

Seasons greetings to our fhn supporters!!!!

Thank you so much for your support in 2022 and to some of you, for your support for over 20 years!

We could not do anything without your financial support, and we really do appreciate it. We know times are tough for most people and there are loads of other worthwhile charities to give to.

Family Gold have just returned from several weeks together in the village in Ghana (for the first time).

We had a wonderful experience and completed lots of projects.

Thank you so much to David, Portia, Vanessa and Jed for hosting us (our co-ordinator and his family).

First, massive thanks to Cindy, Nick Trueman, Trez and Dom Lawrence.

When we arrived, the bore hole that provides water to the health centre (which was sunk 20 years ago), had been contaminated. This does happen after many years of use. It was due an upgrade... After sending one message to the above people, £1,500 arrived in one day and we completed the bore hole. Thanks guys.

Due to climate change, the weather is becoming more and more unpredictable, and Ghana had unusually heavy and longer lasting rains. It is a dirt road that connects the clinic to the town and was impassable with a vehicle due to the rains. People need access to the clinic and the very sick can obviously not walk. Hence, we decided to make the first road in the whole region. It was several days and several truckloads of stones with some small dramas, as usual, added into the mix. It was also quite a spectacle for the whole village to see the first road actually come to fruition. It also has enormous significance in terms of our work in the region, since it shows all the people in the communities that we are able to complete something that the government has been neglecting for years. Our next task is to work with local leaders to complete the 'main road'. The road from the town to the main Accra-Kumasi road... We have a plan.

One of our aims for 2023 is to further develop the education available near the Health Centre. The ratio of churches to schools in the region is around 15:1 at the moment! There are a few government schools but unfortunately, they do not reliably pay their teachers and there are so many children to teach. This equates to permanent 'break time'. Every time we pass any school, tragically, the kids are just out on the field playing or working. fhn has been supporting a 'private' school for several years now. Peter, a teacher from the North of Ghana, has been working in our region for many years. Unfortunately, he is facing myriad pressures in his village and has been on the verge of quitting for years. We have been topping up his teachers' salaries for a while with what equates to around £50/month. This means the teachers attend and the 200 kids also attend. Each child pays a tiny amount and that pays most of the salaries, we just add a little bit more.

To secure the future of the school and the teachers, we are moving them to our land where the Health Centre is located. After much fighting to secure our land (which was given to Mrs Huttel over 30 years ago by the then regional chief), we can now go ahead.

Massive thanks to Mike Dagleish **again**, who has generously provided the first half of the money needed to start the school. This is after sponsoring a lot of the water provision in the region as well as other projects.

There is so much we can do with a reliable school. In the future, we hope to be able to take children from junior education all the way through to admission to higher education. We will be able to offer sponsorship to a handful of the most committed and high-performing students and this would also give fhn supporters the chance to sponsor a child to go to university, where they would previously would not have the resources to do it themselves.

One of the most important additions will be English, because this is taught at a very rudimentary level. Being able to converse in a higher standard of English is critical for job success. When the school is established, it will afford communities an opportunity to enjoy foreign teachers, much as the health facility enjoys highly skilled foreign health workers.

In a similar way to how our health centre has been functioning for 20 years, we are not here to dictate or replace what is happening locally. We never replace Ghanaian health centre staff; we simply augment the services they provide. In addition, it will afford foreign teachers an opportunity for a highly rewarding experience (akin to our medical volunteers) which usually shapes them for the better for the rest of their professional lives.

There are so many additional educational activities when you have a reliable cohort of teachers married to a constant stream of students. We will be able to establish a supervised library for the older students and a playroom with donated toys for the younger ones (via a slightly resistant daughter of mine who found it a little challenging to let go of two rucksacks full of toys and books destined for the new school). It would also give us an opportunity to integrate and educate on our other projects, such as menstruation, recycling, alternative energy, gender equality, alcoholism etc.

And who knows, in the future, could some of the most motivated students end up working for fhn...

With all this talk of schools, I have neglected to mention our fantastic, fully operational 24/7 health centre. In our opinion it is the best in Ghana! We are still offering full clinical and lab and maternity services to the thousands of poor farmers and their families who would not have another option to access health care, apart from in large cities with all the associated high costs.

Over the last few years, we have been able to focus on the immediate environment surrounding the clinic. We were given a huge portion of land which has taken us many years to secure. David, our co-ordinator, with help of our health volunteers, has started to reforest the land. We have planted a large variety of fruit and forest trees, most of which can only be found in the few protected areas that are left in Ghana. These include mahogany and other red woods. The effect of this rewilding is staggering. In only a few years, birds, amphibians, lizards and insect species have returned. We are creating a little garden of Eden! Everyone who attends the clinic is breath-taken by how beautiful it now is. We have also planted so many flowering plants which attracts its share of insects.

We are right in the middle of the 'plastic epoch'. Ghana, like most developing countries, is literally strewn with plastic. fhn is powerless to deal with this on a national scale. However, we can make sure that our site is plastic free and we recycle all plastics used at the health centre. The hope is to inspire local leaders to do the same with all the other villages in the communities.

Time to get off my soap box. As you can see, in this crazy world that we are currently living in, fhn can provide you with a cheap and efficient way to make a real difference.

As you know, fhn is run by volunteer groups in the UK and Germany where none of us command a salary. We have been doing this for over 20 years and we are unlike any other charity I know in this respect. This equates to us having no overheads, therefore every penny/cent goes to where it is most needed in Ghana, as well as the projects in Ecuador and Nepal (that are supported by fhn Germany).

To a happy and healthy year, the fhn team

Ed

Sena, Andy, Lizzie, Nadia, Ana-Maria, Sophie, Paul and Nick