

Newsletter august 2014

Ghana project successful!

One of the reasons to visit a truly African country is for our children to show a more complete picture of the world. Our village in Bilthoven is of course a great community but gives a one-sided picture, much wealth, everything is well organized and children generally have relatively few concerns.

We choose Ghana because people despite poverty are very friendly and cheerful. Moreover, there is a stable political environment and it is safe there. Indra met a Ghanaian student (Sammy) at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht where she works. This contact resulted in a warm friendship. Sammy helped us with the preparation of our tour and the idea was also to visit his native village in Ghana: Serwi Bekwai a small poor village of a few thousand inhabitants located 150 km southwest of the second city of Ghana: Kumasi. We wanted to help Sammy's, family and old school and so the idea came up to collect (sports) clothing, shoes and toiletries. We approached the Emmaus and Hema in Bilthoven, sportclubs like DOSC and FC De Bilt and some residents of Vogelzang where we live.

Thanks to their great contributions we left Bilthoven with eleven suitcases!

From the capital Accra we started our fascinating and exciting tour. Through the Volta region, Kumasi, Tamale we descended towards the south. Each day there was a very special experience, beautiful African huts, villages, very nice people, cute little children that you really like to hold or hug, beautiful nature (tropical jungles with elephants, antelopes, monkeys and crocodiles), delicious fruit but widespread poverty. After two weeks we reached Serfi Bekwai. The inhabitants had been fully informed of our arrival and the next morning, on the main square of the village, we were greeted by hundreds of children, their parents, the 'queen mother', the village head and the school head. After walking for a round and having given lots of children a high five, we were allowed to sit on the dais.

One speech after another followed and there were many eulogies towards us. Then John spoke to the children as " head of the family " in accordance with the Ghanaian culture. In Twi's he spoke some words which lead to huge laughter. Then singing and dancing were alternated and there was a discussion between children whether girls and boys had the same rights of access to education.

At the end of the day we handed our case with sport shirts, gotten from DOSC and FC De Bilt, to the school principal. Everyone stood in amazement watching the beautiful shirts that could use the school for football which is extremely popular in Ghana. We received a

certificate of thanks.

The next day we first visited Sammy's family who welcomed us warmly and they took care of the distribution of all clothing and shoes that we brought. They were very happy.

Then we went to the school to make a monkey out of socks with several children. Indra brought a lot of socks, needles, scissors, thread, buttons and filler and we started this day with forty children to make a monkey. That was quite a challenge because not all children were able to work independently. In a very hot stuffy room with two pears we had trouble getting the yarn through the eyes of the needles! The children were euphoric and in the classroom was a huge cozy chaos. Children who were not selected, did all kinds of things to come in the classroom to catch a glimpse of the project. Because some children were very young we had to decide to hire some local seamstresses to help them.





With the help of our daughters Sacha and Hannah and three additional seamstresses who worked all day in sweat, we were able to make a lot of monkeys which the children could

take home. Although some monkeys didn't have an arm, leg or eye the children were happy and proud to take the toy home. It was an incredible job but we enjoyed to work all day with these special little children. End of the day we were allowed to give out a prize for groups with children who had prepared a number of dishes. Then again the school principal thanked us very much for the nice shirts "we are just a spot on the map and Mr. John and his family visited our school and brought these wonderful shirts. Listen



kids, these shirts are amazing and of perfect quality! " That went on for a bit and we became shy of all these compliments.

Then everyone wanted to take a picture of us, the school management, teachers, classes

and individuals. Around five o'clock a car with siren entered the school grounds and we were happy to return to the hotel where we yearned for a cold drink.

The next day we resumed our tour and came to rest in Lake Busumtwe just a few days. Very pleased we looked back at the wonderful and meaningful days. The children and the village Serwi Bekwai we will close forever in our hearts.

Through this way we would like to thank the Foundation Emmaus Bilthoven for the donation of the many suitcases with clothes and shoes. Thanks to DOSC / volleyball and FC De Bilt, we were able to donate many sport shirts / uniforms nearly a hundred in total! Hema Bilthoven gave some underwear and toiletries and then we thank our dear Villa Vogelzang residents who have supported us enormously with all sorts of stuff!

John, Indra, Sacha and Hannah Van Deemter

Bilthoven

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