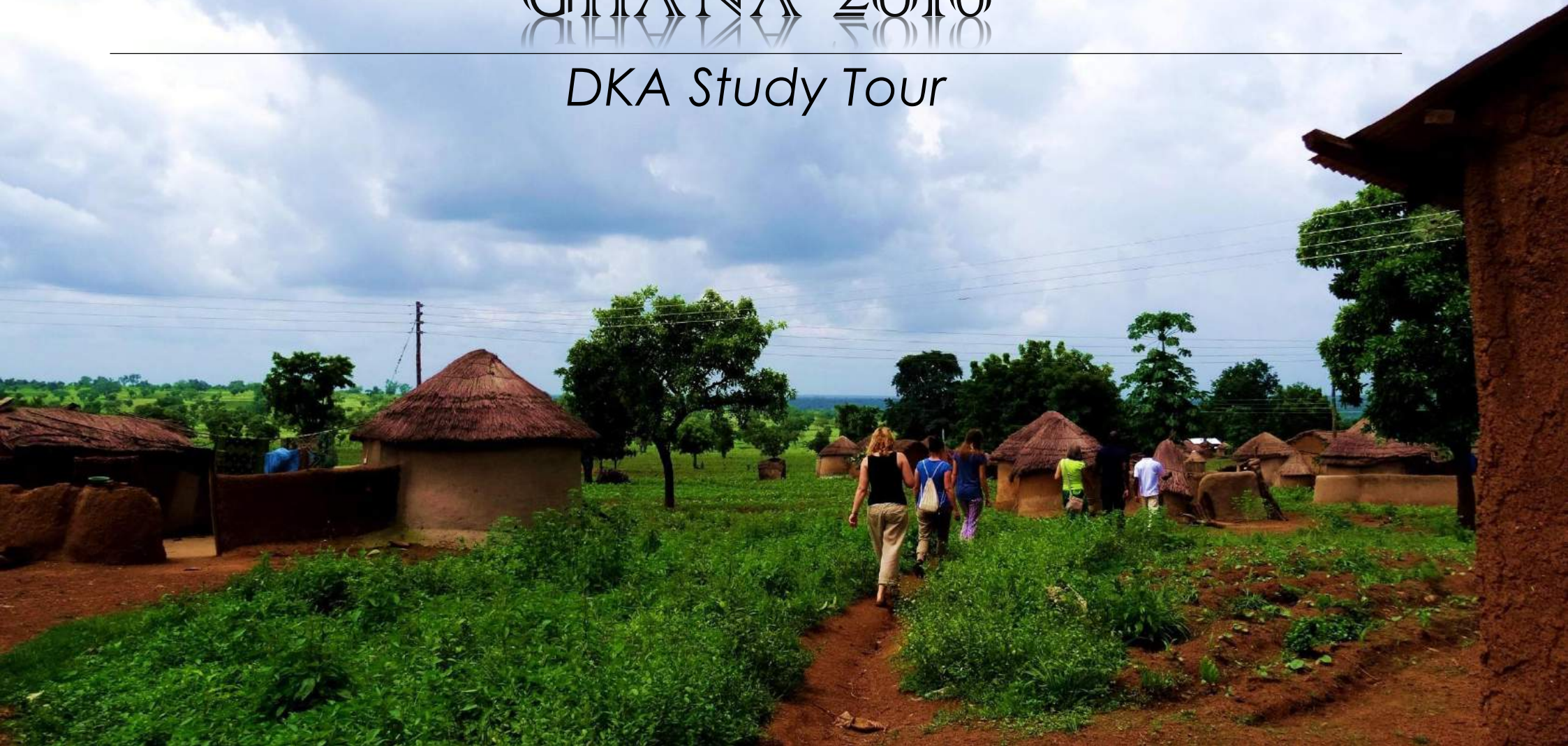


GHANA 2016

DKA Study Tour





Foreword

The Ghana Study Tour 2016 took place from Sunday, 31th July to Sunday, 28th August.

