

ANNUAL REPORT

SSFA ACTIVITIES, 2017

Introduction

Established as a foundation in the Netherlands in 2006, Stepping Stones for Africa (SSFA) is a charity organization focused on grassroots development in West Africa. We work together with community-based associations to achieve their development objectives. To be able to be more effective in the Ghanaian context and administrative structures, in August 2016 Stepping Stones for Africa was formally registered as an NGO in Ghana.

Our vision: empowering communities

In West Africa, we see many communities lacking necessities like healthcare, clean water or sustainable ways of making a living. Despite being mostly well organized socially, these communities are often not capable of making significant changes by themselves to improve the quality of life.

Our vision is to empower these communities to lead their development and improve the living conditions of their inhabitants, through small-scale projects that are initiated and sustained by the community itself or its leaders, and not imposed by others. SSFA wants to provide capacity building to fuel these community-initiated projects and make them a success.

Our mission: providing stepping stones

Our mission is to provide stepping stones such as guidance, expertise, inspiration and funding for development initiatives by communities in West Africa. We want to empower communities to lead their development and reach their goals through participatory approaches, and thereby significantly improve the quality of life of its inhabitants, while respecting the environment.

Administration Ghana Branch

The priorities for 2017, was based on the SSFA midterm strategy of 2016-19. The main focus of activities was Atsiekpoe Battor in the North Tongu District and Liati Wote in the Afadzato South District. The two communities are in the Volta region. In April 2017, Jonathan Kuma Gavi was asked to take up the position of Project Manager in Accra to manage project in the field.

Projects

The people of the Atsiekpoe with the help of Stepping Stones for Africa, Jolinaiko Eco Tours and other philanthropists raised enough funds to complete phase 1 of the "Green Clinic" Project. The foundation for the clinic was completed on 6 March – the 60th Independence Day of Ghana.

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In September 2017, SSFA acquired and installed the interlocking bricks making machine for the project at Atsiekpoe. Three young men were nominated by the community upon the advice of SSFA to learn how to operate the machine and lay the bricks as part of the skills transfer component of the project strategy. The young men worked together with the two expert masons on moulding the bricks and building the walls with the interlocking bricks. By November 2017 all the bricks estimated for the walls were moulded. The three young learnt how to efficiently operate the machine and make the bricks without or with little supervision.

To ensure a smooth running of the clinic project, we made a visit to the District Assembly and District Health Directorate to inform them of our activities in the district. A delegation from SSFA, Jolinaiko Eco Tours and Atsiekpoe Community also had audience with the District Chief Executive to update him on progress of the clinic project and inform him of how much support we need from them.



Installation of bricks making machine(left) and the young men operating the machine (right)



Some of the moulded interlocking bricks

INSPIRING STEPS TO MAKE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

Fundraising

SSFA engaged in a three-pronged tactics to raise funds for its activities:

- SSFA used internet crowdfunding in The Netherlands. It also used its website and social media (Facebook) solicited funds from philanthropists and voluntary organizations.
- SSFA raised funds among travellers of our affiliate partner, Jolinaiko Eco Tours, locally.
- SSFA worked closely with and encouraged the Atsiekpoe community to raise their own funds towards the project besides doing community labour. A mini harvest was held in September and an annual major fund raising was done in December 2017.

Community Engagement

Atsiekpoe Community

As the main project site currently, SSFA engages with the Atsiekpoe community on a continues basis to monitor, evaluate, resolve project related conflicts and re-strategize on how to accomplish our goals. We spearheaded the reconstitution of the project committee as most of the previous committee had either travelled or relocated elsewhere.



Community engagement in Atsiekpoe



SSFA team meeting with the Atsiekpoe community

Liatì Wote

Social Mapping in Liatì Wote

On February 24, 2017, Stepping Stones for Africa Foundation (SSFA) in collaboration with Jolinaiko Eco Tours held a meeting with the Chiefs, elders and people of the Liatì Wote community. Liatì Wote is situated at the foot of Afadjato, the highest mountain in Ghana, found in the Afadzato South District of the Volta Region.

