Trustees, send our sincere thanks to our loyal supporters.

Roger Gillman  
Chair of the Board of Trustees  
07801 866 723  
rogergreyhair@hotmail.com



### New Hostel Building

The plans above show the design for our new hostel building at the college. This is the first stage of an ambitious project aimed at providing good accommodation for all of our resident students. We will be casting the building blocks and constructing the hostel ourselves - so we can get a lot achieved for a relatively modest budget. We hope to start digging foundations in January 2016.

### Pencil Case Project 2015

Stuart Payne and Jenny Tolmie ran the project again this year. Around 500 loaded pencil cases were carried to Ghana in their suitcases and distributed to children around our villages.

Many UK schoolchildren were involved in preparing for the project and our thanks go out to: Jenny, Michael, Luke, Neil, Tina, Jessica, Kacey, Hermione, Olivia, Amy, Bronwyn, Annie, Jacob - plus to: Acorn Office Solutions, GSM Accountants, The Lyceum Theatre and Church House Education Division.



## Vivienne King and her trip to Ghana



During a meeting of the charity's Trustees, we were saying that our work in Ghana would really benefit from a capable visitor from the UK spending an extended period in the villages to progress several projects that were overdue for attention. Almost immediately, a volunteer stepped forward: Vivienne King, a recently retired lady from Battersea. Entirely at her own expense, Vivienne spent six weeks in Ghana and achieved all the jobs we allocated to her and a whole lot more in addition. Vivienne managed with to survive her time in the village without running water and with little electricity supply

The major part of her work was to re-equip our college, after five years of operation; we really needed to upgrade our facilities and equipment. We managed to organise a budget of £5,000 which included money for building work, equipment for every department, text books and gifts for the local schools.

Vivienne was also involved in some of Ebenezer's trips to the hospitals in Accra for scans and blood tests which she financed herself.

Here are some of the highlights of Vivienne's report to the Trustees:

Day 2 and 3 was spent in Accra markets after meeting Castro and Thomas. It was blisteringly hot (they reckoned 40 degrees) and it was a real experience going from place to place to buy, (here is a sample) over these next two days:

5 calor gas canisters, large 'fridge, cooker, 3 ovens, industrial sewing machine, industrial iron, photocopier, scanner, TONS of electrical wires/sockets/plugs etc etc. All of it had to be loaded on to Castro's truck, and secured, to get it back to Gillman and Abbey, and then finally on to Mankoadze (one large, closed lorry was hired in order to transport everything in one go the following day). The shopping continued over the 5 weeks I was in Ghana.

Tom's hut was filthy and needed a massive clean/scrub before we could equip it - I jumped out of my skin whilst going to clean the loo when a frog leaped out of it up towards me!!). Castro and I bought wood, nails, sheeting, cement, iron rods and a multitude of other building materials.

The GIRLS' ACCOMMODATION is dire. VERY cramped VERY hot, urgently needs improvement. (Did not see the Boys' hostel). We visited the School at Abotsia in order to distribute art and drawing materials. They have a well and water pump which Mankoadze doesn't have! The 'dangerous wall' had been repaired by the time I left (Fashion Dept). The College now keeps Registers for Teachers' Attendance and Students' attendance.

We spent around 23,000 CEDIS during the time I was there; this should really encourage all TEABAG staff and students that improvements are happening (still more to go!).



I felt my time at TEABAG was productive, and I understand, and know a great deal more about the charity now! I will follow future developments with great interest, and hope to return in the not too distant future....I guess other Trustees will be there to follow up within a few months..



## TEABAG Vocational College

The college has held two big events this year. The first was the wonderful graduation ceremony held in March which included a fashion display, dancing, marching by the cadet force and catering for all the visitors.

The college also held an open day and exhibition during the village's annual festival in March. This gave the students an excellent opportunity to show their progress to the village elders and to the many visitors to the village that gather during festival time.



