

LernEinsatz 2023

Ghana



Foreword

Being on LernEinsatz to Ghana is a very special experience. Travelling through a country in a bus for one month, sharing a home from home together with 12 adults involves learning on different levels:

On a social level, people might have to adapt to different ways of being with each other, caring for each other. On a personal level, people might have to adapt to having less individual time and space. On a physical level, you have to deal with all kinds of food which is new to you and your body. And on an intercultural level, you have to immerse yourself into a different lifestyle while at the same time asking yourself big questions about global inequalities, injustices and your own privileges.

This report covers all aspects of our journey through Ghana, our schedule, a short introduction of the group members, the "sights" we discovered, our daily life, different projects we visited and the villages we went to. So, it hopefully gives a closer insight into a very in-depth experience. Thank you to all the kind people involved in TIICLS who accompanied us on our journey.



Program

first week

Tuesday, 1st AUGUST ACCRA

Arrival and welcoming Team from Austria Late Breakfast
Staying Healthy in Ghana
Lunch
La Beach/Laboma Beach
Supper (at perfect touch)

Wednesday, 2nd ACCRA

Breakfast (Good Shepherd)
National Museum park (around National Theater)
Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park
Art Centre
LUNCH @ OSEKAN by the sea side
Supper

Thursday, 3rd CAPE COAST

Breakfast (at Kakum)
Kakum Forest
Elimina Castle
Lunch (in Cape Coast)
Supper

Friday 4th KOFORIDUA

Breakfast (Cape Coast)
Travel to Cocoa Farms
Lunch at Koforidua
Rest of day free
Supper

Saturday 5th KOFORIDUA

Breakfast at Koforidua (at guest house)
Visit to Saamam community
Continue to Kumasi, (Cultural Centre/Manhyia Palace)
Supper (new discovery)

Sunday 6th KUMASI

Breakfast at Kumasi
Traveling to Tamale
Lunch (on the way)
Visit Kintampo Water Falls
Supper at TIICLS

second week

Monday, 7th TAMALE

Welcome and Overview of TIICLS
Free Day, washing and taking the first steps outside

Tuesday, 8th TAMALE

Traditional economic system in Ghana
Cross – Cultural Differences and Cultural Entry Systems in Ghana
Tea break
Visit to YCW project (hair dressers and sewing)
Lunch
Visiting local industries (aluminum pots, weavers and shea butter coop)
Reflection evening on female empowerment projects

Wednesday, 9th TAMALE

Empowerment of Women in Ghana
Gender roles in Northern Ghana
Tea break
Giving power to Female Youth in Ghana
Lunch
Preparation & Modern medicine in a local context: Shekina Clinic

Thursday, 10th TAMALE

Interreligious Dialogue
Divination as a tool for problem-solving
Tea Break
Lunch
Visit to a Traditional Chief

Friday, 11th TAMALE

Education in Northern Ghana
Visiting Public & Private Schools
Lunch
Red clay
Traditional dancing. Get your dancing shoes ready
Ghanaian Buffet with several dishes to taste

Saturday, 12th NAVRONGO

Visit to crocodile pond

Sunday, 13th FREE DAY

third week

Monday, 14th TAMALES/DAMONGO

Visit to a Mosque (Central)
Arts Center
Lunch (At TIICLS)
Damongo Talk by Tony, Visit Abrayo seamstresses
Supper (in Damongo)

Tuesday, 15th BOLE

Breakfast (Damongo)
Travel to Bole
Talk by the CDC Director JK
Lunch at Bole Dubai
Walk through Bole Town
Supper & Stay in Bole

Wednesday, 16th BOLE

Breakfast
Travel to one CDC COMMUNITY
Lunch
Walk through Damongo and visit to a pito bar
Travel to Damongo, stay at Mole + Supper

Thursday, 17th MOLE-TAMALES

Visit Mole Game Park (Wildlife)
Breakfast in Damongo (not Mole)
Lunch and Supper at TIICLS

Friday, 18th TIICLS

Bonding
Talk on village immersion
Lunch & Rest
Meeting the village helpers

Saturday, 19th YENDI-SUNSONG

Breakfast (at TIICLS)
Preparation & Trip to Yendi (visit Christian Mothers' Association)
Lunch (Early Lunch)
Preparation & Travel to ("Ngani, witch camp")

Sunday, 20th SUNSONG & TAMALES

Church (optional)
Breakfast
Return to Tamale
Lunch (At TIICLS). Rest of day is free
Supper and Meeting South-North participants at TIICLS

fourth week

Monday, 21st ARRIVAL IN VILLAGES

Dagbani Texts for the village
Individual preparation for village
Lunch
Drop-off in the villages
STAY IN VILLAGES

Tuesday, 22nd and Wednesday, 23rd

Village immersion

Thursday, 24th TIICLS

Breakfast at communities
Return to TIICLS
Lunch
Free afternoon – Drumming and dancing classes

Friday, 25th TIICLS

Breakfast (at TIICLS)
Debriefing at TIICLS
General Evaluations
Lunch
Supper and Khebab Party & Presentation of Certificates

Saturday, 26th ACCRA

Breakfast at TIICLS
Fly to Accra in the afternoon
Farewell Supper at Perfect touch (Life band at +233 Jazz bar)

Sunday, 27th Departure

Early Lunch (Post office)
Early Check –in
Departure

Let us introduce ourselves ...

Karin Kaineder

Dagbani-name: Wumpini (God's gift)

Age: 24-25 (birthday during the study tour)

Favourite food in Ghana: fufu, palava sauce

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: red bird

Shopping favourites in Ghana: fabrics

Must-have in my travel luggage: clothes line

What I could have left at home: book

Position/role in the group: journalist, dancing queen

Special memories of the study tour: batik-workshop, visits in schools, slave camp



Monika Spiekermann

Dagbani-name: Chentiuni (leave it to God)

Age: 26

Favourite food in Ghana: fried plantains, palava sauce

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: baby goats

Shopping favourites in Ghana: earrings

Must-have in my travel luggage: toilet paper, Oropax

What I could have left at home: book

Position/role in the group: radio speaker, gymnastic-yoga-animator

Special memories of the study tour: canopy walk Kakum Nationalpark, our choir-concerts

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Katharina (Kathi) Zöhrer

Dagbani-name: Wumpini (God's gift)

Age: 24

Favourite food in Ghana: fried plantains, mangos

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: elephants

Shopping favourites in Ghana: decoration

Must-have in my travel luggage: snacks

What I could have left at home: sun cream

Position/role in the group: toilet break organizer, the one who blots her clothes nearly every day

Special memory of the study tour: village immersion



Joachim Pesendorfer

Dagbani-name: Naporo

Age: 21

Favourite food in Ghana: Shito (hot sauce)

