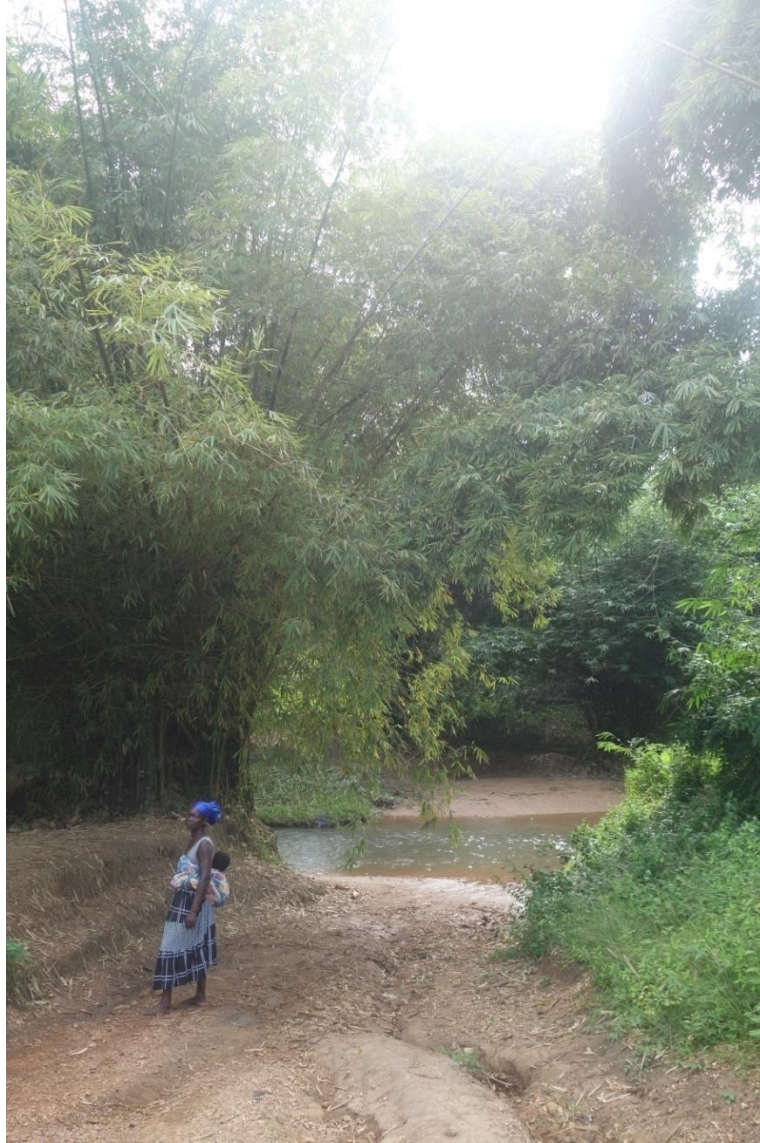


*SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter, Holiday  
Edition XXXIX; West Africa: 2022*



*To Dr. Kwasi Ampene, Ethnomusicology Department, CU-Boulder, Colorado, U.S.A. I know you have long-since left CU-Boulder, but when you were my African Ensemble professor in 2003 you enhanced the quality of my life. You opened my eyes to Africa. Because of one man, I Love an entire continent. And that man is you. Thank you for inspiring me at age 23, now again at age 43 as I come to move around the villages of your beLoved nation: Ghana, to see how best SSAAP can help them too with their water issues. We never know how we impact others, especially as teachers. Thank you for changing my life and for being a force in changing the lives of others, without clean water or food enough in the rural villages of Africa.*

## *Happy Holidays to All*

*I am thankful, literally every day of my life, for the opportunity to do this work. I live for it. It gives me great purpose, deep satisfaction, and a feeling of hope that there is something I can do in this world to help others, no matter how small I may be, or how small SSAAP is, we can do big things. In fact, sometimes it is the small people who can make the greatest impact on the planet, because the notion of being a big person well-known and recognized can be a burden, and an obstacle to flight. SSAAP has been, and continues to be, extremely effective in its mission of reaching the grassroots areas of various parts of Africa and in helping people with their simple yet vast need for clean and sustainable water security, as well as more food for their personal consumption. This project is the greatest gift of my life, hopefully my daughter Radiance's as well, and on a large-scale: thousands of African people. SSAAP has been a global effort on a large-scale; we have people participating in this project from all over the world: United States of America, India, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Ireland, England, and of course: Africa. May the beauty and abundance of this season remind you of all you have done to help so many people that you may never meet. This is one of the highest forms of Love that can exist on this planet.*



*I am a small person but my dreams are very, very big; thank you for making them come true.*

## *Ghana: October-November 2022*



I am back to doing what I Love most and on October 28, 2022 we went on our first site visit: *Klutse-Kope Village* in Volta Region, Ghana. This is my third visit to this nation; my African Ensemble teacher, Dr. Kwasi Ampene, was from here and he cemented within me that I needed to go to Africa my senior year of college, while I was already in the process of applying for Peace Corps to come to Africa. Dr. Ampene took a group of students to study abroad every year to Ghana, to the capital city of Accra and short day excursions around the city; he invited me to join his students the first year I was in Peace Corps (2004), but Peace Corps-Zambia wouldn't allow me to travel that far from Zambia my first year, so they gave me permission the following year, in 2005, when I met Dr. Ampene and his students here.

I brought Radiance to Ghana in 2016; we came here in 2016 on a layover to get to Sierra Leone and we stayed in the city in an expat setup with one of my best friends from Peace Corps and his wife ~ we saw nothing of rural Ghana but truly enjoyed the quality time we had with my friend and his wife and their two beautiful children (now they have three!).

Anyhow, we are traveling with British Airways on this trip, had a few hundred thousand bonus miles to use up, and British Airways has last two stops in West Africa: either Lagos,



Nigeria or Accra, Ghana. In Lagos on a layover, they take every passenger who is a non-African, lead them to a room where they take your passport and lock it in a drawer inside a desk. An immigration officer escorts you to and from your flight. Been there!, already did it (Radi was 4), and promised myself never again, and so we chose to come to Ghana: last stop with British Airways in West Africa.



British Airways, along with every other commercial airline other than Kenya Airways and Ethiopian Airways, stopped flying to Freetown, Sierra Leone during the Ebola Outbreak in 2014-2015 and hasn't returned since, so we are stuck with smaller African airlines like Gambia Bird and Asky Air to move around West Africa. I booked the ticket to Accra and then afterwards realized I knew someone in Ghana!, someone who I had been working with for about 3 years, who studied on the same course in India at Gandhi's University focusing on Nonviolence/Conflict Resolution; he studied on the same course as we did, but three years prior to when Radiance and I went to the course. We had been communicating for many years over his book, which I wrote two chapters of and helped him to edit its English. He has been asking for years for SSAAP to come help with the water issues in the rural villages here.



His name is Lawson Awudi Gadri, and he has been a phenomenal host here in Ghana. We spent the night in the city on the 26<sup>th</sup>, traveled via African minibus all day on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and



went to a guest house where the air was so clean and pure and the place was just quiet, silent.... incredible. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, we went on our first Ghanaian site visit. Radiance and I just kept saying that it seemed like we had *just* been to the village on a site visit, and I did the math: we left Sierra Leone on 19 March 2020. It has been 2.5 years since we were in West Africa on a site visit, *but it feels like we never left*.

