



Unifying Neighbors Through Education and Development

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Dear readers,

I would like to share my experience with you. This way, I hope to inspire you. I was in Ghana for the first time for a holiday in 2012. The holiday was called 'Ghana Roots'. Being in between Ghanaians, I fell in love with the country and its people. My second experience was the year (April 2013-2014) I lived in Kpando and volunteered for UNiTED Projects and HardtHaven. Consequently, Ghana became my second home. I am living back in Belgium now and there is no single day I don't think about Ghana since I left. The best thing that has happened to me so far is that Jessy and Edem have let me know in March 2013 that I could come to Kpando and that they trusted me into their team. I am sure you are a little curious about my background? Well, I am a bioscience engineer with a PhD in pharmacy. Many of the volunteers didn't understand what I was doing there. I understood more with every passing day. Ghana and its marvelous hospitality felt like coming home.

So, April 10, 2013 I arrived in Accra and I felt so excited about what would come. With an open and giving mind, I travelled to Kpando with Jessy who was introducing me to everything. As the acting program coordinator of UNiTED Projects and volunteer of HardtHaven, I finally found the job of my life. I could be myself, I found myself and I learned so much about life, public health and people. The work was so satisfying and fun, so intense. Although some situations were hard and sad, these were unforgettable and shaped me in a way. During that one year, I worked hard and I made a difference for the people living in Kpando. Though, it also made a huge difference for myself, it made me richer in so many aspects (however not literally ☺). I guided around 90 international volunteers and interns from 17 to 45 years old, from the US, Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada etc. It was so interesting to get to know all these different people with different backgrounds. All those backgrounds complete each other. Together with everyone's enthusiasm it is a synergistic totality that makes the NGOs work and progress forward. All those volunteers give their time, money, knowledge and helping hands to make Kpando step by step a better place to live. Everybody can do something either it is working for an ongoing project either to help to start up a new project. UNiTED Projects and HardtHaven have a clear set of rules and plans so that they are separate professional organizations. Therefore, you make a difference volunteering for them!

When you come to Ghana, be open-minded, adjust to and undergo the real Ghanaian life. What I like so much about the difference with the Western world is that you are conscious about every single minute and every action you undertake (unlike being an automatic pilot). In Ghana, life is slower making living there so intense. This is the end of the page but surely not the end of my story with/in Ghana. I can only advise you to go and volunteer with UNiTED Projects. Go experience it all yourself!

Cheers, Nathalie Symens



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The evening of June 11, 2013: light off (no electricity) in Kpando. Exhausted volunteers and students having a relaxed evening reading close by each other to catch a little of the light produced by a single flashlight.