We now have excellent teachers in all departments who are assisted this year by three National Service personnel.

Following Vivienne's extended visit, we now have improved management and accountancy systems in place to ensure the smooth running of the administration of the facility. Vivienne was also instrumental in updating each department with text books, improved buildings and new equipment. Our college is now amongst the very best in the country and there is a wonderful atmosphere of enthusiastic learning throughout the establishment.



## Magic Blankets

I reported quite fully in the previous issue of the newsletter concerning the shawls and blankets made by the Salvation Army at Upper Norwood. We are still receiving the blankets from Upper Norwood and some more from the Inner Wheel Club of Frien Barnet and Whetstone. However, a further story about the blankets has arisen during the year.

Our usual policy is to visit the villages and give the blankets to mothers with newly born babies. This has been a very interesting task for our visitors from the UK as it gets them right into the homes and communities, sometimes giving them an opportunity to help impoverished families in others way and to spot health issues.

However, there was one box of these hand-knitted blankets left undistributed from our visit in January and I left instructions for them to be given to the mid-wife. Later in the year a story reached me that really sounds quite amazing:

Mary, the Mid-wife, is highly trained and very capable but she was facing the huge problem that the mothers were attending the pre-natal health checks at the birthing clinic but choosing to give birth at home – often accompanied by the traditional (witch) attendant. This was resulting in many problems that could easily have been avoided if they had gone to the clinic to give birth. Certainly babies were lost and in some cases the mothers also lost their lives. Then Mary started to give out the blankets only to mothers who actually gave birth at the clinic and the news quickly spread around the villages. Birthing numbers immediately went up from 2 births in the clinic a month to an amazing 18 per month. I think that the ladies at the Salvation Army must be stitching some special magic into those blankets



## Can You Help With our Shipping Problem?

TEABAG gratefully receives many donated items that we ship to Ghana and distribute around the villages. Until recently, we were lucky enough to get free space in a commercial container leaving from London – we often took up a third of the space so it was wonderful for us. However, that friendly company is no longer sending goods to Ghana and we have to find a new way to get our items there.

It is quite amazing how much we have been able to send to Ghana: children's clothes, bicycles, toys, thousands of children's books, equipment for our college, furniture, decorating supplies, cooking implements, football boots, school shoes, sewing machines and the blankets mentioned above.



Under the rules of running a charity, when we ask you to donate money to educate a child, we must use that money only for the purpose and the individual for which it was given, likewise with grants that have been given to us for various building and development projects. We do receive some general funds from our supporters and we spend this money very carefully on community projects and health issues. We have never spent any donated funds on administration, travelling or accommodation for the volunteer workers that travel to Ghana to help us with our work. The problem is that we simply do not have the funds available to send the next shipment of donate items to Ghana. Somehow, to me, it sounds an uninteresting cause to ask people to donate to but I can assure you that every item we ship really is appreciated by those in receipt of the gifts from England. The children's books are desperately needed by the schools, the clothes all go to good use and no item is ever wasted – even the cardboard boxes are reused. We need to raise about £500 this year to clear the warehouse, so please consider adding that little bit extra to help us to help so many other people. Please contact me if you would like to help.



## The Story of Ebenezer Otabil

As so many of our supporters have shown such great concern for Ebenezer, I thought it worthwhile to print his full story in this issue. It has been a difficult project for our small charity and we had no idea how much work would be involved when we started this journey. However, it has been a wonder privilege to help this little boy through the journey to straighten his neck and have the tumour removed. If we had never taken him on and given our help to him, the tumour would have never been diagnosed and it is unlikely that he would have survived. I guess the two most wonderful factors of the story are that Ebenezer never lost his smile - even though the treatment required that he had a metal frame bolted in to his skull, and the fact that we now have to keep a watch on him because he is desperate to play football and the doctor has ordered that no contact sports until his recovery is complete. Our supporters and the charity's Trustees have been extremely generous in giving towards this cause for which our sincere thanks are given. Our team in Ghana, particularly Castro Amoah, have worked tirelessly on the practical issues of getting Ebenezer and his mother to the capital city for treatment. Although Ebenezer is now back at home, we still do have a considerable amount owing to the

hospital. With Christmas fast approaching, perhaps you could consider having a little collection box under your tree for family visitors to drop a few coins in towards clearing this debt.