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: otter

Shopping favourites in Ghana: shirts

Must-have in my travel luggage: knife

What I could have left at home: power outlet

Position/role in the group: chief (11 wives), bottle opener

Special memory of the study tour: village immersion

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Sophia Quirchmair

Dagbani-name: Wumpini (God's gift)

Age: 18

Favourite food in Ghana: fufu, palava sauce, mangos

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: baby goats

Shopping favourites in Ghana: bracelets

Must-have in my travel luggage: flip-flops

What I could have left at home: five powerbanks

Position/role in the group: camera woman, mobile pharmacy, birthday organizer

Special memory of the study tour: visit/participation at Steven's church



Elisabeth (Elli) Furtner

Dagbani-name: Tungteya

Age: 23

Favourite food in Ghana: pineapple

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: guinea fowls

Shopping favourites in Ghana: music instruments

Must-have in my travel luggage: fanny pack / bumbag

What I could have left at home: trash bags

Position/role in the group: choirmaster, birthday organizer

Special memory of the study tour: children in the village

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Anna Haidn

Dagbani-name: Wunnam (God's creation)

Age: 21

Favourite food in Ghana: fried plantains

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: elephants, goats

Shopping favourites in Ghana: clothes, jewellery/accessories

Must-have in my travel luggage: no-bite-spray, toilet paper, handkerchiefs

What I could have left at home: shorts

Position/role in the group: animal-friend, safari-tourist, Dagbani-expert, fun facts

Special memory of the study tour: visiting a diviner



Christina (Chrisi) Zisser

Dagbani-name: name: Tiyumba (let us love them)

Title: Magazhia

Age: 28-29 (birthday during the study tour)

Favourite food in Ghana: fried yam

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: baby goats, elephants

Shopping favourites in Ghana: mangos, cocoa bean

Must-have in my travel luggage: sun glasses

What I could have left at home: trash bags

Position/role in the group: party queen, chicken friend, birthday organizer

Special memories of the study tour: village immersion, diviner, Sr. Regina's project

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Klara Musil

Dagbani-name: Wunnam

Age: 19-20 (birthday during the study tour)

Favourite food in Ghana: mangos, avocados, fried plantains with spices

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: baby goats, sheep

Shopping favourites in Ghana: milo, skirts

Must-have in my travel luggage: Schnapskarten (playing cards)

What I could have left at home: powerbank, trash bags

Position/role in the group: photographer, butterfly-expert

Special memories of the study tour: slave camp, batik workshop



Nicole (Nici) Wyszecski

Dagbani-name: Mandeya

Age: 32

Favourite food in Ghana: palava sauce, plantains, tomato stew, yam, fries, mangos

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: (baby) goats, sheeps

Shopping favourites in Ghana: clothes made of traditional fabrics

Must-have in my travel luggage: bite-away-stick

What I could have left at home: trash bags, Tolino (ebook reader)

Position/role in the group: DJane, nurse, gospel singer, mosquito-bite-healer

Special memories of the study tour: Yendi (talk with members of the Christian Mothers Association, visit at the witchcraft community), village immersion

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Rosemarie (Rosie) Schöffmann

Dagbani-name: Wumpini (God's gift)

Age: 35

Favourite food in Ghana: palava sauce, jollof rice, mangos

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: goats, sheep

Shopping favourites in Ghana: orchestra (music instruments)

Must-have in my travel luggage: scarf

What I could have left at home: sun cream, trash bags

Position/role in the group: organizer, question-box, mosquito-bite-healer

Special memories of the study tour: spontaneous moments/encounters



Fabienne Hopfner

Dagbani-name: Tipagja

Age: 33

Favourite food in Ghana: jollof rice, palava sauce, fried plantains

Favourite animal(s) in Ghana: red bird, little chicks

Shopping favourites in Ghana: nothing special,

I bought a lot of different things

Must-have in my travel luggage: diary

What I could have left at home: bikini, big bottle of sun cream

Position/role in the group: fruit cutter

Special memories of the study tour: village immersion, batik workshop

Report LernEinsatz Ghana 2023

Our Common Group Experience

Caring, fun to be around with, helpful, honest, open-minded, curious - these are just some few words to describe our group members. Before the trip, some of us had been a bit unsure about traveling in a group. Yet, the opposite was true: Our group experience in Ghana was just fantastic!

On our way to becoming a group, we've encountered several special moments that will stay in our minds:

- 👏 first group picture during the preparation seminar
- 👏 fun time at Laboma Beach in Accra
- 👏 birthday celebrations including cakes, drinks and dancing
- 👏 group members talk honestly and openly about their digestion
- 👏 ALL of us dancing at Flemish bar in Tamale
- 👏 sitting and chatting in front of our rooms in TIICLS
- 👏 singing on the bus, and our choir concerts

When it comes to group dynamics, a special focus shall be laid on the time and closeness we shared on the bus. After TIICLS being our first home, the bus had almost become our second one. Thanks to our careful drivers, we were able to enjoy the time by looking out of the window, sleeping or singing. With the help of our song book, which Eli had put together for us, our singing skills improved drastically and at some point, we felt like a real choir. As we later performed our songs, some listeners had tears in their eyes. No wonder, we sang the Irish Blessing in three voices and even we were shivering from the heart-warming sound.

A special VIP in our group was our group leader Rosi. Throughout the whole trip, Rosi helped us with her emotional support and diplomatic skills. Plus, she encouraged us to make our own experiences, reflect on them and thus grow personally. Adding up to her caring and optimistic character, this made her a fantastic group leader.

Thank you - Danke - M paya pam!

Back in time ...

National Museum of Ghana

We went to the National Museum in Accra. The museum is the largest and oldest of six museums managed by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board. It preserves and shares the cultural heritage of Ghana and Africa.

The exhibition we visited was called "Diversity & Unity". There we were able to take a small journey through the history and culture of Ghana. The exhibits were very impressive and had a



lot of additional information. Through this, we learned a lot about the cultural characteristics of the country. The National Museum of Ghana has a large collection of artefacts from different fields such as archaeology, ethnography and art. They showed us how diverse and rich Ghana's heritage is, from the Stone Age to the present day.

In the museum we could admire jewellery and clothing of the tribal leaders, traditional musical instruments, gold weights, beads, textiles, stools, ceramics and much more. These things not only show us the richness of Ghana, but also what unites African societies and what makes them unique.

The visit to the National Museum of Ghana was very interesting and showed us a lot about the history and culture of the country. It was a great start for our trip, on which we would learn a lot more about Ghana, its history and the culture of its people.

Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum

We were also able to visit the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum in Accra. The park and museum are dedicated to Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, who was one of the founders of Ghana. During his term, many educational institutions, hospitals and infrastructures were built. Statues of him can still be found all over Ghana today.

