

Welcome to the latest newsletter from Ahotokurom - Ghana!

What follows is a brief overview of some of the good things that you have helped to happen!

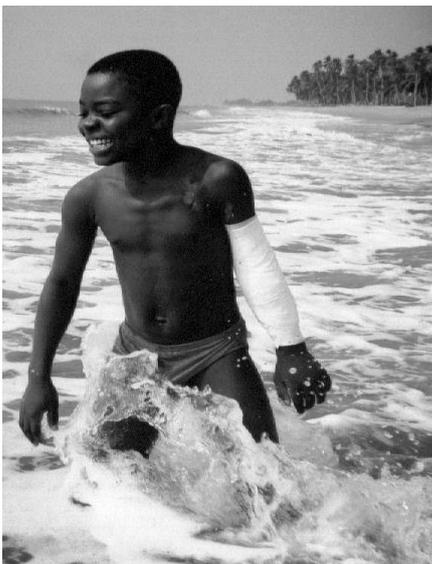
We have news from the minibus appeal, a letter from Francis and a brief update on the work in Ghana. Also in this edition - an appeal to help stop privatisation of water supplies in Ghana.

An update from Francis.....

Since the age of 10 Francis has battled with Buruli Ulcer and has spent almost five years as an in-patient in various hospitals.

We wrote about him back in 2003 when he was facing yet another operation to try and halt this hideous ulceration disease from eating into his body.

Little is known about the illness. For those who suffer with it there is almost no known cure other than surgery to remove the infected area. It has left many with amputations and disabilities.



Francis enjoys his 1st experience of the sea!

At last aged fifteen – it seems that Francis is free of the disease.

Francis writes.....

“Dear all

I hope you will be happy to read this letter because our God has

answered my prayers and my arm is now fully healed.

I know you will be happy to hear this because I believe you keep me in your prayers for healing.

After many years my first wound healed fully and I was referred to Korle Bu Teaching hospital for surgery on 29th January 2004 because my arm would not bend. However after surgery – again my wounds would not heal so I had another skin graft on 16th March 2004. I was discharged back to the Leprosarium on 17th April 2004 and now because God is so great I can say my wounds are fully healed!

I thank Sister Monica and Sister Pat for giving me an opportunity to move to Ahotokurom to continue my education so I can get into college. I also thank all of you for your prayers and for your support. Thank you, your son, Francis.

I know you will be happy to see the impact that long term care can have on a child's life. Francis is a bright teenager. Despite five years as a hospital patient – living in the most terrible conditions, on a ward filled mostly with older people having amputations, he is doing really well at school. He shows great potential & his determination to make the most of his life is an inspiration for us all.

A Date for your diary.....

We would like to invite all interested supporters to an open meeting of Friends of Ahotokurom on July 30th from 1-4pm in the church hall of St Dominic's Parish, Waddon, Croydon

The meeting will be a chance to update and thank everyone concerned for their efforts on behalf of Ahotokurommore information will follow.....but if you would like to register your interest contact fionnuala37@hotmail.com

General news from Ahotokurom From Childcare.....

There are now 24 children living in childcare.....and with many growing into their teenage years – life is always busy!

The older children help the younger ones...but as in all families there can be moments of tension! Nothing like the manners and demands of teenagers here in the West though!

The centre also supports a number of families offering advice and support to parents of sick and disabled children. *Thank you sponsors for your support of the children.*

Enyindakurom – Ahotokurom also supports all 80 families at Enyindakurom who are affected by leprosy. It is now five years since the housing project sought to house the families in clean dry housing rather than the squalid conditions that they had had to exist in. Minor repairs to homes and medical / social support to the more vulnerable families has been made possible *by the generosity of Selsdon parish – thank you.*

For the first time ever all children of school age who live in Enyindakurom are attending school! This is a miracle when you consider that less than 7 years ago the village was hidden away – off the beaten track - in the 'bush'. People were embarrassed and afraid to mix in the community because they came from 'the leprosy village'. Now all the children are in school! Those who can achieve academically are encouraged to continue to Senior Secondary school and those who aren't academics are supported through vocational training and into work. *Thanks to Rainham parish for your support.*

St Clare's Home - Christmas Day itself was in fact a sad day for all because Mr Moro – probably one of the most senior residents of St Clare's died that morning. The children and the other residents of St Clare's home loved him dearly because he was such a peaceful and content man.