### Report from Castro Amoah, Principal of the TEABAG Vocational Training College

Ebenezer Otabil is an eight years old boy from Gomoa Assin in the central region of Ghana. The parents are both very poor peasant farmers. They have a total of 8 children of which Ebenezer is the last born. Ebenezer was born with a disability in the neck. Even though the parents realized this abnormally early enough, due to poverty they were unable to seek medical attention for him, leaving him to his fate.

In January this year, Roger visited Ebenezer's school to distribute clothing, stationery etc from TEABAG Charity. It was on this visit that Ebenezer's teacher made an appeal to TEABAG to help get medical treatment for Ebenezer. The poor boy, even though is determined to get educated, he could hardly concentrate in class as he had difficulty in keeping his head up to look at the teacher or the black board. He as a result always had his head resting on his table when he was in class. Roger organized for Ebenezer to see a doctor for the first time in his life. He was referred to a bigger and specialized hospital in the capital city of Ghana known as FOCOS hospital. A local team was formed to follow up with this agenda when Roger returned to England. This team comprised of Ebenezer's teacher, Parents and myself.

In May we took Ebenezer to Focos hospital. The initial test carried out on him revealed that he was suffering from congenital scoliosis. A condition which according to the doctor, would eventually paralyse the boy and even take his life if not attended to. After this diagnosis, we were told Ebenezer would have to undergo surgery to correct this defect. We were then asked to do more detailed scans like MRI, USG etc. Our first surprise came when the MRI scan detected a tumour in-between the boy's heart and spine. This is a condition that has been unknown to the parents for all these years. TEABAG now had the task of raising funds not only to correct the spinal deformity but also to remove the growth around his chest. Ebenezer at this point was referred to a cardio thoracic surgeon for more clinical test to be done. After further tests he was scheduled to undergo surgery to remove the tumour on 30<sup>th</sup> June. On the morning of the surgery day, we were given the unpleasant news that the surgery has been cancelled. The anaesthetist, whiles preparing Ebenezer for the surgery that morning realized it will be impossible to keep him alive during the operation. This was because they weren't able to pass the breathing tube down his throat due to the acute curvature of his neck.

We were asked to go back to Focos hospital where we were now had to try and get both surgeries done at the same time. We were given a huge bill of US\$24000 which had to be paid before the surgery was done. Thankfully upon appeal, the hospital gave TEABAG a 50% discount. Through the hard work and generosity of trustees, friends and supporters of TEABAG Charity, some funds were raised and paid. Ebenezer was made to undergo what is termed as halo traction. With this process the boy was put in a head brace that basically stretches and straightens the neck. This was to precede the main surgery. He fortunately underwent the halo traction for ten weeks without any complication. On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 Ebenezer Otabil successfully underwent the surgery. He is currently discharged from the hospital and is fast recovering.

The journey to get sponsorship and to have Ebenezer treated started from January this year and it is gratifying to see the great difference that TEABAG has made in the life of Ebenezer. Finally Ebenezer can have a normal life and get educated like his friends. On behalf of Ebenezer, the family, friends and teachers, I want to thank all who have contributed in diverse ways to save Ebenezer's life and made it possible for him to live his dream. THANK YOU.

Castro Amoah,

(The photos show Ebenezer's journey through 2015, from the first time we met him at the school, through his first visit to the local hospital with his mother and schoolteacher, being admitted to the Focos specialist hospital, receiving treatment with the frame bolted to his head with weights attached to his return home wearing a supporting collar while his neck muscles grow strong enough to fully support his head.