When we arrived at the airport in Accra Father Joshua, the director of TICCS, and Alhassan, our beloved driver and friend, picked us up and took care of us till we had to leave Ghana again. Both of them, as well as Dominic, Paul, Ama, Martin, Moses, David, Kizito, Thomas and Simon made our trip unforgettable and a once in a lifetime experience. We really want to express our greatest thankfulness!

Besides all people in Ghana we also want to thank the team of DKA Austria, which made our trip possible. During long working days of planning and organizing our special journey was created. Thank you very much Elisabeth, Clemens, Karin and Ute!

Our Study Tour group were nine unique women, aged 22 to 60. Due to our different interests, jobs and education we could support each other perfectly during our adventurous journey. We shared knowledge, experience, skills, (funny, sad and love) stories, laughs, adventures, names for prospective children, cosmetics, rooms, meals and a looooot more. Honestly we managed one month sticking together without any fight! Girls thank you very much for this unique month!

A last big thank you goes to Conny for spending many hours collecting articles, pictures, extending deadlines ;) and the layout of this Study Tour report!

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Our unforgettable and unique group

Alex



Always smiling, open-minded, understanding, Yogini: that are the first things that come into my mind when I think about Alex, my lovely roommate in Tamale. She's a globe trotter, interested in different cultures but especially in people. She wants to understand their everyday life, what makes them happy, and which challenges they have to deal with, always with a sympathetic ear. If this means she has to bypass some statements from an authority to talk with people selling food on the street and buy doughnuts from them, she accepts this with the words "ich bin halt ein Wildfang". Alex is very empathetic, which is a big plus when it comes to group tours. Especially our talks in the evenings have been wonderful because Alex is in the habit of paying people compliments before going to bed. Alex stayed in Ghana on her own for three additional weeks to explore her family roots. In my opinion Alex is an enrichment to every group.

Anni

Anni was a big enrichment for our group. We all loved to listen to her wonderful stories, so that the travel hours went really fast and with a lot of laughter. Mostly she was telling about her lovely family, her boys and grandchildren, so that we know all know them quite well. Anni's open, friendly and optimistic way of life keeps her much younger than she really is. She went out with us, was the first dancer of the group and never refused a good glass of star (a beer). She enjoyed Ghana, the culture and the people a lot and her most interests were the extraordinary coffins we saw at the streets. She was fascinated by the different designs like planes, houses and fishes. We all thought her perfect design as a passionate teacher would be a pen. Anni is such an amazing, impressive woman and I had a very good time with her in our shared room.



Babsi



Babsi, in her role as our group leader, was always prepared to support us with useful advice and to share her knowledge with us. Also she had been the contact person for all certain things, but no matter what happened, Babsi took everything with the needed humor, so that every misunderstanding or problem was solved with a smile. With her openminded and amusing character Babsi was also very liked by the people in Ghana, for example when it came to support the women in making shea butter. Her funny stories and sayings were often the reason for a laugh in the whole bus, thus our bus tours always felt a little bit shorter. Since our visit at the diviner Babsi raised a new topic – the names of her prospective twins. For me it was a pleasure to share a room with Babsi at TICCS, so we could also share a lot of good-night-stories of our lives and from our loved ones. All in all, our whole group wants to say "Thank you Babsi for everything!"

Conny

The visit at the diviner gave interesting suggestions for her private future and beware! – accompanying her in her car at midnight could be very dangerous for all parties ;) In our group, Conny was not only a great listener, she also knew how to take any kind of situation with the right amount of humor and composure. She was very popular throughout the whole Ghanaian community, not only because of her very fair skin but because she's highly outgoing, extroverted, communicative and has a very kind heart. She never fails to observe with care and compassion because Conny is a very curious minded person. Her nature is bursting with energy – so there was never an excuse when it came to having a last drink in the jungle bar or exploring the Ghanaian night life (“the full Ghana experience”).



Franziska



As the oldest of our group Franziska was sometimes called our mother, grandmother and auntie. Nevertheless, she also received some marriage proposals. Although she was really interested in the culture and especially the tastes of Ghana she denied all proposals. Her culinary experimentations went from Banku, Fufu and Kinki over Palava sauce, goat, occur to dried cocoa, cola nuts and several fruits.