The entire site includes an expanded museum, a presidential library, a restored mausoleum, a small amphitheatre, a fountain and a new reception hall. In front of the mausoleum is a statue of Nkrumah, which seemed to cast a watchful eye over the grounds



and surroundings.

The museum displays Nkrumah's personal belongings, such as books, photographs and official pictures. A collection of photographs shows him with well-known leaders of his time, including Pope Pius XII, Queen Elizabeth II and President John F. Kennedy of the USA. The mausoleum which is located at the centre of the site is the final resting place of Kwame Nkrumah. The mortal remains of his wife Fathia Nkrumah also lie here.

The history of the site is significant, as it was here that Nkrumah proclaimed Ghana's independence from British colonial rule. The decision to build the mausoleum on the old polo grounds of the former colony was implemented in 1992.

Today, the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum is a major attraction for tourists from Ghana and around the world and we were very happy to learn more about such an important person in Ghana's history during our visit at the Memorial Park and Mausoleum.

Manhyia Palace Museum

The Manhyia Palace and Museum in Kumasi is a remarkable monument to the Asante culture and serves to preserve and present the rich history and culture of the Asante

Kingdom. During our short stay in Kumasi, we were able to visit the site, before we continued our travel to the north. The museum is located in a historical palace, which was once the residence of the thirteenth and fourteenth king of the Asante.

The museum houses a numerous and impressive collection of exhibits, including royal jewellery, photographs, medals, furniture, drums and chariots, which are on display for visitors to see, and about which our guide provided us with a wide range of stories and information.

The museum was opened in 1995 and is a two-storey building with open verandas in the courtyard. On a guided tour, we were able to learn more about the history of the Asante Kingdom, royal heritage and rituals, and the conflicts with the British colonial forces. Our

visit to the Manhyia Palace Museum was a rewarding journey into the history and culture of the Asante people and gave us a deeper insight into the chieftdom and royal culture of the country.



Pikworo Slave Camp and Elimina Castle

In the 18th and 19th century, numerous enslaved people were gathered and traded in the Northern region of Ghana before being forced to march on foot towards the southern coast to be shipped to another country. The slaves were given food only once a day and many of them died due to inadequate nourishment. They were also used for the entertainment of their masters, being forced to make music with stones or dance. The premises of the Pikworo slave camp were closely guarded in case slaves attempted to

escape or someone tried to free them. As a punishment, slaves were chained to a rock and had to stare into the sun all day under very high temperatures. Many of them died or went blind.

Upon reaching the south, slaves were brought to trading points, for example to Elmina Castle. This castle was constructed as a trading post for the exploitation of gold, other goods like ivory and spices and later the transatlantic slave trade. It is situated in the town of Elmina, which was originally established by the Portuguese in the 15th century, but later it was also under the occupation of the Dutch and the British. Over time, the castle became a major centre for the transatlantic slave trade. Millions of African men, women were forcibly held in the dungeons of Elmina Castle before being shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas.

The castle contains several dungeons where about 1000 enslaved Africans (400 women and 600 men) were kept in horrific and inhumane conditions. These dungeons were overcrowded, unsanitary and lacked adequate ventilation. The captives had to stay there for several months, were branded with their master's mark and endured unimaginable suffering before being loaded onto ships and forced to leave their homeland.

Elmina Castle has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It stands as a powerful reminder of the brutality and inhumanity of the transatlantic slave trade and is a reminder of the importance of human rights.



Nature in Ghana

Kakum National Park

After spending some days of our journey in Accra, the capital and biggest city in Ghana,



we then got to explore the beautiful nature of Kakum National Park in Cape Coast. The park is named after the Kakum river which is an important water source in that area. Due to afforestation the park now measures 375 km² and is therefore the largest remaining rainforest in Ghana.

There is a great variety of plants and animals. Kakum National Park is for example home to around 650 butterfly species and 100 mammal species like about 300 forest elephants. During daytime most animals are hidden, but they may come out at night. The vegetation can be divided into five sections. The first of the layers, close to the floor, consists of shrubs and herbaceous plants which reach up to four metres. The treetops of the third layer are about 18 metres high and of the fourth layer is about 40 metres. The largest trees are up to 70 metres high. In former times, huge trees (*Celtis mildbraedii*) with flat roots that start way above ground level were used for communication and as a shelter.

The 350 metre long canopy walkway in Kakum National Forest leads over seven bridges and rises up to 40m above forest floor. It was great opportunity for us to see these gigantic trees from above and get the full rainforest experience with a bit of rain.



Sources:

<https://national-parks.org/ghana/kakum>

Briggs, Philip: Ghana (edition 8): Bradt 2019, p. 214

Kintampo Waterfalls

This day was probably the day when we spent the most time on our beloved bus, as we were travelling the long distance from Kumasi to Tamale. However, we stopped in Kintampo for a short visit of the waterfall there. It is part of the Pumpum River which is a tributary of the Black Volta, one of the main rivers in Ghana. The Pumpum River originates in Pumpumatifi, a village that is 10km away. The waterfall is around 70m high and falls in three stages. These can be seen at a 15min walk across bridges and stairs. We only took the stairs to the pool at the base and enjoyed the view from there, as well as taking lovely pictures.

The Kintampo Waterfall is publicly known since the 18th century. It was first named after a British medical officer, Sauders. For a short time, after Ghana gaining independence, the waterfall was called Nkrumah Falls. Legends say that dwarfs live in the area around the waterfall.

Sources:

<https://visitghana.com/attractions/kintampo-waterfalls/>

Briggs, Philip: Ghana (edition 8): Bradt 2019, p. 429

Mole National Park

All excited about hopefully seeing elephants, we were directly tested if we had already been adapted to Ghanaian time. Although time management was not the problem that day, it was rainy and that meant we could not start our safari on time. We did not worry too much and spent our time playing games. Suddenly the chimpanzees came out and we could not get enough watching these cute and cheeky primates climbing up the cars and building. Eventually, we got on top of two Jeeps and started our safari through the famous Mole National Park.

In rainy season the park is full of greens which makes it easy for the wildlife to hide. Soon a warthog, also called pumba crossed our path, as well as kobs, waterbucks, birds, butterflies, etc. And then we saw what we were all waiting for – six elephants. When the elephants moved to that area of the park, they also brought the nice smelling mint plants since this is what they eat. The seeds got there via excrements.

The area was set under protection only one year after Ghana gained independence in 1957. In 1971 Mole National Park was founded. With time, all communities that were still living within the park were resettled. Today it covers an area of 4 577 km². In the park 334 bird species can be counted, as well as 33 reptile, 9 amphibian and 120 butterfly species. There are also more than 90 mammal species. Some examples in addition to the ones mentioned above there are buffalos, roan antelopes, black and white colobus Monkeys, leopards and hippos.

