



Unifying Neighbors Through Education and Development

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#### **UNiTED Research**

I traveled to Accra at the end of February 2012. Soon after arriving there I continued the journey to the Volta Region. When I arrived at HardtHaven I was overwhelmed by all children who are curious and welcoming to the new visitor. I was staying in a small apartment with electricity in the room and running water on the compound; this was a lot less back to basic then when I stayed in Uganda and Kenya. As my aim was to conduct a health research internship, I wanted to start as soon as possible. The warm weather and the laid back culture, forced me to take it easy and to live by the day. I had both a Dutch and a Ghanaian supervisor which was very helpful. I was the first intern of UNiTED and I received good support and assistance during my research implementation and adjustment to the local culture. I was taught about local habits, traditions and the local kitchen. A special rite is the funeral rite. Family members save for months to gather enough money for the funeral rite; especially when the deceased was old. The funeral rite takes the whole weekend, starting with a lot of alcohol, music and dance. Later on people mourn with loud crying and shouting. People buy special clothes for the funeral, for example a t-shirt with a picture of the deceased. Many people visit funerals. One beliefs that if you don't attend funerals, people will not attend your funeral either.

Before I knew it I felt at ease. I was "adopted" by a Ghanaian mother and had a mountain bike, which I used to bike through the villages. There was no time for boredom with all the children surrounding you. The people in the community were friendly and used to white people. The warm weather was overwhelming at first, but as soon as you admit to it, it becomes comfortable. Taking a bucket shower needs some adjustment and practice. After a little practice I enjoyed the outhouse shower with the lizards passing by. I learned that women too can pee while standing. Learning the local language was a challenging, but rewarding assignment. Just a few words in Ewe in the beginning of a conversation or interview break the ice!

*Jacinta wrote a book about her stay in Ghana. The text above is a small part of the 56 pages Ghana experience of UNiTED's first intern. The book is available in Dutch only. It is called "Liefde en leed onder de Ghanese zon – Belevissen van een onderzoekstagiair in de Afrikaanse Goudkust" and is available at the website of Free Musketiers.*