To keep the journey in mind for a long time and to bring souvenirs for her beloved ones at home, she bought a traditional smok, a lot of batiks from Damongo and colorful bags. Throughout the journey we learned to appreciate all her curves and edges.

Martina

Martina is a very open-hearted and lovely person. She is also very thirsty for knowledge, especially for the political system of Ghana. Unsurprisingly a lot of men fell for her. She really enjoyed the time at TICCS, besides her fear of cute cats (*Comment to this by Martina: Wild cats, wiiiild cats ☺*).

When there were children around, Martina was always s the first one who walked up to them. The children immediately took her into their hearts, apart from a few exceptions who started to cry instead. ☺



Teresa



Mit Teresa kann man reden, wenn man reden will und auch schweigen, was oft gut ist.

Mit Teresa kann man über pädagogische Themen heiß diskutieren.

Mit Teresa im Zimmer kann man in der Nacht stundenlang lesen und dann den Lesestoff besprechen.

Mit Teresa muss man über die Dauer von Aussetzungsversuchen Gespräche führen.

Mit Teresa erfährt man immer, wer, wann, wo und überhaupt zusammengehört.

Mit Teresa hat man immer Trinkwasser in der Nähe.

Mit Teresa ist der Zugang zu den Kindern gesichert.

Mit Teresa's Sprachmelodie aus Vorarlberg ist jede Busfahrt ein Vergnügen.

Ich würde ihr meine Enkelkinder sofort anvertrauen!

Theresa

I hereby would like to announce, that I am an official member of the Theresa R. fan club. This upper-Austrian/Viennese cheerful soul amazed us all with her never-ending optimism, calmness and patience, when she was tied to bed for many days because of a resistant case of Malaria. In any case, Theresa is your all-around perfect travel partner: A morning sports partner, a hair styler, a dance partner and a friend, that always has an open ear. No surprise that even the diviner we visited predicted you a great future in the psychology department!

Theresa, you were a fantastic room-mate and a true inspiration! Thank you especially for bringing us some soft drinks to the village, when we were really desperate for some coke ;)

PS: Not only the mosquitos were attracted by Theresa, but our blonde beauty had also many admirers from Accra to Tamale.



Victoria



Veni Vidi Vici! This is not only the motto of her bachelor party, but true words and the shortest way to describe Victoria. No matter if as nurse, hair-dresser, sewer or master of air- conditioning in our „Obruni Express“, Vici seems to have a solution for everything. She sewed our clothes, found the perfect mixture of hot and cold and the beautiful hairstyles she provided the group with

were little artworks themselves. If she wasn't caring for the wellbeing of the group, Vici is always up for a bit of fun – be it a Shandy in the Jungle Bar, a dance on a rooftop bar or demonstrating the local population what a real sunburn looks like. She loved experiencing the new and unknown culture but found out quickly that pounding Fufu is very exhausting and causes blisters after only short periods of time ;) But this was not the only confusing cross-cultural experience she made. She was relieved when she learned that the police officer who separated her from the group didn't want to arrest her as it might have appeared at the first moment but simply wanted to have her contact details. Thanks to Vici's experience we now know that it is quite common in Ghana.

Our Ghanaian family



Father Joshua

TICCS director and our caring father



Alhassan

The best driver and our beloved friend



Paul

From Yendi to the villages - our gentleman for every situation



Dominic (Do)

One of our heart-warming bus drivers and a very liked companion



Ama

The good soul of the kitchen



Anthony

Heart and soul of the Damongo projects



Martin

The best teacher of Ghanaian culture



während unserer quer-durchs-land-kleinbusreise sahen wir sinnvolle projekte, nationalparks mit elefanten und noch vieles wunderbare mehr. zu beginn und am ende des lerneinsatzes erlebten wir jedoch ein besonderes highlight:

ACCRA

(in der sprache der akan: nkran)

die viiielen freundlichen menschen, der unheimliche verkehr gaaanz anders als unsere europäischen städte; eine der wenigen, welche ihr gesicht nicht auf antrieb zeigen. die atmosphäre schwankt zwischen ländlichkeit und metropolen- look. es fühlt sich hier (mit fast 2,5 millionen einwohner/innen) nicht so an - wie in einer „typischen“ großstadt. es gibt keine hochhäuser, keine geschäftsstraßen mit einkaufszentren. der verkauf findet in kleinen buden oder entlang der straße statt. menschen breiten ihre waren am wegrand aus. an den kreuzungen laufen verkäufer/innen (ihre waren auf dem kopf tragend) herum, in der hoffnung auf ein schnelles geschäft. riiesige märkte mit obst, gemüse, stoffen aller art... ersatzteile, schuhe..... egal, es gibt so gut wie alles zu kaufen. immer und überall zu ver/fair-handeln ist angebracht, sonst zahlt man den sogenannten „obruni- preis“, den preis für weiße, welcher häufig um ein vielfaches höher ist.

accra bildet mit der stadt tema und dem gemeinsamen umfeld die greater accra region, eine von zehn regionen ghanas. hier gibt es die niedrigsten niederschlagswerte im ganzen land. außer vom meer ist accra von vier lagunen und einem see (weija-see) umgeben, welcher accras wasserversorgung sichert. die stadt liegt nur 25 m oberhalb des meeresspiegels und ist an drei seiten von bis zu 350m hohen hügelketten umgeben. mit dem kotoka international airport verfügt accra über einen internationalen flughafen. sehenswert sind u.a. das nationalmuseum, die ghanaische akademie der künste und wissenschaften, die universität von ghana, das nationalarchiv und die zentralbibliothek. das einzige „echte“ theaterhaus , das national theatre, ermöglicht in seinen modernen räumlichkeiten und bühnen auch aufwendigere kulturveranstaltungen und musikalische darbietungen. ein denkmal in der nähe des heutigen regierungssitzes erinnert an die toten der sogenannten „accra riots“= accraunruhen, welche 1948 in accra, der hauptstadt der damaligen britischen kolonie goldküste, ausbrachen. diese unruhen waren eine art geburtshelfer der unabhängigkeitsbewegung ghanas und machten den späteren ersten präsidenten kwame nkrumah landesweit bekannt. beeindruckend ist auch der platz der unabhängigkeit und das kwame nkrumah memorial = nkrumah-denkmal. da accra aus einer vielzahl von handelsposten zusammengewachsen ist (bzw.

auch aufgrund etlicher erdbeben während der aufbaujahre), hat es nie ein stadtzentrum im eigentlichen sinne des wortes gegeben. als klassische mitte dient lediglich das kleine areal zwischen makola market und old parliament house, darüber hinaus zählt alles südlich der ring road zum innenstadtbereich. die mehrheit der bevölkerung hat gelernt, ohne

straßennamen auszukommen. sie orientiert sich an gebäudenamen bzw. kennt mit wenigen ausnahmen – die namen der straßen selbst nicht. in letzter zeit hat sich zugunsten der touristen die schildersituation verbessert. auch sind die verschiedenen segmente der stadt durch große ausfallstraßen (von kilometern länge) verbunden und enden stets an einem kreis. solche drehkreuze werden circles genannt. es gibt sehr viele markante circles in accra. umsich zurechtzufinden, genügt es zu wissen, welche straßen zu den circles führen und wo sich die circles genau befinden. ganz einfach..... gerade weil die üblichen attribute fehlen, empfindet man accra womöglich nicht sofort als besonders schön. dennoch: die bewohner/innen sind stolz auf ihre stadt. sie hat charakter, ist aufregend und laut, manchmal auch aufreibend aber jedenfalls



unverwechselbar und liebenswürdig. die meisten accraner sprechen englisch, die tro-tros und taxis bringen einen günstig und unkompliziert überall hin. wir trafen auf schöne strände, feine street-art und musik, gute chop-bars, alle paar hundert meter frische kokosnüsse!, auf verkehrschao, auch auf müll und armut. man kann