Every day for as long as anyone remembers he would sit in the sun and pray. He would keep both his sandals laid out beside him – despite

the fact he had both his legs amputated many years ago. All who passed by were welcomed with a handshake and a smile. His passing almost seems to mark the end of an era and he will be sadly missed.

The Special Unit is growing from strength to strength – there is a waiting list of children wanting to attend. However until now, the transport has been a problem. This is soon to be resolved with the addition of an accessible minibus – *thanks to Carshalton parish* for taking the lead in this one and you can read more below.....

From small acorns...

In the spring of 2002, Holy Cross Church in Carshalton, Surrey, UK, was fortunate to receive sufficient funds from a benefactor to build a parish centre. This busy parish with many young families had been hoping for this facility for many years and suddenly, there were the funds to build it!

In thanksgiving, parishioners – headed by the parish priest Fr. Luke Verhees – decided they would like to give something to others less fortunate than themselves in Africa – and so the Tithing project was born.

Two projects were chosen:

- The Daughters of the Cross who are establishing schools in Cameroon and
- Ahotokurom – for an accessible bus to help their work with disabled people

It was agreed that all fundraising would go into the central pot and be shared equally. Presentations were arranged to make people aware of the need and activities commenced.

A chance meeting with a friend of a parishioner led to the offer of match funding for the first £10,000 raised for the bus - this was a major incentive!

The UCM hosted cake sales and quizzes; parishioners ran coffee mornings and bring & buys, school children sang carols, all kinds of sponsored activities were organised; one supporter ran the London Marathon and another undertook the Tenere Desert Walk in Niger! – in fact, all the wonderful things that people do for those less fortunate than themselves.

One person read about the project in this newsletter and promptly donated £1,000 from a house sale!

By October 2004, the first £10,000 had been raised – and the match funding went live. Supporters from Ireland, Holland and America heard about the project and the total climbed to £44,000. A further anonymous donation has taken the total to almost £50,000.

A quotation has been received for the vehicle and the sisters are now hoping to place the order and let us know what balance is required to put the bus on the road.

Fundraising is not easy but it brings with it a sense of satisfaction - knowing that what you have done has made a real difference to someone else's life. Responses to the Tsunami disaster recently show that people do care for others - and if they can do something practical, they will.

Through these pages, may we at Carshalton thank all those who have supported the project in any way – by practical support, making people aware of Ahotokurom or by their prayers for the success of the venture.

And here's hoping we will be able to raise the balance by the end of 2005! (Noreen Collyer)

Water problems in Ghana.....

In Ghana, as everywhere, water means life. But almost half the population has no regular safe supply of water.

The most vulnerable are most affected. In the countryside where most of the country lives, two-thirds regularly take their chances with unclean water. In the slums of the cities the sewage flows away down open trenches and only one family in ten is lucky enough to have their own water supply.

A typical household in one of the slums of Accra, Ghana's capital city, might spend 40p a day on water - the same amount as a typical household in London. **But in Ghana that is a day's earnings spent!**

Many ordinary Ghanaians are worried for the future of their water supply. A dire situation has got worse in recent years as Ghana's water supply is pushed into an undemocratic privatisation. Decisions made behind closed doors and designed to pave the way for privatisation have already led to unaffordable price rises. Meanwhile a hold up on investment until the privatisation goes through is leading to deterioration in the system and a spread in water-borne diseases like guinea worm. In response a massive popular movement has sprung up, demanding that water reform should be about water for all, not just for those who can afford it.

A British company – Biwater is bidding to buy Ghana's water system. There is currently a massive campaign to put pressure on all companies preparing to bid – to pull out. Ghanaians can then push for reform of their system. The World Development Movement is leading the campaign in the UK – have a look at www.wdm.org.uk/biwater to find out more. Write to Biwater – letters are available on the website or contact us at the address below. April is the deadline.... Please help by acting now.

We thank you all for your care and concern and hope that this newsletter will help you to understand the very real difference that you make

To make a donation to Friends of Ahotokurom please send cheques/postal orders made payable to:

'DMJ Friends of Ahotokurom'

The Treasurer, 2, Century Road, Rainham, Kent ME8 0BG

For further information on any of our activities please write to:
Friends of Ahotokurom, 3, Redding Close, Dartford, DA2 6NB

www.ahotokurom.org

The work of this group is undertaken entirely voluntarily and every penny donated goes directly to support the work in Ghana