

Brown University
LIBRARY PROJECT FOR THE GIA-KAJELO COMMUNITY
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June 1st 2018 - July 31st 2018
Navrongo, Ghana

Mission

To cause an increase in the academic performance and output of pupils from the Gia-Kajelo village in rural Ghana by provision of a well-stocked library and accompanying necessary library resources. This is necessary so as to encourage the academic involvement of the pupils. This is necessary so as to encourage the academic involvement of the pupils since there is a constant competition for time and energy between their academic work and the agricultural input needed of them.

Background

Subsistence farming is the major way of survival for people in the Gia-Kajelo rural community in Navrongo, Northern Ghana. This form of farming is done with very simple equipment like hoes, cutlasses and donkey carts. Since the village began this has been the sole way of year-round food production for families. However, the youth, who are the only source of labor, are expected to have an education and also be ever-present on the farms. This makes concentration on academics very challenging for the youth since they have to spend most of their out-of-school time providing labor on their farms. Thus, they are exhausted before going to school or studying.

Additionally, due to the remoteness of the village and the lack of government investment in education in rural areas like Gia-Kajelo, there are very few resources at the St. Oscar School, the only elementary and middle school in the area. There is not a single library in the village and its surroundings, and most families are not able to afford the required textbooks for classes and exams for the children. Hence most students only get to read using an informal borrowing system where one person passes their book around the village and hopes it is returned to them. This combination of tedious agricultural labor and lack of resources for studying leads to very little academic investment, absenteeism and high rates of school drop outs.

With very minimal academic returns and very few examples of academically successful people, most pupils in transition between elementary and middle school begin to doubt the need for continued schooling. Most pupils drop out of school before they complete their primary school education. The district to which the community belongs, the Kassena Nankani District, is one of the districts with the highest student failures in the national Junior and Senior High School Exams. Most students do not make it to high school and a very small percentage make it to the few tertiary institutions in the region. Hence, the predominant educational attainment of the village is middle school.

This project therefore identifies that the very low standards of education and academic success rate in the community is linked to the poor academic culture and the heavily manual agricultural system in the village. This project seeks to bring about a change in this situation by fully tackling the lack of resources for studying.

Project Details

This project will be embarked upon by myself and a mentor who is a representative of the St. Oscar Primary and Junior High school and a resident of the village, Mr. Gilbert Kwose Kuduma. The project will have three foci. The first will be to work on providing a stocked library for the community. The next will be to have a computer literacy program that will greatly complement and enhance IT learning in the primary and middle schools. The third will be focused on the project's sustainability which will include to a fundraising and book collection movement for stocking and updating the library.

The first focus of the project will give them a library to use for studying and test preparation. We intend to use a communal study room provided by Mr. Kwose. Firstly, we will furnish the place with nice chairs, tables and shelves. Then we will provide electricity to the room by using solar panels. With that done we will purchase as many books as possible. The current estimate of the number of books is 700 textbooks that pertain to the syllabi of the various classes from the primary, junior and senior high schools. We intend to add books for senior high schools in order to cater to the high school students who are not in boarding schools and those who return home for vacations since they fall in the same situations as the elementary and junior high school students.

The second focus, the IT literacy program, will seek provide seven computers to the library and an IT tutoring program. This is needed to aid the heavily theoretical IT courses that the pupils take in school and yet most of them almost never get to interact with the computers they learn so much about. The tutoring program will be led by Mr. Kwose and a volunteer from the community. This will be a bi-weekly program to introduce and familiarize the pupils with basic computer functions and software, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and others.

In order to keep the project running and sustained, the third focus will be an ongoing project that will continue adding and updating the books, and keep the IT program running at the library. We (myself and the teachers at the school) plan on partnering with the Books For Africa and the Book Aid International organizations (which have freely stocked

many similar libraries in Ghana) in order to see this happen. We will also raise funds by sending letters to NGOs and the local government, and procuring books from public libraries and bookstores in the country and abroad.

Project Plan

Weeks 1 and 2:

- Engaging all potential volunteers and laying out the entire plan for the project and delegating duties.
- Securing the room for the facility for the library
- Making all the purchases of books and furniture for the library in Accra and Kumasi

Weeks 3 and 4:

- Putting in place the needed furniture
- Purchasing the equipment for the solar electrification system at the library.
- Installing the of the solar electrification system at the library.

Week 5:

- Stocking of the library with the books.
- Assembly and training of volunteers for running the project.
- Searching for more labor volunteers around the village.

Week 6:

- Purchase and install the seven computers and their accessories.

Weeks 7 and beyond:

- Commencement and observation of the project.
- Keeping track of the progress in order to identify and fix faults with the equipment and the systems for running the library.
- Start the book collection and fundraising to keep the library running.

Personal Qualifications.

Gia-Kajelo is my hometown and is where I attended high school. Therefore, I have grown to know the community and the struggles of students at a personal level. I am also fluent in the language, Kasem, and would be able to interact with the people.

Again, I am well versed with community resource building and refurbishment through my work with the NGO called Do Remember Other People(DROP) at the United World College Red Cross Nordic (UWCRCN) in Norway from 2014 to 2017. I worked with this NGO as the Ghanaian liaison as we renovated a dilapidated school in Sakyikrom, a rural area in Ghana. I was in charge of procuring all the needed equipment, making sure that things were properly done, and reporting back to the executive board of DROP.

Mr. Gilbert Kwose Kudama will be my mentor on the project. He was once a student at the St. Oscar School is now the head teacher there. Mr. Gilbert knows very well what the children at school need since he has experienced it and is still a member of the school. He runs the current study space, which he opened himself, that we intend to use for the library. It is therefore with Mr. Kwose that the project was planned and will be executed. For these reasons, he is the representative of the school for this project.

Both of us have expressed interest and commitment to the project and therefore are willing to work very hard to see it happen since it is our home.

Sustaining the project.

We seek to put in place a system that runs itself once I, the project leader, am not around. This involves the use of trained volunteers and sustainable material. This project has already seen the welcome of the residents, most of whom have expressed the desire to be part of it, therefore there is the hope that it will be taken care of. The library will use volunteers who will be available at all of its open times to make sure the use of the facility is monitored. Also, a borrowing system for the books will be put in place which will include thorough documentation and tracking of the borrowed items. This system is meant to replace or work parallel to the aforementioned informal borrowing system. Again, a part of sustaining the library will be the book collection phase of the project, which will keep the library running and constantly updated with books.

In addition, the training of the volunteers on how to use the provided equipment will be a good way to keep them running and taken care of. Mr. Kwose will be in charge since he is in contact with an electrician who has pledged to help with fixing the system (the solar panels and the computers) for free if it should fail.

Also, the idea of using solar panels is one that will help to make the lighting sustainable since the library will be off of the national grid, free of electricity bills. Also, this is a perfect place for the harvesting solar energy since Navrongo has the longest sunlight prevalence per day in Ghana.