I am convinced that consciousness is the key to all things. It is also the key to living above this world while also living within it: how to surf above the darkness of this density dimension of human ego, control, power, ego, lovelessness. We live consciously, we unearth the darkness and bring out the light ~ all of us are both: darkness and light; you leave a place and you never really leave it, you leave people you Love and you never really leave them. Your Soul is everywhere. In this way of being conscious, you never have to say goodbye to anywhere or anything you Love.

No matter how many of these site visits I go on, I can never really wrap my head around how the people in the village are surviving. It is only because they are among the strongest people on the planet; that is the only reason. It took us two hours to reach the village, as there were streams of water intersecting the pathways leading back to the village; the people were elated to see us, and also shocked that we had come to meet them. I learned later that countless Ghanaian politicians had visited them over the years, promised them a water well in exchange for their vote, and were never seen again. Some of them seemed skeptical that SSAAP would truly be able to help them.

During the meeting, I asked them a multitude of questions about their water source. In this region of Ghana, the Volta Region, they experience a Major Rainy Season (May to July), and a Minor Rainy Season (September-November). They have three water sources: the first one is utilized until it dries up, the second one lasts approximately two months longer, then finally there is a large river they drink from, called the River Dayi, that is approximately five kilometers away, and they fetch water from it when the two other [closer] sources dry up.

It is such a human tragedy to me that people should be living this way, and when I asked a village elder if he thought that there is any way my work is hurting people, rather than helping them (i.e. perhaps I am taking their personal responsibility away from them by providing them with a water source when they should have taken initiative on their own to solve their water problems), he said: "They will never fix it on their own. They will be drinking that bad water for the next 100 years, if left to their own devices."

"So maybe they don't want or need the water well, then? If they are content to drink the bad water? I mean, who am I to say that they need better water; just because I want better for them than this, is it really my place to decide for them what is best for them?"

He laughed. "They want the water well, and they need it, more than you will ever know. They won't ever do it on their own, because they don't take initiative. They consider

initiative as risk-bearing work. And they don't want to take risks. So they remain in destitution. They know you will help them overcome their fear of taking risks. They want the water well. And so your work here is not just requested; it is in fact mandatory.”

Now I just have to figure out how to organize for wells to be dug in the rural part of Ghana. I have seen their village now, and I cannot turn a blind eye to it; I cannot betray them and be another African politician who has visited them, promised them water in exchange for their votes, a fly-by-night ghost that vanishes after their elections are over. I cannot be part of the darkness of the planet, let me be a warrior of Light instead.

The situation here was shocking to me, as Accra is so developed, and there is so much wealth and development in the city here – so much more than in Lusaka, Zambia or in Freetown, Sierra Leone. But perhaps mismanagement of resources has caused such a discrepancy between the urbanized city and the rural village area.

The village has enormous potential. The people of Klutse-Kope Community were asking me about rice farming. Can SSAAP help them with farming, after we do the water well, so that they have more food to eat?, they asked me. ***YES!*** I answered them; yes!, but only if we do a project in the village and only if they are willing to contribute their mandatory 25% Community Contribution in order to sustain mutual partnership between the community and SSAAP. For probably \$100, an entire network of people can farm a rice plantation and eat and reproduce the rice seed from the amount that they sell (that they don't consume for their families) – SSAAP definitely has \$100 for them.

This now on my plate, I simply need to figure out all the pieces of the jigsaw: who to get the water permissions from, find the right contractor, etc. I figure that SSAAP is for all of Africa; anywhere there is a need – I don't want to discriminate. I also don't want to risk spreading myself too thin, which is something I have been guilty of since I was a teenager. Sierra Leone and Zambia are SSAAP's commitments at this time, and if the Universe permits it then we are able to help the remote communities of Kpando District, Ghana.

I reexamined some of the line items on our SSAAP budget and I think we can dig water wells in Ghana while keeping our commitment to Sierra Leone for their 55 wells for 2022-2023 and Zambia out of its 3 wells for 2022-2023. Four other villages in this region of Kpando District are in a cluster, within a 1 km radius of one another, of Klutse-Kope Village, so I am thinking at this time that 2 or 3 wells can satisfy all 5 of those villages; this is the great essential of West Africa. West African tribespeople live in clusters. One well can help even up to 5 villages! In Sub-Saharan, we have more nomadic tribes, or people like the Tongas (our tribe in Zambia) that herd cattle, and there are usually 20 minute walks between homesteads within the same village and one village is a 2-3 hour walk to get across it; drilling a water well in such a situation is always difficult, as you deal with the challenge of where to centralize the water well in such a large square area whereby everyone is desperate, as the water well in a village is basically gold in Africa: everyone wants it, desperately, will do anything to get it.... In our villages in Zambia, the question of where to

sink the drill bit into the ground to secure a water well is something I let SSAAP's contractor/geologist/driller named Likumbi determine, and he does so in terms of the geology of the area, or where the aquifer will provide the most water abundance for as many people as possible, and then blame everything on him because I can never make everyone happy ☺, but I try my best at all times with my impossible job ☺, and Love it more than anything else on the Earth.



*Our first site visit of 2022 and I am elated to be back in Africa again!*



*Site visit: Lake Volta Region, Ghana: Klutse-Kope Village, 28 October 2022. The village is impassable with a vehicle or motorbike so part of the way we had to walk through water. We came to find out later that this water source is Water Source #2 that they use when Water Source #1 completely dries up.*





*The journey was quite long due to the conditions of the road. This is also one of the fundamental reasons why the villages in this area are undeveloped: the outside world cannot reach them, nor can they reach the outside world in order to trade goods, or work together. Perhaps this is one of the taproots of SSAAP: each village should be sustainable within itself, rather than relying on a system of trade with the towns or even the capital city of the nation. Each village should be self-sustaining, with enough clean water and food to keep its people healthy, with adequate nutrition, and have plenty of water for all who reside there. After this task is accomplished, or during its process I should say, SSAAP works with secondary issues: microloans (“Village Banking”) in an effort to provide start-up capital for one to begin her/his own business, which usually involves rearing animals, selling baked goods within the community, sewing, starting sunflower fields (Zambia) or pineapple plantations (Sierra Leone). Other secondary issues work with school sponsorship (primary and teenage mothers returning to school in Sierra Leone; adult literacy for women in Zambia), animal-rearing, and a multitude of other projects that can prosper depending upon the level that the people themselves are thriving. But in order to have a sustainable, firm, solid base, SSAAP’s foundation rests in security of water and food for the people, primarily. Without this, nothing truly sustainable can ever be accomplished in the rural communities SSAAP serves.*





*The school children, after attending school, are fetching water to take back to their homes.*







By the time we reached the village, the Team of seven of us were nothing short of exhausted.