The average altitude of the park is about 150m. The two main watercourses are the Lovi and the Mole rivers that are seasonal but still feed more multiple waterholes. Both are tributaries of the White Volta River.

Sources:

<https://molenationalpark.org/>

Briggs, Philip: Ghana (edition 8): Bradt 2019, p. 454

Crocodile Pond Paga

Crocodiles are the town's totem in Paga and therefore sacred animals. They hold the souls of their ancestors. If one dies, it is buried like a human being. The respect and the trust that both, human and crocodiles, have in each other leads to a strong bond.

About 200 crocodiles live in 15 ponds that may connect during rainy season. In two of the ponds tourists like us can interact with these trained animals. The main ponds are the Chief's Pond and the Zenga pond. Some of the crocodiles are over 80 years old. We also got to meet an old one when we visited them on the 12th of August. They are conditioned to wait for the chicken that they will get after everybody has taken pictures and touched the crocodile. It is believed that the crocodiles know if someone has ever eaten a crocodile but if that is not the case, they will be friendly.

The scenery around the pond is stunning, the water attracts dragonflies and we saw many beautiful butterflies there. The land around the ponds is used as



pastureland for goats and cows. And of course, the chicken that later will be fed to the crocodiles.

It requires trust to touch a crocodile, an animal that is much stronger than oneself, that could kill you easily. It is kind of surreal to think that crocodiles have been living on this planet since dinosaur times. Nowadays, the crocodile pond in Paga might just be a tourist attraction but there is much history lying behind it and more importantly remarkable animals.

Sources:

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/sacred-crocodile-ponds-of-paga>

Briggs, Philip: Ghana (edition 8): Bradt 2019, p. 484

Traditions

Traditional drumming and dancing in Ghana

The most important musical instruments in Ghana are rhythmical instruments. We got to see many different types of drums and rattles – for example a Bakita, a Balungu, a Dung-dung or a Djembe. A Djembe is always hand-made and you can buy one at the Arts Centre. That is the reason why



all of them are unique and each drum has a different carving. This kind of drum is made of carved hardwood and is covered by rawhide. The most used hide is from goats. A Djembe is played with bare hands.

During our trip a group of traditional drummers and dancers performed for us at our accommodation. The drummers

were accompanied by a flute player. Most of the traditional dances are performed barefoot. The dancers always wear clothes made of traditional fabrics. When you appreciate the dancing and drumming in Ghana, you push some banknotes or coins against the foreheads of the artists.

The chiefly system - Chiefs

The system of chiefs is one of the most important old traditions in Ghana. There are many different kinds of system along the country, in some even a woman can become a chief. But in the most parts of Ghana the son of the aunt of the current chief is going to become the next chief. In bigger cities like Tamale there are some less powerful chiefs. They serve mainly as mediators in disputes and conflicts, where a higher chief acts in the role of a landlord. He owns most of the land. The less influential chiefs are called "subchiefs". There are also differences among the clans. The biggest clan is called the "Ashanti". The leading chief of the Ashanti has nearly the same power as the president. The Ashanti even have their own police force.

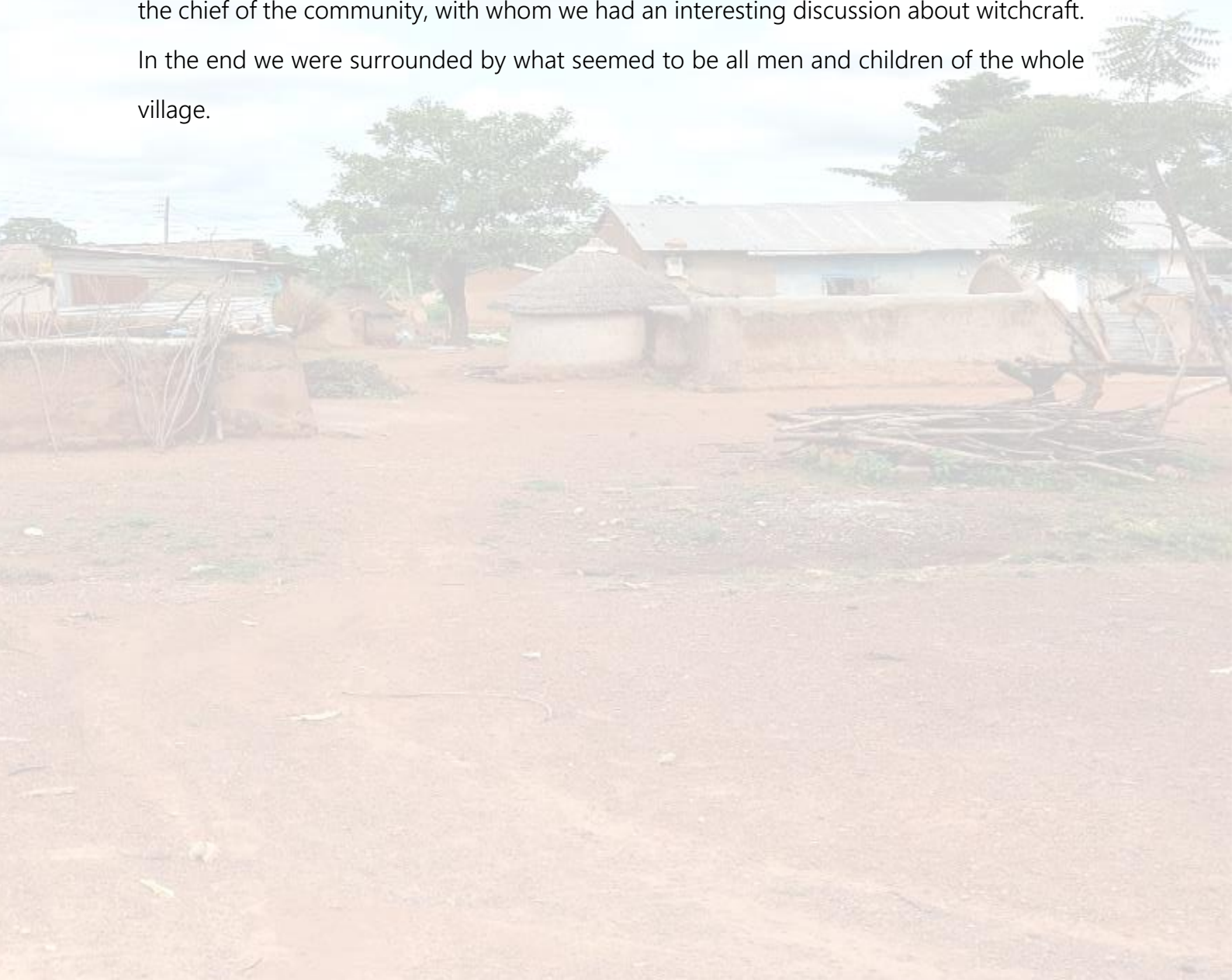
The chiefs tasks are very diverse. As already mentioned, being chief is an important and powerful title. He has the power to speak right. For example, if you killed the chicken of your neighbour, the chief tells you what you have to do as reparation. Therefore, the chief has to make sure that there is harmony in the village.

