

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Ghana



A young Muslim girl performing a very moving spoken word during a human rights outreach to a highly conservative muslim community in Accra.

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Highlights of the month

Human Rights Project Activities

The Human rights go hand in hand with economic empowerment, which is in itself a human right. That is why our human rights volunteers - Elizabeth from England, Natalie from Australia, Sophie from Germany and Hannah from England – were so dedicated to empowering women in the town of Abokobi. The women were trained in how to develop effective business plans for new or existing businesses. They analysed effective business strategies and reviewed microloans and other financial means of support that would help them to start and sustain their businesses.



The volunteers used creative and interactive approaches to train the local women. The women broke into groups and worked on marketing strategies for hypothetical businesses after which each group made a plenary presentation of their strategies.



More human rights outreaches were held at a Muslim community in Accra called Nima. Young Muslim girls, who are members of an inspirational group called Achievers Book Club, took part in workshops that focused on domestic violence as well as leadership and role modeling. The volunteers explained to the girls exactly what constitutes their rights, and they also discussed the national laws and international conventions that seek to protect them from harm.

Karen Slowe, wife of the founder of Projects Abroad, visited the volunteers and girls, and she was awe-inspired by the girls' determination to break through the cultural and religious barriers that they face.

Watch a very touching poetry performance by one of the girls on [Facebook](#).



Medical outreach in Winneba

This month, the medical outreach vehicle stopped at the Mother's Love School in Winneba. The volunteers ran health checks to test patients' BMI (Body Mass Index), temperature, blood pressure and blood sugar levels. This weekly service is completely free to help people living in the local community to monitor their health.

Limerick Tutorial College student

Alana Brennan named Youth Queen in Ghana

Every summer, many young Westerners have a break from school and set out to explore life outside of their countries. Their project may be planned but their future encounters are left up to their imagination.

Seventeen year old Alana Brennan followed the call of summer and travelled to Ghana in West Africa. She spent a month in Winneba, a coastal town in the central region of Ghana, to volunteer on the medical programme offered by Projects Abroad.

She spent her days at the Winneba Government Hospital observing procedures and gathering life changing experiences. One such experience was when she volunteered to wash a still-born baby and pray with the distraught mother for the soul of the departed child. This was an experience that she says will stay with her for a long time.

Alana is originally from Clare in Ireland. She had no idea that she was bound for royalty in a strange land over 5,000 kilometers away. It was an unforgettable moment but she admits that she was at first quite scared when she was crowned Youth Queen of Essakyir as she is expected to be a role model for the young women in the traditional community.

The day started like any other. Alana and a group of volunteers went to Essakyir on a routine visit. Before long, they saw a festive crowd headed in their direction. They initially thought nothing of it. After all, Ghanaians are always in a festive mood – drumming and dancing are part of their everyday lives.

Before long, the crowds had grown larger and had circled the group of volunteers with their drumming and dancing. The young men were bare-chested and the young women had white circles painted all over their bodies. The volunteers joined in with the dancing and tried to move to the rhythm as best as they could.

Suddenly, a number of men lifted Alana to shoulder height and begun to walk her out of the crowd. She thought it was all part of the dance as all of the other volunteers were getting shoulder rides too. She was just enjoying the ride and was lost in the moment.

A group of women then whisked her away into a small room with a number of stools. The women dressed Alana in Kente cloth, which is a traditional cloth with colourful patterns and designs that, is worn on festive occasions, and sat her on one of the stools.



They took her through the royal rituals and informed her of her duties. After what seemed like a lifetime, she reappeared in full regalia to roaring applause from hundreds of people who had gathered in the compound of the house that she later found out was the palace.

A man appeared holding a bottle of Schnapps and poured it into a hole in the middle of the compound. She looked to Augustine Bow, the regional coordinator, and saw him smiling. Alana was then introduced to the crowd as “Nana Yaa Essakyir I”.

She was then taken through the streets amidst a fanfare of drumming and dancing. “It was an out-of-body experience. I don’t think I will ever experience anything like that in my life.” Standing next to her was Richard Dugbenu, a Projects Abroad medical coordinator. “I’m glad Richard was there because he was telling me what to do, how to walk and how to wave to the crowd. I call him my royal advisor,” she smiled.

After the celebrations, Alana returned to the palace where she was given her royal clothes, which consisted of several pieces of Kente cloth and traditional sandals. As Youth Queen, Alana’s principal duty is to be a role model for the young girls. “I believe that the best way I can be a role model is to set an example for the girls and young ladies. I intend to get a good education, pursue a career in medicine, get a good job and then I can come back and help the community. But anytime I get the chance, I will come back to visit.”