*The people had already gathered in numbers, waiting for us to explain to them the purpose of our visit, why we had traveled so far to meet them, and the mission of our organization.*







*Proper village protocol insists that each of the visitors shake the hand of each participant.*



*The people asked outstanding questions, and when I explained to them that their part in this project would be 25% Community Contribution, in the form of F&F (Food and Fuel) when we come to visit their site, they started clapping. I also suggested that they build a small structure for SSAAP, so that when anyone coming from outside the village, or internationally, the SSAAP volunteer can have a place to sleep, as the travel time to and from this area is so long, the time actually spent within the village felt too short.*

**Water Source #1.** This temporary stream, located approximately 3 minutes outside of Klutse-Kope Village, dries up by November/December of each year.







*Mosquitoes and other bugs are mating in this water, which adds to further contamination of the water source. Radiance laughed at me that everyone reading my newsletter would think I was joking when I displayed these photos of the water source; both she and I were actually in disbelief that the water could be this bad, until we saw people fetching it and drinking it, gulping it down from thirst in this large-scale West African jungle, and I had to fight away tears that were choking my throat.*



*The situation is so appalling, because even animals are not treated this way. An animal can drink this condition of water, a human being cannot. My work leads me to a state of chronic shock; no matter how long I do this work, I still cannot fathom how human beings can survive when this is the water they are polluting their bodies with, and have no choice other than to do so.*



**Water Source #2.** *This secondary stream, approximately 30 minutes from Klutse-Kope Village, dries up by January of each year. This is the same water source as in pages 7-9 of this newsletter: the water that the Team is wading through.*







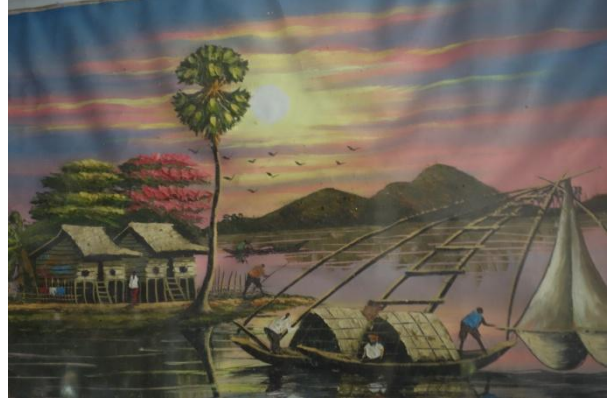
***Water Source #3.*** *This water never dries, as it is a river, called River Dayi, but as you can see, it is hardly fit for human drinking purposes, or for washing laundry, cleaning the cooking pots, or for using to bath your baby in. It is also located approximately 5 km from Klutse-Kope Village, which the people report is about a two hour walk in one direction just to fetch one 20-litre container of water, which isn't even enough for their entire family of 10+ people, on average.*



*The people took the site visit extremely seriously, which was an honor to both Radiance and as well as to SSAAP.*



## *SSAAP Art Opportunities*



*Some samples of local Ghanaian art, to be sold by SSAAP in the future! I am so excited!*



*All images featured on this page are courtesy of Bethel Height Hotel, Accra, Ghana.*

## *Radiant Street Beast Art Holiday Sale*



Radiance is sitting on the bed of our guesthouse in Ghana, in a frenzy (!), making art to send back to the States in time for the Holidays! Our beLoved SSAAP Volunteer, Mike Edwards, visiting us from November 4-18, 2022 in Sierra Leone, will bring her jewelry back to the States and send them to Laura, SSAAP's Secretary, in North Carolina for sale on SSAAP's website: [www.ssaap.org](http://www.ssaap.org).



These precious trinkets are perfect holiday gifts, and also support a worthy cause: taking animals off the streets of urban areas and bringing them back to the village; through vaccination, medication, de-worming, and proper food, care, and Love, the animals become their highest selves. To learn more about Radiance's work, please contact her: [radianceamara@gmail.com](mailto:radianceamara@gmail.com) (her middle name: "Amara" is a West African/Egyptian name meaning: "immortal" or "tree" and is a common name here in West Africa. She is called Amara in both Sierra Leone and Ghana).

Other traditional, local art items from Zambia, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia/South Sudan are also available for sale on SSAAP's website: [www.ssaap.org](http://www.ssaap.org). Thank you for your interest in supporting both local artisans and street animals! ☺







*Village vegetable market, Kpando District, Southern Volta Region, Ghana. Many vegetables are grown in the village or in areas just outside the district town, and brought to the village via animal or vehicle. The vegetables must be sold that day or a day later, as they are entirely organic: not grown with any GMO's, chemicals, or pesticides, and if unsold they will rot there in the market.*



## *Trokosi in West Africa*



I had the great honor and privilege of meeting with Mr. Steven Awudi Gadri when I traveled to Ghana; Steven also happens to be the father of our host, Lawson. ☺ Steven is a human rights activist, a follower of Gandhi, and works with abolishment of the practice of Trokosi. Trokosi is practiced in Ghana and its neighboring nations of Togo and Benin.

Ghana was the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to get independence from its colonial oppressor, England, on March 6, 1957. Just to give you an idea, Zambia did not get its independence from England until October 24, 1964: more than 7 ½ years later. The last of the African nations to have their independence granted to them happened after my birth in 1979. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, was a follower of Gandhi; as was the first president of Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikwe. I see this as a perfect home-school lesson for my daughter; I tell her: *“Connect the dots. Why would the first presidents of both Ghana and Nigeria be followers of Gandhi? What is their relationship to Gandhi, or why would they be interested in him at all?”*

For me, one of the most important parts about Gandhi and his Nonviolence movement, which was indeed international, was that his work freeing India from the shackles of British colonialism was the first nail in the coffin of colonialism. Once India was freed, this paved the way for all the African nations to gain independence from their colonial oppressors. Some nations, like Zambia – deemed worthless as our only export is essentially copper – was given up without a fight, but other nations, like Sierra Leone, D.R.C. (formerly the Congo or Zaire), or Zimbabwe, were not wrenched free unless through a great struggle of conflict, battle, and suffering.

Therefore, to me it is paramount to recognize Gandhi’s participation in the dissolution of colonialism all over the face of the great African continent. He was the leader in the abolishment of the colonialism of India, and due to his work (and suffering), after India fell



from Britain's colonial reign, one by one all the African nations fell like dominoes from their colonial oppressors: France, Belgium, Portugal, and Germany. I think it is also important to recognize the essence of Nonviolence: to get to Nonviolence, one always must pass through violence first; that is why leaders like Martin Luther King, Abe Lincoln, Barack Obama, Mohandas Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela have had so much violence inflicted into their lives: physical, emotional, or psychological violence; they are warriors in the name of Nonviolence, but lives were filled with so much violence. In order to reach Nonviolence, we must pass through violence first. Man in his lowest forms is violent; man in his highest forms is Nonviolent. There are many tests along the way, and once we reach a state of Nonviolence, we realize that we could not have reached this place without first having encountered serious injustice and violence. Nonviolence is one of the most misunderstood concepts on the face of this planet: we cannot passively tolerate injustice and sit as silent stones and be "nonviolent", as this is the essence of violence itself: doing nothing. We must stand up for Truth. Gandhi said: "There is no god higher than Truth."