If you are visiting a community, you have to introduce yourself to the chief. At first you have to find one of the elders who can arrange a meeting. After the elder has arranged a meeting you have to find out what you have to bring to the chief as a gift. Common gifts are: cola nuts, guineafowls, goats or some money. That depends strongly on what you want from him.

When you are in the chief's palace there are some more rules. After entering, go to the left side of the room, the right side is only for the village elders. After you have taken your place do not look at the chief and do not speak to him, you are just allowed to talk to one of the elders, who is called an interpreter.

Witchcraft – The Ngani witch camp

During our trip we visited the Ngani “witch camp”. Lots of people who are blamed for having supernatural powers live in this community. They get accused of causing sickness or death. Often by their neighbours or other members of the same communities, even if they just appeared in their bad dreams. Therefore, the communities they used to live in forced them to leave everything behind and to never come back. Their only chance of survival is to get to one of those so-called “witch camps” where they can start a new life in a safe but very poor environment. Even though they should “lose their powers” if they go through a special process and drink some mixed cocktail with unknown ingredients prepared by the chief’s family, they still are not welcomed by society. During our walk through the village, we met a lot of women and children who looked at us in surprise but were very happy as soon we tried to greet them in their mother tongue. We also visited the chief of the community, with whom we had an interesting discussion about witchcraft. In the end we were surrounded by what seemed to be all men and children of the whole village.



Local industries

During our study tour we visited some local industries, for example a shea butter factory and a pottery center.

Shea butter cooperative

In Gumo near Tamale we visited a shea butter cooperative. There we learned a lot about the production of shea butter and got the possibility to buy pure shea butter and shea butter soap made in this factory.

Shea butter is made from shea nuts which grow on shea trees. The production of shea butter needs a lot of time (around one week) because there are a lot of different steps to do. The work is mostly done by women even though it is physically demanding work. In factories there are different tools and machines



available, in rural areas the women do the work just with their hands. In the factory we visited in Gumo there were about 40 active women and 75 retrieval women (for example for the first step - picking the fruits). They produce two different types of shea butter: pure white shea butter and yellow shea butter which is mixed with herbs. They sell the shea butter to individuals and companies inside and outside of Ghana. There are different prices for individuals and companies. Both prices are very low in comparison to the price shea butter products are sold in the Western world.

The visit of the shea butter factory was interesting, but it made some of us very pensive and angry about the injustices in the world trade system.



Pottery centre

In Tamale two local producers showed us how to produce cooking pots. They use termite soil as a shaping tool and melted aluminium waste as material for the pots. You do not need a lot of different materials and tools for the process but the work is very hard to do. Probably the physical exertion is one of the reasons why this work is mostly done by men.

There is no special education or training for this work and consequently you cannot get a certificate for it. Because of this it is very difficult to find young people who want to learn this profession.

It was very impressive to see how these two men transform waste just with their hands and easy tools into pots.

Project visits

Caritas Ghana – Advocacy on child labour in agricultural communities in Ghana

Child labour in Ghana is a very concerning issue. It involves the exploitation of children through various forms of work that deprive them of their childhood, interfere with their ability to attend schools on a regular basis. Child labour is mentally, physically, socially and/or morally harmful.

In Ghana, children are working in various sectors, including agriculture, fishing, mining, domestic service and in small-scale industries. The reasons for child labour in Ghana are complex and often tied to poverty, lack of access to education and limited enforcement of labour laws.

The project “Advocacy on child labour in agricultural communities in Ghana” focuses on increasing access to quality education, strengthening child protection systems and raising awareness about the importance of abolishing child labour. So, for example, the children

have established a club against child labour together with their teachers to repeatedly raise awareness about children's rights in their community.

During our visit, many speeches and presentations emphasized the importance of this initiative and how the entire community, including the Chiefs, value and support this project.

Cocoa farm

After a longer drive than expected (we started with an estimation of less than 5 hours and ended up with over 8 hours) we finally arrived near Koforidua at the cocoa farm. Ready to learn about farming in Ghana, we went straight to one of the organic cocoa farms. Farming

in an organic way

helps to save money because hygienic working conditions are more important than pesticides.

However, the certification

progress increases the workload

significantly. This



particular cocoa farm is part of the organic cocoa association society, based in the Netherlands. Every year, the farmers are applying for the certificate by handing in information about the quantity of beans to be sold during the next year, about their farming practices or about the size of the farm. After reviewing these documents, visits on site take place to check if the information provided is correct. Farmers are also trained every year by one of their fellow farmers about farming practices and how to further improve them.

We got a “yes” when we asked if our guide likes being a cocoa farmer. In his opinion, cocoa is one of the best crops in Ghana, since dried cocoa beans can be stored for around two months before selling. As a result, the prices on the market can be monitored for some time before selling the crop.

Young Christian Workers and weaving center

The NGO Young Christian workers has different initiatives to support people to get proper training in different occupational fields. Two of them are sewing and hairdressing. In both projects, we got to know a lot of interesting young women, who want to open their own business one day. Before that, they have to finish their training in order to get a certificate



and work for some time to get money to open up their own business. The Young Christian workers are helping them on their way, by supporting especially those girls who cannot afford all costs of the training.

After that, we met a woman, who already achieved her goal and opened her own weaving training center. She finished her education in a weavery in 2002 and could open her own training center in 2018. There she is teaching 12 girls who are with her for about three years before they finish their training. We learned, that

in order to weave 15 inches of fabric, they need 1230 inches of thread and about a quarter day to weave the beautiful fabrics, which are used for traditional clothing.

Christian Mothers Association

“A group of women to pray & support each other” – that is the explanation we got about this association. After an informal, but very informational and exciting talk with these women, this explanation really fits perfectly. Areas of their work include:

- Education of civil society about problems people face when marrying at a young age.
- Distribution of sanitary pads to girls, so that they are able to go to school during their menstruation.
- Training woman in soap making to decrease the dependency on their husbands.
- Talking with both men and women about traditional gender roles, and how the dependency of women has negative effects for both.

However, a lot of us will remember this project for a different reason. We had very interesting discussions about gender roles, climate change, homosexuality, marriage, and so on. We exchanged different points of views, learned a lot about Ghanaian culture, but also our own culture. We found out about similar standpoints and could talk about differences very openly.