One of her duties is to take part in durbars and all decisions made by the chiefs and people of the land. She plans to connect with them regularly by email and instant messages to maintain communication with them. “My mom asked the same thing.

You know what I told her? I said *Mom, I have a cool chief. He uses a tablet and I have his email. We can keep in touch. I can Skype a message to them on special days and email the chief often.*” Alana Brennan seems to be taking her responsibility seriously and, with the support of Projects Abroad, is ready to perform the necessary duties as Youth Queen of Essakyir.

Note from the Editor

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Caring for children may be the hardest job in the world but when you see them happy and all smiling, you'd know that you are in for the most rewarding job a person can find.

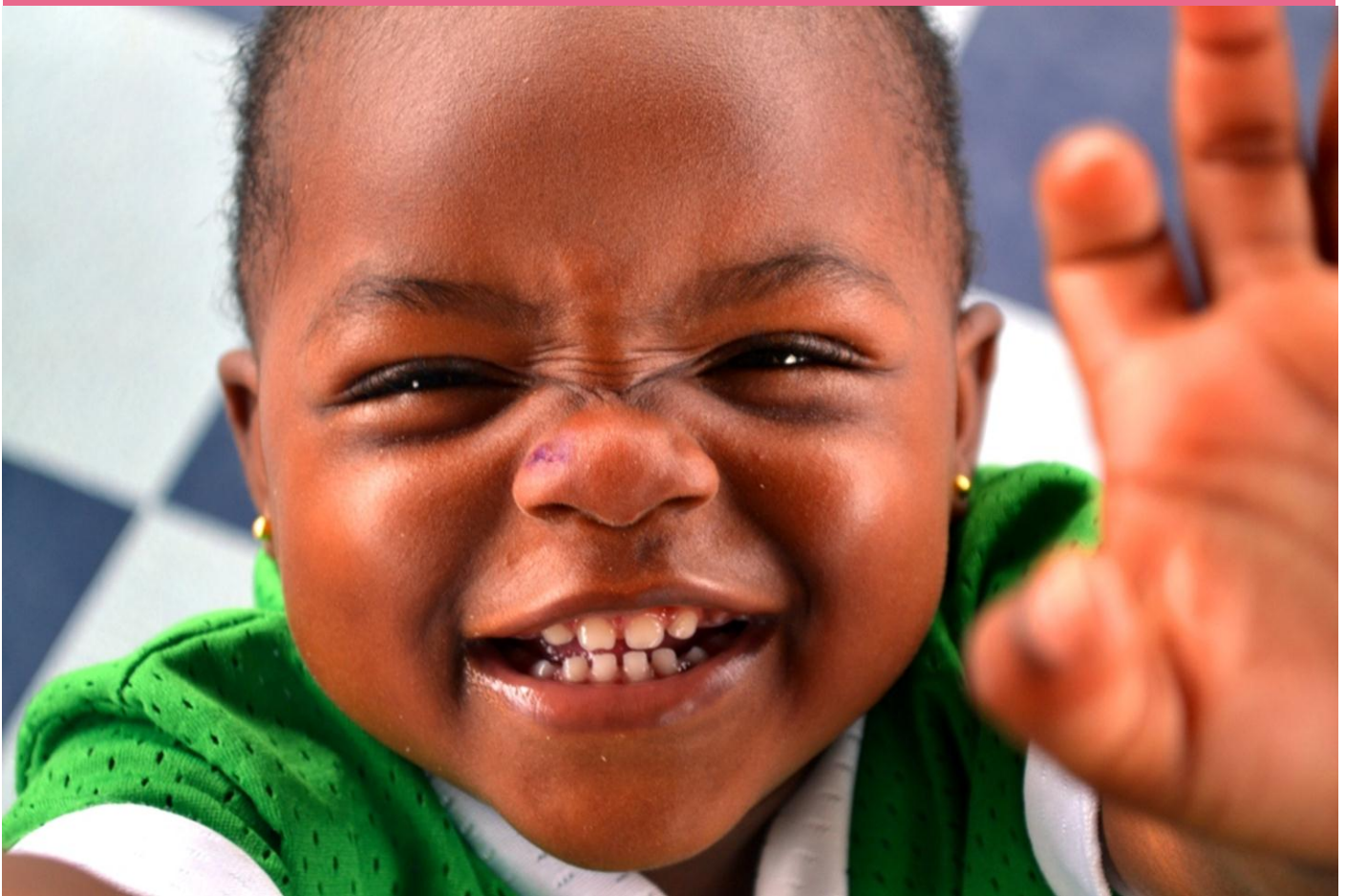


Photo taken at Mother's Love School, a Projects Abroad care placement in Winneba, Ghana

Please feel free to contact the Communications Officer if you have any questions, concerns or comments:
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Thanks for reading!