Conflict is the greatest lesson – and greatest tool – we have available to us as human beings for deep, deep growth. A true warrior confronts conflict; the first meeting at the Oval Office between Barack Obama and Donald Trump was expected to last fifteen minutes; after an hour and a half, the meeting ended. I have no doubt that during those ninety minutes, Obama was trying to talk through, gain understanding, and deal with the conflict and tension between the two men. That is the faith I have in him, as an emissary of Light, this is the faith I have in Barack Obama.

Conflict doesn't just go away because we don't want to face it; rather, conflict not dealt with gets worse. It doesn't go away on its own. Therefore, all of us as a collective human unit breathing oxygen on this planet, as warriors of Light we must confront the darkest demons of this dimension ~ and we can begin within ourselves.

\*

***Trokosi***: the practice of sending a virgin to the Trokosi shrine to atone for the family's sins. Such sins include, but are not limited to: stealing, committing adultery, murder, refusal to settle land disputes, and other forms of violence. Steven, born into the ancestral system of traditional African religion (*Animism*), saw from a very young age the darkness within the system. He has been working to eradicate it for over half of his life, and has spoken about this practice in India, as well as worked with various foundations around the world (Australia, U.S.A.,) and the UN to educate about the atrocities of Trokosi.

Trokosi is considered an African religion, and for that reason, it has not been abolished ~ not only by intellectuals in Africa, but also by the West, even during the colonial era, as it was deemed an integral part of indigenous society. But as a human rights activist, Steven believes that innocent people should not be sacrificed for the negative deeds (i.e. sins) done by others.

If a sin is committed by the family, then in order to eradicate the sin / atone for it, a virgin is located within the family unit. As most African families, in the villages / traditional setup have an average of 8-12 children, and all families are extended families, finding a virgin is usually fairly commonplace for the family. The virgin girl is defined as, (1) age 6-12 years old, (2) has not begun her menses, and (3) has never engaged in sexual intercourse. The girl is then sacrificed to the Trokosi priest, on average age 60 years old, and she must stay with him forever, in sexual and psychological bondage. However, the virgin girl is not the responsibility of the Trokosi priest; she is fed, clothed, and still taken care of by her relatives.



It is also noteworthy that the virgin girl is typically taken from the maternal family line – not the paternal family line.

The girl becomes initiated after participating in an initiation ceremony. After the initiation, she becomes a slave of the deity, which in physical form is the Trokosi priest. It is taboo for anyone to touch her except for the Trokosi priest. At one time at the Trokosi shrine, Steven reported to me that there were 602 virgin girls waiting to be initiated.

More about his work, and Trokosi in Ghana, is indicated in Steven's invitation letter for Heather to come to Ghana, in order for my visa to be issued by the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, D.C., U.S.A. The Ghanaian Ambassador located in Washington, D.C., Ms. Hajia Mahama, is a personal friend of his.

This letter also appeared in the Summer (June) 2022 SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter, so I apologize for the repeated information; I include it again in the Holiday (November) 2022 SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter only because now, it has more significance to both me and to SSAAP than it did in June 2022 when I had no idea what Trokosi was!



Thank you for your interest in this issue. There is so much we don't know about tribal societies, as most of them revolve and evolve through oral tradition and education rather than the Western system of reading and writing (literacy). Because of this, most knowledge of the indigenous people is not recorded on paper. I am so deeply appreciative for the experience I have had here in Ghana. The more deeply I dig into the local, ancient roots of this society – and any society – the more I learn and then can pass onto others. The main objective of education should be service to others. If my education doesn't serve you, then it has failed – and vice-versa.

## **TROKOSI ABOLITION FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL (TAFI)**

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Her Excellency  
Ghana Ambassador to U.S.,

### **INVITATION AS GUEST SPEAKER TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION ON NON-VIOLENCE FORUM IN GBEFI KPANDO, VOLTA REGION, GHANA**

We have the honour most respectfully to recommend Ms. Heather Cumming of Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program (SSAAP) U.S.A for tourist visa issuance.

We are highly privileged and honoured to extend our warm invitation letter to **Heather Cumming** of Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program (SSAAP) U.S.A. as Guest Speaker to participate in Community Education on Non-Violence Forum in Gbefi Kpando, Volta Region of Ghana from 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022 – 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2022.

The Community Education Forum is being organized by Trokosi Abolition Fellowship International (TAFI) in collaboration with Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Programme (SSAAP) U.S.A.

Trokosi Abolition Fellowship is a non-governmental organization founded and established on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1999 Incorporated with Certificate of Incorporation No. G.4652 issued by Registrar General's Department and Certificate of Recognition No. D.S.W/1384 from Department of Social Welfare, Ministries, Accra, Ghana dedicated to advocacy, research, women and girls in domestic servitude, sexual bondage, ritual bondage in

Harmful Traditional Practices known as Trokosi System in Ghana, in the Southern Volta Region and Dangbe East and West Districts in the Greater Accra Regions over the years and have achieved tremendous success in collaboration with Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Department of Social Welfare, Baptist Development and Relief Agency (BREDA), International Needs Ghana and others brought the birth of Women and girls gained liberation and re-integrated into the society.

The organization also published the book title: *The Revealed Myths About Trokosi Slavery: Human Rights Violations*, First Edition published by AuthorHouse UK/US and is available at Amazon.com to educate both local and international community to complete eradicate the practice. The Second Edition book title: *Domestic Servitude: Land and Gender* is now exploring Philanthropist support to publish.

In the year 2013, TAFI participated in the EmPeace LABS 2013 in Jalgaon, India and presented Ghanaian Culture and the topic: Volta River Development in Eradicating Poverty and Hunger in Rural Communities around the Lake and Proposed Irrigation Farming and Water University in the Volta Region. This conference is organized and sponsored by the African Union, Gandhi Research Foundation, Arizona State University, USA, Jain Irrigation Systems Limited and University Community for Social Action and Research, China and has received Certificate of Participation.

Our tremendous presentation, contribution, inputs and excellent performance in the EmPeace LABS 2013 Capacity Building and collaboration building has opened the opportunities for three Ghanaian students for International Students Sponsorship to study in the Department of Peace and Research Centre at Gujarat Vidyapith University and have graduated in Gandhi philosophy (Gandhian Non-violence Theory and Application).

TAFI launched Mahatma Gandhi Peace and Research Centre Community Awareness Education at New Bakpa in the Central Tongu District in the Volta Region that brought the initiative of Satyagraha Institute Capacity Building in the Volta Region in Ghana.

In 2019, the Founder and President of TAFI Ghana was invited as Guest Speaker on the 150 Years Birthday Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and presented a paper on the Topic: Gandhi Philosophy in Relation to Trokosi System in Ghana and has been honoured and awarded with Certificate as International Speaker presented by Professor Nelasco Shobana at Madurai College in India.

TAFI is one of the frontline anti-slavery organizations appointed as a Consultant in Ghana by Minderoo Foundation, an Australian International Human Rights Organization to collate Data on Global Modern Slavery Reports as at 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2020 on Women and Girls during COVID-19 pandemic threat that brought the economic challenges and setback for the organization ongoing programmes till this upcoming innovative Community Forum from 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022 – 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2022.

Trokosi Abolition Fellowship International was registered and established in the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) Journal since 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia by AGRF partners as a staunch advocate educating smallholder farmers in the Eastern and Volta Regions to strengthen the AGRF Concept in fighting to promote Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security to eradicate Zero Poverty, Zero Hunger in the continent.