A Rocha – Caring for God’s Creation / Mole

During our four-day trip to the north-west of Ghana we also visited a project by A Rocha. A Rocha is an organisation that advocates for environmental conservation. The goal of the project in Mole is to take action within today’s climate crisis via landscaping.

The communities that lived in the area where now the Mole National Park is, were relocated and they lost their right to hunt and farm there. A Rocha is helping these people to adapt to a new way of agriculture that is beneficial to them and to nature and helps coping with climate change. Some examples of the work of A Rocha are implementing honey bees, improving the value of shea butter but also planting Indigenous plants. Moreover, they work with schools to teach about climate and environment.

A Rocha is always in contact with the government to discuss the best use of natural resources and appropriate policies.

When working with the communities, A Rocha wants to give them the leadership over the projects. They let them identify what good things they are already doing and educate to improve the circumstances they are living in. They are pointing out the noticeable consequences of climate change to educate about problems that have occurred in the last few years.

A Rocha is operating in 20 different countries. They first came to Ghana in 1999 and started their work in the north in 2005. One of the biggest challenges that Ghana is facing right now are decreasing rainfalls which endangers the food security. A Rocha is collecting data about flora and fauna and warning people about possible fire outbreaks.

Sources:

<https://ghana.arocha.org/news/mole-landscape-momo4c-green-business-call/>

Notes Karin Kaineder

Stephen's Project – Plant nursery

During our trip we were in the very good hands of the TIICLS team. Sometimes it was hard to imagine that they also have a day-to-day life that they are managing while taking care of us and helping us explore Ghanian culture. Stephen, who accompanied us almost every day is a landscaper in "real life". It took us almost until the end of our stay in Ghana to visit his project, a plant nursery in the Tamale region (close to Shekina clinic). We soon understood how much passion Stephen has for his plants. Together with 4 permanent



and 8 casual staff members he cultivates for example sweet potatoes, papaya trees and shade trees. The small plants are then brought to communities to provide them with food that endures the consequences of climate change or helps reducing the effects. This is what the huge

shade trees do since they work like a natural air condition. It was impressive to see with how much passion and motivation this project is running.

Shekhinah Clinic

(Shekhinah = the presence of God)

Shekhinah Clinic for the Poor and Destitute was officially established in 1991 by Dr. David Abdulai Fuseini – popularly known as Dr. Choggu.

Shekhinah Clinic exists to provide free medical services, meals, clothes, accommodation and other support services to the poorest of the poor in order that they may experience God's unconditional love. The clinic is open daily except weekends and runs on a first-come-first-served basis. There are about 50-70 patients every day.

Shekhinah Clinic is a non-governmental and nonprofit organization. There is no regular source of funding outside of Divine Providence. The clinic depends on donations and individuals who are passionate to its mission and vision because it is not possible to employ workers. All the staff members (around 20) are volunteers from inside and outside of Ghana. There is a cooperation with some doctors from Canada for 25 years. They come twice a year for surgical operations. The motivation for all the volunteers is the joy to help somebody else.

The idea of services for the poor was developed by David Abdulai Fuseini's wish of personal fulfilment in life. In 1951 he was born into a poor family. He was the only survivor of eleven children, all his siblings died because of poverty related diseases. David became a street kid and decided to spend his life helping the poorest in his society. With the help of a few Samaritans he made his way through basic education and medical school. In order to realize his dream of running a clinic for the poor, he needed enough experience, so after graduating as a medical doctor in 1979 David worked in different places inside and outside of Ghana to gather experience.

1989 he did his first operation under a mango tree where the Shekhinah Clinic presently stands. The building of the clinic started in 1990 and was finished in 1991.

Shekhinah Clinic is not just a place for medical services but also has a food program ("food-on-wheels") since 1992. A daily service serves foods for around 150 people in Tamale (mentally ill people, underfed prisoners and volunteers of the clinic) and every year the volunteers cook a special Christmas meal for "the forgotten ones" (more than 3000 poor people).

Since the death of Dr. Choggu in 2016, his wife Mariama leads the team of Shekhinah Clinic. On his death bed Doc insisted the food program should continue because “the stomach knows no holidays”. Dr. Choggu was buried inside the clinic area. He was a true pioneer and left big foot steps!

More information: homepage: <https://shekhinahclinic.org>

Youtube: under the mango tree – documentary trailer

Schools

On our programme there were also some school visits. Especially the teachers among us were really looking forward to those attendances. In one of the lectures, we could already learn that the school system in Ghana is very different to the Austrian system.

We visited a public school not far away from TIICLS. As soon as we



arrived, our appearance was the most important attraction. We met the headmaster of the school who explained to us that school starts at 8 o'clock in the morning and lasts until

2:30 pm. Apparently public schools always have money issues. We were very surprised that each class is attended by 50-70 students even though the maximum number of students should be 45 per class. Even though there are a lot of trained teachers in Ghana, there is always a teacher shortage in



public schools. One of the reasons might also be the insufficient payment. For example,



teachers have to pay for most of their workshops by themselves. Later, we visited some of the classrooms and had some time to interact with the students. After a lot of high fives, we went on to our next stop: the private school. As soon as we arrived, we could already see a lot of differences compared to the other school. This school did not have any money issues. The reason for that might also be the 1500 Ghanaian Cedi school fee that parents must pay every school year. The headmaster also told us that they have discounts for workers from the school. In general,

more men work as teachers but in nursery it is the opposite. It seems like the students and teachers in this private school were more used to visitors because we did not feel like being the most important attraction of the year. However, it was very special for us to see the big differences between those two school forms.

CDC – Care for Deprived Communities

The CDC project was formed in 1999 by John and his team in order to raise awareness of the HIV issue in Bole and in the communities nearby. Even though a lot of NGOs were fighting HIV in Ghana, no organisation took care of the north. Thanks to John who connected his programme with Action Aid the HIV campaign the education could start. Later, they got fundings from the government and since 2012 the DKA also supports different projects. Since then, other actions like campaigns against child trafficking or girl's empowerment and teen pregnancy projects have been running. Now John and his team are also trying to set up a mobile library to support the education of students in schools in different communities.

During our days in Bole we also visited a community where John and his team are based with their project. After a short visit at the local chief's palace, we were warmly welcomed by the inhabitants of the village. They showed us traditional dances, gave speeches and showed us the local school.

Village Immersions

During our stay in Ghana we also got to experience a village immersion where we learnt a lot about the lifestyle and everyday life of the Ghanaians. In Groups of three we visited the villages Gumo, Napayili, Nwodua and Kukuo Yapalsi where we stayed for three nights. We also had to fulfil some group-challenges (which we set up for ourselves) like driving with any transportation in the village, taking a cute picture of a goat or doing a stone meditation with some children. All in all, the village immersion was a success.