The purpose of the meeting therefore was to:

1. Officially introduce the organizations Stepping Stones for Africa Foundation and Jolinaiko Eco Tours and their philosophy. This also includes their strong believe in community participation. The initiatives are community-driven, and communities play a major role in decision making during each phase of the project.
2. Brainstorm with the community how all the various stakeholders (Jolinaiko, the Lodge, the community) will benefit from ecotourism.
3. Ultimately draw a social map of the community for development.

On April 26 - 27, 2017 a transect walk was organised as a follow up on the first exercise of telling the community story from the past to the present. Essentially, the goal of this exercise was to produce a social map by identifying community resources. This was to aid in identifying the tourist potentials, places of interest, individuals with special skills and unexplored potentials. The exercise was also intended to identify community weaknesses – what these community potentials are lacking and therefore making them ineffective, unprofitable or unattractive.

On August 3, 2017, SSFA organized another community engagement. This was the third stage in the process of identifying the prime area of concern facing the Liatì Wote community and to find ways of resolving it. The purpose of this community engagement was to undertake needs assessment and prioritization to ensure effective planning and implementation of community development projects. Tourism development and management was identified as the prime area of concern.

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Joint SSFA and Solidaridad Community Engagement with Liati Wote

On April 23rd, 2017, SSFA sent an alert email to Solidaridad on account of large portions along the path to the Tagbo Falls in the ecotourism catchment area that was cleared to make way for new cocoa farms. Solidaridad is an NGO committed to empowering the youth, through Next Generation Cocoa Youth Programme ('Maso') in Liati Wote to engage in farming activities to increase cocoa production in the area. Farming activities unfortunately led to the clearing of the forest and felling of trees in the catchment area.

On June 1, 2017, Jonathan Kuma Gavi and the Programme Manager for 'Maso' Fred Frimpong met in Accra to deliberate on the best approach in handling the problem. It was agreed that a joint team of SSFA and Solidaridad meet with the people of Liati Wote to discuss and strategize on how to solve the emerging danger of deforestation to ensure sustainable ecotourism and cocoa production.

Consequently, on Tuesday 13th June 2017, the combined team of SSFA and Solidaridad met with the Liati Wote community at the market square in the morning to find the way forward. Issues discussed covered the engagement of the Ghana Cocoa Board with the farmers, activities of chainsaw operators, charcoal production, lack of environmental and farming techniques education and absence of plan of action for forest protection and conservation.

Actions to Ensure Sustainable Ecotourism and Cocoa Production

From the interactions with the community and submissions by the SSFA and Solidaridad officials, the following ways of solving the problems enumerated were suggest.

- i. The creation of a buffer zone, according to the environmental protection laws of Ghana, along the course of the Tagbo river within which no land owner can farm or fell trees.
- ii. Annual tree planting/growing day in Liati Wote in conjunction with the World Environment Day celebration. **SSFA** to lead the way.
- iii. Planting forest trees along the paths to mount Afadjato and the Tagbo Falls where the paths do not pass through the buffer zone.
- iv. Clearly demarcate the ecotourism catchment area and form a task force for effective supervision and protection of the demarcated area.
- v. Establishing a partnership between Liati Wote, SSFA, Solidaridad and Ghana Cocoa Board to ensure best practices that will lead to sustainable tourism and cocoa production.
- vi. Integrate Cocoa farm tours into ecotourism as one of the tourism products.

It is clear from the meeting that there is a strong need for a good partnership with all the stakeholders in tourism and cocoa production in Liati Wote to forestall the reoccurrence of what happened and also promote sustainable tourism and cocoa production. It is also clear that there is the need for a carefully crafted environmental education and sustained agricultural extension services in the village to ensure best practices.

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Drawing the Liatì Wote community social map for development



Representatives of identified groups (chiefs, men, women and youth) in a needs prioritization meeting with personnel of SSFA

Internship

We had one intern, Marious Manneh, a business school student at the Dominion University college, Accra from July to August 2017.

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