In efforts of this remarkable and laudable achievements made so far and also to promote the good work of our Ruling Government policy on Planting for Food and Jobs, this programme is being organized by Trokosi Abolition Fellowship International in collaboration with Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program (SSAAP) to drive public education on Non-Violence and creating job opportunities in eradicating poverty and hunger in the remote communities in the Kpando Municipality and North Dayi District in the Volta Region of Ghana.



**The Historic Event Venue:** Gbefi Community, Kpando

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> October – 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2022

**The Theme:** Community Education Forum on Non-Violence

**Guest Speaker:** Heather Cumming

- Heather Cumming Courtesy Call on Eminent Akpini Fiaga Togbe Dagadu Ablenyi IX Royal Palace, Paramount Chief of Akpini State.
- Community Education Forum on Non-Violence
- Non-Violence Library Initiative
- Discussions: Project Opportunities for remote communities
- Delegates from 50 communities and Traditional Rulers, CSO, Media, Dignitaries would participate in this historic event and shared lessons learned to disseminate and educate their communities.

Another issue concerning women in Ghana is the same issue we face in Sierra Leone: *FGM*, or Female Genital Mutilation. This is practiced primarily in the northern regions of Ghana. Female Genital Mutilation, or the removal of female anatomy, causes the vaginal opening to become much smaller, as after being cut the sore will heal. In doing so, during childbirth, many women develop a condition known as *Fistula*, whereby during labor when the woman is pushing the baby through her vaginal canal, because of the reduced size of the vagina due to FGM, the vagina tears into the anus, leaving the woman to have to defecate, urinate, and menstruate from the same orifice, as anatomically the vaginal opening and anal opening are located very close to one another. Due to FGM, when the vaginal opening shrinks, it is almost a certainty that the woman will develop fistula when giving birth. This is a very, very common issue in rural Ghana. From ages 12-14, in the rural areas most of the girls are married off.

It is an unknown fact to most Western feminists that the practice of FGM in Sierra Leone began through a woman, named as Madame Yoko. Yoko, from Moyamba, Sierra Leone (one of SSAAP's project sites), insisted that every woman – in order to be a worthy wife – should know how to cook, clean, please her man, and be circumcised so that she would not feel the pleasure of sexual intercourse, which would cause her not to stray from her husband. In modern times, I have seen girls with my own eyes scamper away excitedly to join the Bondo Bush, where the girls stay for a few months and are initiated into this Secret Society whereby the girls are circumcised and taught to be good wives by the matrons of the

society. It is very tragic to me that as women, we are our own worst enemies – both to ourselves, and to others, specifically in the vein that many women treat other women abhorrently in the name of men. Women who do not value relationships with other women as deeply as they value relationships to their men, women treating other women badly over men, and discrimination of single women – very specifically women who choose to be single – are the most sustainable avenues for ensuring that patriarchy is kept alive on this planet, in all its nations and corners. I also find it very ironic that men are consistently and chronically blamed for injustices brought upon women, when indeed many times women have brought them upon themselves: a prime example being the case with Madame Yoko initiating the circumcision of women in Sierra Leone; this practice was not originated through men.



*Traditional Ghanaian beads, made of clay, glass, and paint*

Slavery in modern times is sometimes even done voluntarily, as is the case with FGM in Sierra Leone. Whereby historically slavery was forced – as per the West African slave trade – , in present times women are volunteering themselves to become slaves, sometimes very specifically to men. It is imperative, I believe, to recognize that men are not to blame for the responsibility that women hold in this decision. We can blame poverty as a generic excuse for women not standing up for themselves, but I have seen just as much injustice done to women in the West as I have seen in Africa, only that the details are different and perhaps so are the extremes.

Enslavement of human beings was a practice that most of the world partook in during the colonial times: Europe, the Americas, Asia, and the Middle East. And yet most of the world is still not prepared to unravel the darkness of what human slavery truly was. Had we healed this part of our past, we would not continue in the present day to see human slavery in all its different forms, still fully alive, on this planet.



## *Volta Region, Ghana*



Volta Lake is a man-made lake, constructed through damming the Volta River. The village area that SSAAP aims to serve, located in Kpando District, Volta Region, Ghana, consists of the community that we visited: Klutse-Kope Village, along with four other villages: Dasilenu-Kope Village (located some meters from Klutse-Kope Village), Lolobi-Kope Village (1 km from Klutse-Kope Village), Togbe-Ahortvi-Kope (1 km from Klutse-Kope Village), and Kokomba-Kope Village (1 kmo from Klutse-Kope Village). SSAAP is hoping to sink 2-3 water wells in this area, which can satisfy all five villages, since the villages are located in a cluster. We try to conserve resources wherever we can, such that one village doesn't have a well that could be easily shared with another village located only a few minutes' walk away, whereby another community located in the middle of nowhere doesn't have a water well because SSAAP was not diligent with resources and gave too many wells in one area. We would prefer to be more organized with our [precious] resources than this.



Lake Volta is stunning, and warm! I was shocked when I swam in it how warm it truly is!



One of the major sources of livelihood for people living just along the borders of the lake is fishing. The fisherwomen/fishermen collect the fish, and then smoke it. It smells delicious! Radiance stopped eating meat at the end of June 2022, and I stopped eating meat in September 2022, and I can already tell it is going to be a long road ahead for us, as Africa is probably the worst part of the world not to eat meat in, second being U.S.A. where nearly every dish is meat-based. In Africa, meat is a luxury and a treat, so it is not consumed at every meal; however, because there is such food scarcity here, I have always taught Radiance to eat what she is given, and when we are served meat as our meal, it is very difficult to turn down eating, and even more difficult to eat something we don't feel it is right to eat. Although animals are treated exponentially better in Africa than in the States, both Radiance and I believe that eating meat is not the way forward for either of us – though both of us will never lie that it is our favorite food group and one of the hardest sacrifices either of us has had to make. I wish I could taste the smoked fish at Volta Lake!



*The fish is huge (!), and is cut into large pieces, then smoked in a local oven, and ready to be eaten, or sold at the local market.*



As formality dictates, we visited the Kpando District Municipal Chief on October 30, 2022: Hon. Geoffrey Koobo Badasu, located second to the right (striped shirt and red shorts). He was elated that SSAAP would potentially be able to come help the rural areas of his municipality. I told him that we can do anything with hard work, honesty, and reverence for the almighty cosmos which controls all things here on Earth. Without this force, which I call Love, nothing is possible – and certainly not SSAAP. A warm, kind-hearted man, Hon. Badasu was thrilled with SSAAP’s philosophy behind working together for the benefit of the rural villages. He asked me if we could assist with agriculture, and I explained to him that yes of course we could, but the agriculture projects require much more than just seeds (which SSAAP can provide), and water (which West Africa appears to have an abundance of). The agriculture projects need education that goes along with them. Nothing formal, just long discussions with people about selling too much of their crop, because they want cash, then finding their families hungry halfway through the year; having to re-purchase more rice or cassava at a much higher rate than what they sold theirs for is not only a detriment to the subsistence farmer, but also a humiliation.