Village immersion in Kukuo Yapalsi



When we finally got to Kukuo Yapalsi it was already dark outside. After a warm welcome by our village helper Thomas and his son John we ate our first meal in our compound under the starry sky. During our stay Thomas always cooked for us. Something quite unusual

for a society in which gender roles are still being followed quite strictly. Thomas is a great chef. We ate plain rice, rice with beans, fresh tomato and cucumber, red-red, yams, tomato stew, plantains and we were surprised how tasty Ghanaian food was. Right in the morning the cooking continued when John prepared omelettes with us.

As guests in the community, we visited two chiefs after buying Kola nuts for them and stepping by young welders and weavers. On this first day we were walking around the village and met lots of people and got to see their workplaces and infrastructure. Unlike in Austrian villages, where many people work in the city, many different professions can be found in a Ghanaian village:

- Shea butter: Most of the inhabitants – exclusively women – are producing shea butter; due to little financial resources this is mostly done by hand. It was also possible for us to try out this hard work.
- Seamstress: Working as a seamstress is very common. Especially young women are doing an apprenticeship for three years. After finishing and getting a degree, it is very hard to find a job not to mention running an own business.
- Weaver: Weaving in Ghana can be compared to the seamstresses. The girls need to have skilled hands and be very fast. As in many other jobs only women are working as weaver.

A main means of transportation in the village is the motorcycle and a majority of the families own one. Furthermore, most people walk to reach a new destination. From stories of local people we learned that only a few people visited another village except their own. In the afternoon we were playing with the children. As soon as we came to Kukuo Yapalsi they became a major part of our village immersion, since they were following us constantly and wishing to play with us. Especially in the afternoon, when the older kids came from school, we were always surrounded by them. It was very fulfilling to see their joy whilst playing with the ball we brought for them and how they cared for each other. However, sometimes it was quite overwhelming. Especially young girls are often responsible for their baby siblings and health care is lacking (many kids needed glasses, a dentist, a dermatologist) and not all of them go to school. Communication was a challenge, but in the end paying each other respect and being open-minded is the key.

On the second day we visited the primary school as well as the junior high. After that we climbed up the water reservoir which is providing Tamale with water. We also visited a



rice field and a small lake on the border of the village. Unfortunately, it was a rather rainy day, so we had to spend some time inside. We made the best out of it playing UNO with John. When the rain got less, we decided to walk around the empty streets, experiencing village that way was interesting and kind of calming.

During our village immersion we truly got a deeper understanding of the way of living in Northern Ghana and had a really impressive experience in Kukuo Yapalsi for which we are thankful.

In the night we were stargazing, hoping to see a shooting star, hoping that the world will soon be a better place.

Village immersion in Napayili

Even before getting out of the car, we were surrounded by kids. They helped with our bags, hold our hands and accompanied us to our compound. Our village helper Simon and his daughter Lucy showed us around: two bedrooms, a toilet, a shower, water in buckets, light from solar panels. That was it – our new home for the next three days. As



the kids wanted to come into our bedrooms, we declared the compound to be our private space and after several explanations with hands and feet, the kids understood. But they found a way to see what's going on inside: They climbed the walls of the compound and sat on it. The understanding of privacy is definitely different in Ghana and Austria and in the village, we learnt to adapt to it. Patiently, the kids waited for us to open the door of our compound and come out to spend time with them. We found various activities to interact with them, such as singing songs with body

movements, playing soccer, or practicing Dagbani words. Most kids were really fascinated by us, especially by our skin and hair, and wanted to touch us as much as possible. Again, it was up to us to say "stop" at certain moments for everyone to feel well. Once in a while, Simon took us on a tour through the village. He introduced us to his wife Salamatu, to the chief, and to numerous village inhabitants. We entered their compounds, tried our best to greet them in Dagbani and then were warm-heartedly received. Throughout our stay in the village, language really was a big barrier. We thus let our bodies speak with mimics and gestures. It was hard, and we could not say much in-depth, but we tried – and then we laughed, all together ;-)

In some compounds, we could see women doing their household tasks, such as preparing food, producing shea butter, or taking care of kids. Especially in Simon's own compound, with his wife Salamatu and daughter Lucy, we had a nice and interesting time. One day, we saw how Salamatu prepared food: she cut fresh okro on a wooden stick. The other day, Joachim learnt about electricity supply in Napayili, while Karin and Monika were allowed to help with producing shea butter.



Stiring the grounded shea nuts with our hands and then cooking the oil on the traditional stove was quite an experience and we definitely got to appreciate the shea butter much more.

Even though we were not far away from the city Tamale, we could see that only a few kilometers can change the surrounding you find yourself in. The difference between this village, the village nearby and the city were so big, even though it was all so close, which was very interesting to realize. In Napayili every bit of land was green and used for farming. Either for the animals, or for producing crops. In the immediate vicinity of the village, as in most areas of Ghana, rice or maize is primarily cultivated. A little path between the crop

fields (you could not go on the path side by side, but only one after the other) was what is called the main road. And when it got dark, it got dark. The only light you could see was



our flashlights when we adjusted our mosquito nets outside to watch the stars. So, when looking back, we will remember a village surrounded by green crops, a quiet village in the morning, when the kids were in school and at night, when people were in their compounds. A lively village when children were around, but also when we walked past the woman sitting together fetching water, cooking or producing their shea butter.

Following our three-day stay in the village, we gained valuable insights into various activities, such as crafting shea butter and carrying water. Additionally, we learned more about the way of life in northern Ghana. We are deeply appreciative of this experience, which allowed us to glimpse into their daily lives.

Village immersion Gumo

Our village immersion in Gumo was one of the most memorable experiences we had in Ghana. Our village helper Moses welcomed us and introduced us to his family. We were



always taken excellent care of by his daughter Eva who cooked for us in the family compound and his son Nicolas, who showed us around.

As our own compound was located behind the shea butter production facility and near a mosque, we had quite some village life around us. As one of the main roads to Tamale runs

through the village as well, it felt already more like a suburb of Tamale, which is the fastest growing city in West Africa. In this particular street, all of the main shops, sewers, weavers, over-the-counter kitchens, etc. can be found. One of the main activities we did in the village was: meeting people and talking to them. We made a tour through the village to meet the chief and our neighbours and everybody was exchanging greetings with us in Dagbani. We tried to answer more than the commonly used "naaaa", laughing with them and going our



ways. We met two sisters who accompanied us to the neighbouring village Napayili, where we met our friends from the group. We also had an interesting visit to a local commercial farmer, who produces chicken for the local market. He talked about the challenges he faces in selling the chicken, since chicken from Europe is cheaper in Ghana, since it is more subsidized. Furthermore, we "helped" with shea butter production, saw the difference between the production facility and the production which is done entirely by hand.

