

Hand in Hand- Reisebericht Knan

27.01.2018

After a 15-hour journey we arrived in Accra at about 8 p.m. We were picked up by Rev. Peter Sarpong and Theresa, a former student of the St. Patricks Nursing and Widwifery School.

28.01.2018

In the morning we continued our journey by car towards Abofour. Around 1p.m. we reached Kumasi. There we visited the archbishop of Kumasi, Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye. After a warm welcome the archbishop thanked us for the support by "hand in hand". He stressed that the awarding of the scholarships in particular not only increases the chances of life for the sponsored child, but also for the entire family supported by the sponsored child.

An investment in the education of young people is therefore the right way to sustainably improve living conditions in Ghana. In the afternoon we reached Abofour. Where we were a guest at the catholic parish St. Francis Xavier, which receives the financial means made available by us for the employment locally and uses after our instructions. The contact persons there are the parish priest Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong and his colleague, Mrs. Grace Adoma. Immediately after our arrival Faustina, the housekeeper of the parish and Rev. Toni Darko accompanied us to St. Jerome Senior High School.

Toni reported that the number of students at St. Jerome Senior High School nearly tripled to 2,300 last year. Since no new school buildings were built, the space is very cramped. Even the very simple kitchen, which we could visit, has big problems to provide enough food for the growing number of children. The boarding students receive three meals a day, which are prepared over an open fire.

In the evening around 6:30p.m. we were greeted in the church by students of St. Jerome Senior High School and various groups of the congregation. Traditional Ghanaian dances were performed and traditional Ghanaian songs were sung by various choirs. In his speech Peter recapitulated the emergence of "Hand in Hand" and emphasized the importance of our support for the people of Abofour. At the end of the event in the church, a live band played traditional Ghanaian music in front of the parsonage.

29.01.2018

In the morning we visited the St. Jerome Primary School and the kindergarten attached to the school. In the kindergarten, which consists of two classes, 230 children are looked after. In the Jerome Primary School, which consists of six classes, a total of 440 students attend school. The school building is in need of renovation, but still fulfils its purpose. Both the kindergarten and the primary school are day care facilities. The children do not get any food from the school. However, local traders sell food and drinks in front of the school. Where the students usually buy their food. For our scholarship holders, the costs for food are covered. Within the framework of a project week, an introductory event was held for all students in the schoolyard by the pastor Peter Sarpong. We took part in this event. Afterwards we were shown the school building and had the opportunity to talk to the teachers. We were told that some students are not financially able to buy food. They would therefore often come to school hungry. With this in mind, we are considering paying the cost of a school meal for a certain number of students.

In the afternoon we met our scholarship holders and their parents. The scholarship holders of St. Patrick Nursery School and Teaching School were unable to attend this meeting, except for one future midwife, as they were unable to travel from Offinso. In addition, two students from St. Jerome Senior High School were missing because they had to attend classes to prepare for their exams.

Father Peter Sarpong stressed in his short speech the importance of education for the development of young people in general and for the development of Ghana in particular. After this meeting we visited St. Jerome Junior High School together with the principal. The school is attended by 220 students. The teaching staff consists of 13 people.

The school building is in very poor condition and urgently needs renovation. During the rainy season it rains into some classrooms. Since the Ghanaian state does not have sufficient financial means, a renovation is unfortunately not to be expected in the next years.

30.01.2018

In the morning we drove from Abofour to two remote villages. After a few minutes the already bad asphalted road ended. After about 6 kilometers over the dust and clay road covered with potholes we reached a small settlement near several plantations where one of our scholars lives with her mother and her siblings.

Since there is no public transport, the 6-year-old child walks to school every day. About 30 minutes later we reached the small village of Kwapanin. We visited the Kwapanin Roman Catholic School, which has a primary and a junior high school. We had the opportunity to talk to some students and teachers. The principal reported that it is very difficult to find teachers in this remote village. Since there is not even a mobile network in this village, there are very few teachers who volunteer there. Therefore, the school depends on teachers being required to work at the school as part of their National Service (compulsory social year). We had the opportunity to talk to some of these teachers, who left no doubt that they would leave the school after completing the National Service.

Afterwards we continued our journey on roads that were getting worse and worse and reached the small village of Asuboi after about an hour. In Asuboi, the state built a small medical center a few years ago, but has not yet found a nurse or midwife who would be willing to work there. The villagers therefore have to drive about two hours to the nearest hospital. During the rainy season, the gravel road is often impassable, which is why there in fact no medical care in this village. With this in mind, we are considering making the award of scholarships for the St. Paricks Midwifery and Nursing School dependent in future on our scholarship holders committing themselves to serve in the remote villages for a certain period after completing their education.