This is also the main reason why SSAAP offers a Microloan Program (“Village Banking”) to our communities in Zambia and hopefully, come 2023, also in Sierra Leone. If we provide small capital startup to interested and industrious female and male entrepreneurs, then they do not have to sell too much of their crops to have cash! This is the philosophy behind our Microloan Programs ~ probably the most popular program among the local people. ☺



## *Sierra Leone: November 2022 – April 2023*



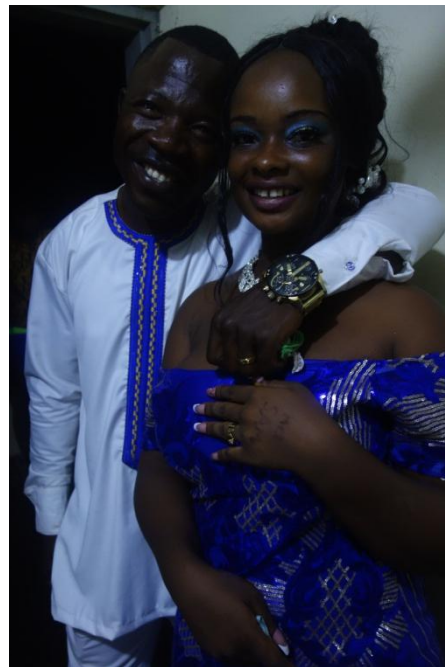
Radiance and I arrived at Lungi International Airport, Freetown, Sierra Leone on November 4<sup>th</sup> @ 4:20 p.m., and our first SSAAP-Sierra Leone visitor, Mike Edwards, arrived the same day on the following flight @ 5:30 p.m.



SSAAP's counterparts from Moyamba District (in orange-red shirt, second from the left: Brima; in khaki vest, second from the right: Musa) met Radiance, Mike, and I at Lungi International Airport, then we proceeded on the four-hour journey from Lungi to Moyamba town, stopping in Port Loko District to briefly meet our counterpart, Taylor (far right).



We stayed at a guest house in Moyamba town, next to a wedding party, the first two nights; the groom is at the far right, in white, above. We decompressed, made a plan for the next few days, and organized the time that Mike would be in Sierra Leone: November 4-18, 2022.



The groom, Amos, with his bride, in blue, above. He showed great interest in working with SSAAP at the next project site, where I want to begin future projects, in Daru town, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone.





It was infinitely incredible to see people that Radiance and I know and Love so deeply, after having been gone from Sierra Leone for almost 2 years and 8 months. We left Sierra Leone at the apex of the Corona virus outbreak and took the last flight out of Lungi Airport before the airport was shut down, on March 19, 2020.







The family we lived with in Moyamba in 2014, another family to us, still has a photo of a graduation ceremony for one of their children. Radiance is pictured on the right, above, wearing a full African *lapa* suit; she is six years old in this photograph and it hangs on the wall of the family's house, though faded, it is a gentle reminder to both Radiance and I of not only how long we have been in Sierra Leone, but also the deep memories we have here. Radiance is half-Sierra Leonean, half-United States of American.

### *Moyamba District SSAAP Monitoring & Evaluation Site Visits*

We began our SSAAP site visits on Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, to assess the five wells in Moyamba District that SSAAP contracted in 2017. The original contractor, Mr. Sam, died in March 2022, and so now four of the five wells are his memorial. The fifth well, for Gbokuma Village, was never completed as the community was uncooperative, and concerned about witchcraft thus they would not allow Mr. Sam to dig their well, and in 2022 we decided – after five years of arguing back and forth with Gbokuma Village – to relocate the fifth SSAAP well in Mowusu Village.



***Well #1: Gibina Village:*** At each of our SSAAP-Moyamba well sites, we are collecting water samples to send back to IX Power Foundation from Golden, Colorado. The water samples will be tested in a laboratory in Colorado, U.S.A., courtesy of IX Power Foundation, to ensure that clean water is indeed extracted from each and every SSAAP well. Due to the high mineral content in the soil in Sierra Leone, as well as the mining done nearly everywhere in the country (Sierra Leonean soil hosts every mineral found in the world), there is concern that the water wells might not be providing clean drinking water, which is SSAAP's main objective in its water well initiative.

Mike is also taking GPS points at every SSAAP-Sierra Leone well site that we visit.







Our SSAAP-Sierra Leone wells rise above the ground, approximately 1 ¼ feet, with a cement layer approximately 1 foot deep within the well at ground level. Each well is affixed with a pulley, a metal door (which has the capacity to lock), a bucket and a tether.

The Gibina Village well has some minor exterior cement damage; otherwise, the well is in outstanding condition and is used by the whole of the community.



The Gibina Village water well success story is one I tell often, and I know I am repeating this information from the Spring Edition, SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter 2022, but after our SSAAP well was dug in 2017, another well across the main path running through the village was dug by three partners: UK Aid, UNICEF, and Living Water International-Sierra Leone, in 2019. This hand-pump well, shown above, was dug without research and insight into the community: it was dug on someone's land, versus in neutral community land, therefore it "belonged" to one family versus to the whole village and the village did not feel comfortable using it; the well was not dug properly anyhow, and extracts little to no water. It is unused by the community. This is an example of how grassroots development aid is typically squandered by large-scale aid organizations working in Africa; they typically hire people from cities and towns who are not local village people, who oftentimes unfortunately fail to do research on the community itself.



Digging a water well in a village that clearly already has a water well is also an abhorrent waste of precious funding resources, when there are thousands of villages in Sierra Leone without any well at all and therefore no source of hygienic potable water. Seeing that millions of Euros and USD are poured into funding impoverished countries such as Sierra Leone annually, with little to no result, it is imperative to understand why. The Gibina Village water well is a prime example of why most large-scale aid organizations fail in their attempts to eradicate poverty: lack of local support, lack of research done in the remote village areas, and general apathy for the rural poor.



I warned Mike Edwards about the SSAAP-Sierra Leone sites before he even came to visit here. My exact words to him were: "... they are jungle sites, hard-to-reach, off-the-beaten-path areas that need services the most and have least access to them..." This is the very essence of SSAAP, but also the great challenge that SSAAP works with on a daily basis: the difficulty in working in areas that are physically complicated to reach, and then after having arrived: working with a village that may or may not be enthusiastic and hard-working; we don't know unless we give each and every village we can an opportunity. Everyone deserves a chance; SSAAP (and Heather) tend to give both people and communities many chances; I have never thrown in the towel easily, which I believe is one of my greatest weaknesses as well as one of my greatest strengths.

