

Title: The Bimbilla Peace Project
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The Bimbilla Peace Project was initiated to facilitate peace in the town of Bimbilla in the Northern Region of Ghana. The project lasted approximately 9 weeks and was funded by the 100 Projects for Peace and Cornell University's Engineering Learning Initiative. Furthermore, Cornell provided us with equipment to perform water quality tests. The main objectives for the Peace Initiative and consequent water project are to

- **Promote Peace and political stability through the improvement of infrastructure.** Basic infrastructure in this context implies everything from good drinking water to basic healthcare. Improvement of Infrastructure also leads to an improvement in the living standards of people. With regards to this, we tried to select a project which will directly improve the living standard among in a community. Clean drinking water being a problem in the Northern part of Ghana essentially became our main focus.
- **Make Bimbilla a model reflecting the importance of community development in facilitating peace.** In other words, we believe that peace can be facilitated if the community comes together for development projects.
- **To gather resources and expertise from international organizations and Non-governmental organizations.** This was important for the success of our project since we had very limited funding. Furthermore, this was a good way to raise awareness about the water situation in Bimbilla.

1. Project Summary

Bimbilla is the district capital of the Nunumba North District in the Northern Region of Ghana. Its estimated population is 27,000, which is growing at a rate of 3% per year. Bimbilla produces several staple foods, including yam, maize, and various animal products for the entire nation. Prior to our arrival in Bimbilla, two major conflicts were identified. One was the ethnic tensions between the Dagombas and the Kusasis which reached its peak in the mid nineties. The other, which was more specific to Bimbilla, was a dispute over who the next chief (king) of Bimbilla should be. The dispute had generated tension to the extent that gunshots were fired (even though no one was killed). This caused the Ghanaian Government to send in military to prevent another war. The troops totaling about 30 helped maintained peace in the region Even though no fighting erupted, there was still tension in the community.

Due to Bimbilla's economic role in the region and the country as a whole, any form of political instability (like the aforementioned war between the Dagombas and Mamprusis) could be disastrous to the nation's well being. Consequently, our first action was to organize a workshop to immediately address the conflicts and promote peace. We were able to organize two workshops, one on peace and infrastructural development, and the other on water sanitation and guinea worm eradication. The workshop participants were all leaders in the town of Bimbilla representing their respective constituencies. Participants included members of the district assembly, religious leaders, and traditional leaders. Professor Esi Awuah, head of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Department of Civil Engineering spoke about general water sanitation and guinea worm eradication and engaged the community leaders to discuss water and health problems affecting the Bimbilla community. We spoke briefly on the interrelationship of infrastructural development and peace. The workshop participants were divided into three groups to developed action plans through dialogue to solve the problems of sanitation, water supply and conflict in Bimbilla.

Upon arriving in Ghana we embarked on a reconnaissance trip, to inform the leaders of Bimbilla about the workshop and get first hand perspectives of the water crisis in the town. During our reconnaissance trip, we had the opportunity to inspect the boreholes drilled under the German Assistance Program (GAP) phase in Bimbilla. Led by the opinion leaders of Bimbilla district we were thoroughly briefed on the water supply situation in the town. One of the major mechanized boreholes had been broken since February 2005. This breakdown had cut down the already insufficient water supply by 20%. In addition the water treatment plant had burned down earlier this year, further cutting the water supply by an additional 45%. The water shortages had led to an increase in guinea worm cases in the Nanumba North District. Due to insufficient funds, we collaborated with the European Union and United Nations to fix the borehole.

In addition, we inspected wells in Kakuhi a village in Bimbilla. There were 4 wells which were owned by the community. These wells were all in bad condition. First and foremost, the all the wells were open and thus, people (especially children) often threw items into them. Furthermore, the open wells served as breeding grounds for toads and mosquitoes which transmit the malaria parasite. In addition, the wells didn't have any drainage system implemented and there was stagnant water around them all year round. This prompted us to cover the wells and install hand pumps on them. Furthermore, we designed and implemented a drainage system to transport run-off water around the wells to neighboring farms for irrigation.

2. Project Results

The attendance and feedback from the workshop was better than expected. There was an overwhelming request for another workshop to be held, this time longer and for a wider audience. The action plans allowed the town leaders to collaborate and discuss future development. By involving the leaders of the community in the dialogue we able to begin the reconciliation process and move a step closer to political stability and peace in the region.

With regards to the water shortages, the borehole we rehabilitated is expected to increase the current water supply by 40%. The town leaders and citizens were appreciative of the work. The wells were completely installed and accepted by the village elders. After installation we met with the women of Kakuhi, and they were pleased with the covered wells. This was an important achievement because primarily women and children fetch the water. Overall the results of the project took Bimbilla one step further towards a peaceful more developed community.

3. Implications

The main aspect of the project was to emphasize and promote the need for peace in infrastructural development. Furthermore, we also wanted to focus on communal labor as a major force for developing the Bimbilla community. Through the workshop we were not only able to provide the leaders with essential information about health, water, and conflict management, but were able to get a glimpse of Bimbilla as a community hoping for a brighter future. The leaders after the workshops we had earlier on, decided to contribute in several ways to help us rehabilitate the borehole. The Imam of the town as well as other religious leaders, assemblymen (equivalent to congressmen) and several other key people in the town assisted with manpower in installing the pump. The manpower provided was very necessary since we didn't have relevant equipment to do so. It was inspiring to see how much can be accomplished with community effort. Through the Bimbilla project we were able to learn the importance of communal development in journey towards peace.



fig 1. Leaders and Youth of Bimbilla volunteer to help install repair the borehole



Fig 2. Section of Christian and Muslims praying for peace at the end of the workshop