Village Immersion in Nwodua

We, Anna, Kathi, and Christina had the privilege of staying in the community of Nwodua and getting to know the wonderful family of our village helper Paul during our village-immersion. We shared a property with Mr. Paul, his wife Mary, their sons and daughter, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. Since all three of us are from Styria, we affectionately called the village "Styrian



Village" and, of course, brought a Styrian heart as a gift.

Alongside Paul's son Andrews (Puumaya), we had the opportunity to get to know village life better.

On the first day, we received our traditional names at breakfast. These were the names we were called by our host-family, and we also used those to introduce us to other people inside the community.

Traditionally, one of the first things we did upon our arrival and start of our first day was meeting the chief of Nwodua. This meeting was an extremely positive experience and filled with a lot of humour and laughter. Our group even received a title by the chief, which is a great honour in Ghana. The title "Magazia," meaning "Leader of Women," was bestowed upon the eldest among us, so Christina is the lucky one bearing this honourable title.



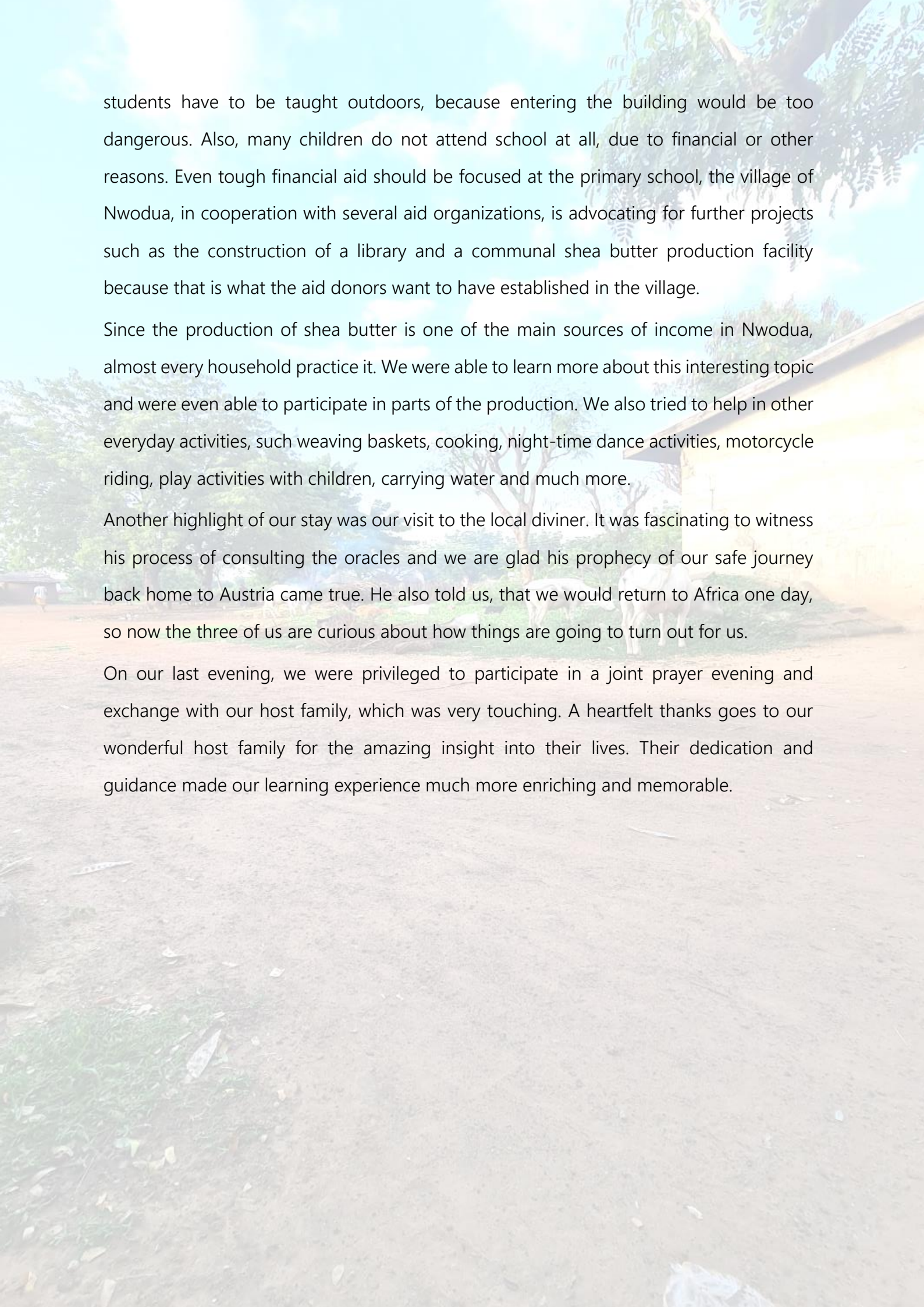
The "Magazia" of Nwodua also welcomed us into her house and told us about her work and responsibilities within the community. Since it is tradition, we received breakfast as a

gift from her the following day. This was really special and we felt very grateful for that.



We also were taken to meet numerous people, especially the family's uncles and were able to demonstrate and further develop our (very basic) Dagbani skills. Our Dagbani representative, Anna, became a true local language expert during our stay.

Although the village and community of Nwodua are rather small, three schools were built in the surrounding area thanks to Mr. Paul and his family. All three schools were constructed with the support of the villagers and are primarily funded by the government. However, there are significant differences in the maintenance of the buildings, so due to the poor condition of the elementary school its



students have to be taught outdoors, because entering the building would be too dangerous. Also, many children do not attend school at all, due to financial or other reasons. Even though financial aid should be focused at the primary school, the village of Nwodua, in cooperation with several aid organizations, is advocating for further projects such as the construction of a library and a communal shea butter production facility because that is what the aid donors want to have established in the village.

Since the production of shea butter is one of the main sources of income in Nwodua, almost every household practices it. We were able to learn more about this interesting topic and were even able to participate in parts of the production. We also tried to help in other everyday activities, such as weaving baskets, cooking, night-time dance activities, motorcycle riding, play activities with children, carrying water and much more.

Another highlight of our stay was our visit to the local diviner. It was fascinating to witness his process of consulting the oracles and we are glad his prophecy of our safe journey back home to Austria came true. He also told us, that we would return to Africa one day, so now the three of us are curious about how things are going to turn out for us.

On our last evening, we were privileged to participate in a joint prayer evening and exchange with our host family, which was very touching. A heartfelt thanks goes to our wonderful host family for the amazing insight into their lives. Their dedication and guidance made our learning experience much more enriching and memorable.