Thank goodness that Mike has one of the best attitudes about life of anyone I have ever known. He doesn't miss a beat. And it takes a lot – a lot! – to rattle him. Because he is our first SSAAP-Sierra Leone visitor, since the project began in 2008 here in Sierra Leone (versus Zambia, whereby SSAAP has hosted over one hundred visitors since its initiation in 2007/2008), this has made all the difference. Sierra Leone is not a user-friendly country, and his volunteer services have profoundly inspired not only me, but also my daughter and

every person he has been in contact with here; his attributes include, but are not limited to: infinite optimism, kindness, compassion, and Love: these are qualities that SSAAP-Sierra Leone is in desperate need of. Working in Sierra Leone is very, very challenging and the first few days – hours! – in the country, I was reminded of that again. Burnout rate is very high in this work, and so having a library of books, as well as a stack of journals to write in, keep my lifeblood flowing. As Osho, the late Indian shaman, said: “*Meditation is the only way to stay completely sane.*” In a country with a track record of four hundred years of human slavery, beginning with the Portuguese in the mid-1400’s and ending with the British in the mid-1800’s, thanks to William Wilberforce, as well the first country to endure the sufferings of the human slave trade, there are many forces of darkness in this country: female genital mutilation (*FGM*), civil / tribal / Diamond War (1990-2001) during which there are records of cannibalism, and the Ebola outbreak (2014-2015). Sierra Leone needs all the Love it can get.





### Well #2: Nyandehun-Nichol Village



Our SSAAP well in this community is doing great, with a few minor adjustments needed through efforts of the community: cement on the four legs of the pulley stand, and a new door on the top of the water well. Otherwise, we are very pleased to report that it is extracting an abundance of water for the whole community to utilize.



### Well #3: Ile (Yelleh) Village

This SSAAP water well is the only non-success story I have to share among the five water wells in Moyamba District. The Ile Village well is the deepest of our five man-dug wells, with a depth of fourteen meters. Any deeper than this is a hazard for a human being to dig,



due to excessive heat below the ground, as well as the possibility of digging into a water vein in the Earth, and the current drowning a man not only through the rushing water from the strong current but also underground: sounds like the worst death I can think of since the Medieval Age. Anyhow, the community is insisting that their 14-meter well is not providing enough water for their very large village which is densely populated. When I was made aware of this issue in 2020, I had a community meeting with Ile Village while the Chief was literally on his death bed, just days before he passed away, and told them that their idea of waiting until the dry season came and then re-digging the well to twenty meters was not something that SSAAP would support: monetarily, as well as ethically. I told them that we do not want blood on our hands, and I forbid them to dig the well another six meters. My alternative to their idea was that SSAAP fund a second water well in their community.

Upon our arrival back to Ile Village on November 7, 2022, SSAAP discovered that the water well wasn't being used at all: their philosophy being that since the well didn't yield enough water for all the people in the village, that none of them would utilize it at all. There wasn't even a bucket and a string tied on the pulley above the well.



These are common challenges in our work: *Obstacles to Flight*, I call them. There is absolutely no way that SSAAP can fund a second well in a village that isn't utilizing their first SSAAP well. Mike was beginning to get discouraged, saying that this job has a lot of very depressing elements to it. I told him *yes!*, while he collected the Ile Village water well sample.

The way I left things with Ile Village was that we would wait for them to communicate with us – ball in their court, not SSAAP's – as to whether they completed the minor cement repairs on the well, and reiterated that they did not have SSAAP's permission to re-dig the well to a hazardous depth. The meeting was indeed depressing and we left feeling failed.



Radiance snapped this photo of me in Ile Village with a local lady's newborn baby. These little beings are full of infinite possibility – and infinite Light; I wish I had had twenty of them myself. ☺ How many children I have – or that I even have children at all – has not been my choice, but rather: Fate's. I have always believed in destiny in a very Shakespearean vein, illustrated when Romeo (in *Romeo and Juliet*) throws up his arms and screams into the heavens: "*I am fortune's fool!*" I believe we should all be fools of our own fortune, rather than trying to plan our lives as though we know what is best for us. The real crux of it is that none of us actually knows what is best for ourselves, and the majority of us spend our lives in a constant state of pain avoidance: we make choices centered not around our well being or the well being of others, but instead make decisions based upon fear and usually unsuccessful attempts in avoidance of physical, emotional, psychological, and metaphysical (psychic) pain. Were we to allow ourselves to surrender, to be "*Fortune's Fool*" as Shakespeare termed it, and realize that our lives are meant for more than just our [small] selves, then we might live in a deeper state of connection, intimacy, and harmony with our own Earth: with animals, insects, water, soil, Nature, and our own human collective.



Well #4: Mokoyo Village



We pulled up to this village just before a heavy storm hit, and as we drove into the village on the motorbikes, and I saw the strong bamboo fence surrounding the well, I said to Radiance: “That is beautiful! I wish it was a SSAAP water well!” – having no idea that we were in Mokoyo Village, and indeed it was a SSAAP water well! I was elated that the community had taken the initiative and built a fence, as well to see the crowd of people that the water well was abundantly providing for.





Well #5: Mowusu Village



We reached the village in the pouring rain, at 7:00 p.m. at night, and so relieved that after half of a decade, the last water well was completed! The people of Mowusu Village showered us with Love and gifts. ☺



*Locally-grown and harvested fruits and vegetables by Mowusu Village. Staple crops in Sierra Leone include: rice, cassava, yams, and sweet potatoes; cash crops are different than staple crops in that they are not necessities for daily living but rather luxuries, such as pineapple, pepper, cashew nuts, groundnuts, and sweet corn – to name a few.*

## *Kambia District SSAAP Monitoring & Evaluation Site Visits*



### *Well #1: Rochain-Thallah Village*

This beautifully-finished well done by SSAAP contractor Mr. James Ndoko awaited us when we arrived for our site visit on November 12, 2022. Other than the well being locked, and the bucket not yet having been affixed (they were waiting for us to see it before they utilized the well), the well was very much the picture-perfect well we had been longing to see since visiting the site last in March 2020.



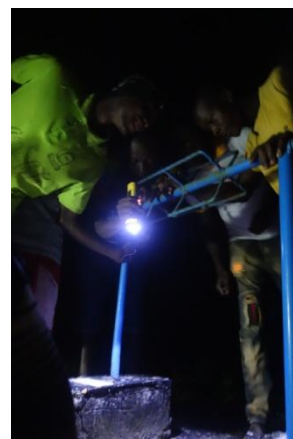
The gratitude of the chief of Rochain-Thallah Village (pictured above, left) was made apparent during his speech, as well the participation and support of the community when they gathered by the hundreds to greet us, sing and dance for us, welcome Mike Edwards (pictured above, right), and to discuss with SSAAP concerning the progress of the village in relation to the addition of a potable water source centralized in their community, on the compound of the community school.



Well #2: Rothemneh Village



The SSAAP contractor for this well site, Mr. Foday, placed a sign on the pathway leading to the water well, so that attention might be drawn to the water source in the village. SSAAP's former local partnership, Community-Based Organization (CBO): Grace Children's Foundation (GCF) is no longer a SSAAP partner in Sierra Leone, though we still maintain a friendly relationship and hope to fund some of their School Gardens or School Toilets projects.



We were not as fortunate at Rothemneh Village as we had been at Rochain-Thallah Village, and found the well unfinished, with cement that looked about two decades old and a distraught community. We had a meeting with them, at 10:00 p.m. at night, and told them



that the contractor, Mr. Foday, would not be paid in-full until his work from 2019/2020 was finished. Hands-down the most challenging aspect of this work is follow-through and holding people whose systems are not learning through reading and writing, but rather oral traditions of learning and story-telling to adhere to written documents, contracts, and commitments. This is very difficult for us, as Westerners, to wrap our minds around, and it is the most difficult part for me, especially as the daughter of an attorney, in my fieldwork in Africa to absorb when written contracts are not honored. As money talks all around the world, and seems to scream even louder in impoverished parts of the world, withholding the final balance for Mr. Foday's 2019-2020 contract until he finishes his four wells seems to be the only way forward for 2022.