During our visit we had the opportunity to visit the local state school. We are considering including this school in our scholarship program. Finally, we had the opportunity to have a longer conversation with the Nana, a kind of village elder. We were then led through the village and gained a very good impression of the living conditions in remote villages in Ghana.

In the evening we visited some of our scholarship holders at home in Abofour and got an impression of the sometimes oppressive living conditions.

31.01.2018

In the morning we visited the Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Offinso. This school is a Catholic school that includes a kindergarten, a primary school and a junior high school. A special feature of this school is that a larger number of handicapped students and non-handicapped students have lessons together.

Many of these disabled students are accommodated in the Boarding House. The headmistress of the school reported that especially for the disabled students often no school fees can be paid. We are therefore considering including this school in our scholarship program as well. The school left a very good impression, because besides the purely academic education also other abilities and talents, artistic, handicraft and sportive nature are promoted.

The students gave us a very warm welcome and performed various dances, songs and a football match. In the afternoon we visited two scholarship holders of the Offinso Teaching College, who graduate in summer and then complete a one-year internship in a school. After completing the internship next summer, the training will be completed and the two scholarship holders will be able to

to work as teachers.

Afterwards we visited the St. Patrick's Nursing and Midwifery School in Offinso. About 1000 nurses and midwives are trained at this school. There is a considerable need for both professions in Ghana.

One of our scholarship holders graduated last year and is already working as a midwife. Two other scholarship holders are currently in their training.

01.02.2018

In the morning we visited St. Jerome Senior High School again. On this occasion we looked in particular at the construction stands of the unfinished buildings. It was particularly surprising that a total of three buildings were practically 80 percent completed, but that construction had already stopped 5 years ago.

Although these buildings are not finished, they are at least partly used as classrooms. Due to the sharp increase in the number of students, partly 90 students are taught in one class. If the unfinished classrooms were not used, class sizes would rise to over 100 students, making orderly teaching practically impossible.

In the first school building the screed floor, the windows and doors as well as the electrical installation are missing. In the second building, which has classrooms on the ground floor and bedrooms on the first floor, even the screed floor has already been laid and the electrical installation carried out. However, the windows, lamps and fans are missing. There is no railing on the first floor, so it cannot be used. Since the first upper floor has a total of 8 bedrooms, a use would be very desirable.

The boys currently sleep with between 80 to 90 students in former classrooms and the library. The third building contains toilets and showers and is practically finished except for the installation of the sanitary facilities. As the school's sanitary facilities are very poor, the completion of this building would significantly improve the situation. The building was not completed because the government did not pay the contractor. In view of the limited space available, we are considering paying for the cost of completing the building. To this end, the school management will contact the building contractor so that he can submit a cost estimate. In addition to financial support from other donors, a prerequisite for assuming the costs would be, in particular, the conclusion of a contract with the building contractor which provides for payment according to the progress of construction. For this purpose, we have to involve a Ghanaian lawyer.

02.02.2018

We used the morning of our last day to have a look at the documents of the catholic parish and the parish priest Rev.Fr. Peter Kwasi Sarpong. We convinced ourselves on site that the financial means provided by us were used according to our specifications for the allocation of the school and training scholarships approved by us. We were provided with receipts for the school fees paid. The partly also cash used means, e.g. for the personal need of the students for school clothes, writing and teaching materials etc., were plausible for us according to the amount and coincided with the impressions and information which we received during the discussions with students and school representatives. Based on our lists of scholarship holders who were sponsored by us and in discussions with the students and their parents, we were able to convince ourselves that all the scholarship holders proposed to us had received a scholarship and that they regularly visit the schools. In the discussions with the headmasters it was confirmed that the school fees of our scholarship holders are paid entirely by the Catholic parish of St. Francis Xavier. The use of the funds according to our guidelines was thus comprehensible. The funds we made available to the parish to finance the administrative staff were used in accordance with our guidelines.

Mrs. Adoma and Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong are in regular contact with us over e-mail and often also over the telephone throughout the year and provide us with continuous information and, as far as the local conditions allow, also evidence, in particular of the payment of school fees. Our two contact persons take care of the selection of the scholarship holders and keep in touch with the families and the schools. After the end of our visit, they will take care of the start of the new school meal program and coordinate the details with us.

Regarding the solar lamp program that we started, Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong reported that a first delivery of lamps has already been distributed and will be used by the students on site.

Realistically, however, we must expect that a number of the users will not be able to pay their own share, which would mean that we would have to bear certain losses.

Thomas Bezani
Stefan Kröll