### **Wells #3 and #4: Bakeh-Lhimray Village**

SSAAP sprang for two wells in this massive village in 2019/2020. Both were given to Mr. Foday, under contract in 2019, and when we reached Bakeh-Lhimray village on November 13, 2022, we found both of the wells unfinished and the second well: not even fully dug.

I will not lie about what goes on in SSAAP's fieldwork – though I may spare you some of the worst details! – and the reality of rural Africa, and educating those who are not exposed to it, is perhaps of far more value than painting a romanticized picture of the Africa we all wish it was, versus the Africa that it truly is.



We arrived at the first well site at Bakeh-Lhimray Village to find it grown over, with the well cover on the ground near the well – used as a drying surface for one family's laundry.

This entire scenario would be heartbreaking if I had not dealt with it many, many times prior to this. I am the most stubborn person I know, save my daughter's father, and so I know that this well will be finished no matter what it takes me to get the contractor to fulfill his contract from nearly three years ago. I trust myself above all challenges life presents, and I know my inner strength and all that I am capable of. This water well will be finished by the end of 2022, or else no future SSAAP funding will be used on SSAAP-Sierra Leone in all four of our districts (Moyamba, Port Loko, Kambia, Tonkalili) and the social

pressure of this alone is enough to make Mr. Foday finish his work. Using traditional ancestral systems already in place in Africa, such as community-based initiatives versus our Western individually-based initiatives, as well as social pressurizing are key to achieving results in grassroots villages across the vast continent.



The second well site at Bakeh-Lhimray Village made me so angry that I could barely look at it; each water well costs \$1000 and to see after nearly three years only a small hole dug in the ground, uncovered, which is actually a safety hazard to village people – specifically children – led me to say that the well would need to be finished before the end of the calendar year in 2022 or none of the 55 wells for SSAAP-Sierra Leone in 2022-2023 could begin. I also explained to the community that I would tell the contractor that his remaining balance of \$200 would be suspended until his work is complete.

Most of the success stories of my life come first from failures, as almost nothing has come easily to me throughout this life and my Truths are typically hard-won. I am prepared to suffer to get all the remaining wells in Port Loko, Tonkalili, and Kambia Districts from 2019/2020 finished prior to writing new contracts for 2022/2023, and other than Mr. James Ndoko, both Mr. Foday and our other contractor Team (Hassan & Musa) will not receive any further contracts from SSAAP.

The community was told, first by me and then reiterated by Mike Edwards, not to use the well and to cover it as it is a safety hazard until Mr. Foday returns to finish his work.

If this job was easy, then there would be countless other people in the African bush besides me doing it. If the problem wasn't so deep, so complex, and so vast, then its solution would be simple: which it is not. Countless issues have conglomerated together to make Africa what it is today. Unconditional Love dictates that all 14 wells for SSAAP-Sierra Leone from 2019/2020 will be finished, as it is our commitment to the local people and to all our SSAAP supporters, worldwide. Infinite patience is part of my job description; I intend to see every SSAAP project through until its completion, with dedication, compassion, and the wisdom energy of my heart. Thank you for sticking by my side, and SSAAP's, as we continuously evaluate and re-evaluate how best to implement our projects in the field in service of the local needs, as discerned by the local people in the communities where SSAAP works.

Dear SSAAP Supporters,

I want to take a moment to thank Heather, SSAAP's Board, and everyone involved with SSAAP's projects for the opportunity to head over to Sierra Leone this November. I was there from November 4<sup>th</sup> until the 18<sup>th</sup> and visited the SSAAP projects in Moyamba, Port Loko, and Kambia Districts. I will say, Sierra Leone is certainly not for the faint of heart! If you can shed expectations of comfort and embrace flexibility, you will be able to open yourself up to the experience of Sierra Leone and her people.

The main purpose of the visit was to get a general overview of the projects and their progress, get the GPS coordinates of existing well sites, collect water samples for testing to be sent back to the IX Power Foundation in Colorado, U.S.A., and to transport local art back to the States to be sold on behalf of SSAAP.

From my experience, SSAAP's projects have a very important role in Sierra Leone. Yes of course, the water wells, Nonviolence libraries, and agricultural projects are paramount, but what I found eye-opening was the importance of evolving relationships, partnerships, and accountability between SSAAP and the local people. Having the villages held accountable to fulfill their 25% community contribution is the relational cement that binds our people, progress, and the project together, and to see it happen (even if it takes some gentle prodding) is as beautiful as watching the first bucket of clean water come up from the wells.

Whether it's completing outstanding items like building a fence around the well with locally-sourced materials, providing food and fuel to us to visit the project sites in the field, or building a locally-sourced SSAAP house on the premises in the village, seeing the 25% community contribution completed uplifts us all by binding our efforts together in partnership. As we may know, Sierra Leoneans have endured great hardship: 400 years of slavery, centuries of colonialism/resource exploitation, and a terrible civil war to name a few of its tragedies, suffering, and hardship. I truly believe that given their history, if they can apply themselves, the Sierra Leonean people can be a light to the rest of the world and a symbol of strength, perseverance, and triumph.

It is my hope that SSAAP's projects continue to assist them in achieving their higher-self aim while simultaneously helping to improve their quality of life. We have made much progress with our existing projects but still have a journey to go and it is only the Sierra Leoneans themselves who can choose how this path forward is charted.

With Peace and Gratitude,

Mike Edwards



*“If we allow ourselves to fulfill our sacred purpose, if we can bring this new aeon into physical existence, we will have surpassed our teachers – which is what all teachers of merit wish for their students, and all conscious parents wish for their children.*”



*If humans waver in their response-ability, they start using creative energy in a way that is of lesser intent... The forward motion of evolution comes grinding to a halt when human consciousness sleeps and corruption takes over.”*

*~ from Shamanic Mysteries of Egypt: Awakening the Healing Power of the Heart by  
Nicki Scully and Linda Star Wolf*

*As we say in Africa: my heart is my palm. Meaning: my hand is the same as my heart, may it always be open and ready to both give and receive.*



\*



*SSAAP is a 501(c)3 organization, registered in the United States of America as a public support charity, EIN #: 27-2033029; SSAAP is also registered with the governments of Zambia and Sierra Leone. We are a water, food, nutrition, and education sustainability organization created by the people and committed to serving the needs of the people.*

*Thank you for your continued support of our work!*

*All photos displayed in this Quarterly Newsletter are courtesy of SSAAP/Heather Corinne Cumming unless otherwise stated. If you would like to use any of these photographs in your publications, please seek permission from Heather Cumming prior to doing so. Thank you!*







*Rivers do not drink their own water,  
trees do not eat their own fruits,  
the sun does not shine on itself,  
and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.*

*Living for others is the rule of Nature.*

*We are all born to help each other no matter how difficult it is. Life is good when you are  
happy, but much better when others are happy because of you.*

*~ Pope Francis*