accra in vielerlei hinsicht im positiven sinne als eine „echt afrikanische“ stadt bezeichnen. hier fühlt man ghanas puls am besten, hier schlägt das herz des landes am schnellsten, hier leben die meisten ghanaer pro quadratmeter, hier ist der hauptteil des geschäftslebens konzentriert, hier ist wachstum sichtbar. eine stadt, welche mit beiden beinen in der moderne steht und dennoch ein ungebrochenes verhältnis zu ihrer vergangenheit gewahrt. ich komme aus dem staunen nicht heraus: die einheimischen freuen sich über touristen, wollen alles von einem erfahren, sind unglaublich herzlich und hilfsbereit. mit ihrer positiven lebenseinstellung stecken sie die gesamte gruppe bereits zu beginn - so richtig an. allein dafür hat uns accra/ghana guuuut getan.



kuhles-hauptstadt-resümee: wiederkommen!!

Elmina Castle



In our first week in Ghana we visited Elmina castle, also called St. George's Castle. It was erected in 1482 by the Portuguese. In 1637 it was taken over by the Dutch and in 1872 it was sold to the British Empire. First established as a trade settlement for gold, ivory and pepper, the castle later became one of the most important stops on the route of the Atlantic slave trade.

We went through a crowded and busy fishing village on our way to Elmina Castle. Once we arrived there our tourguide showed us the rooms where they locked up to 150 people in one room, women and men separated. The rooms were very dark and musty with no sanitation facilities. The people lived there in unimaginable inhumanely conditions up to three months before they had to leave through the „door of no return“. The people who survived the ordeal in Elmina castle were shipped to Europe or America to live there as

slaves, knowing that they will never see their hometown and their beloved ones ever again.

Our tourguide also showed us the luxurious rooms upstairs. It gave me goosebumps to stand at the same place where many generals stood before. They picked one woman out of the enslaved women standing downstairs to be brought to their bedrooms.

It is estimated that between 12 million and 20 million Africans were transported across the Atlantic between the late 17th century and the early 19th. It is impossible to tell how many people died during this time due to the slavetrade.



Stay gold!!

[Gold] mining in Ghana

There is a very long history of mining in Ghana. The commercially exploited minerals in Ghana include gold, manganese, bauxite and diamond of which gold is by far the largest, contributing over 95 per cent of the country's total mineral revenue. Today, Ghana is Africa's second largest gold producer after South Africa (ICMM 2015, 5).

[Gold] mining and Ghanaian economy

The mining sector plays an important role in the Ghanaian economy as it attracts more than half of all foreign direct investments (FDI), generates more than one-third of all export revenues, is the largest tax-paying sector in the country and makes a significant contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) and employment creation: 37 per cent of export revenues

were attributable to mining and the sector was responsible for 19 per cent of all direct tax payments in Ghana. This clearly indicates the significant importance of mining in Ghana, which is also reflected in mining's contribution to GDP and direct employment, respectively 1.7 per cent of Ghana's GDP and 1.1 per cent of the Ghanaian labour force (ibid).

[Gold] mining and ownership

Prior to 1983, most Ghanaian mining production was state owned, but since the Economic Recovery Program, Ghana has attracted foreign investments and pushed towards privatization and state divestiture. The sector is now largely foreign owned, but the Government of Ghana still holds a minority (10 per cent) free carried interest in most of the main active large-scale mines. The small-scale mining industry is reserved for Ghanaians. Looking at all policy developments in the sector over the last decade, it shows that the Government of Ghana is increasingly focusing on regulating and promoting small-scale mining and strengthening the collection, transparency, and management of mineral revenues (ibid). Local equity participation in the sector is also very minimal, especially in the large-scale mining sector: domestic players make up 24 per cent of the sector while foreign companies make up the remaining majority (KPMG International 2014).



[Gold] mining and its opportunities

Most community stakeholders hold the view that the large-scale mining companies have contributed noticeably to increasing overall economic benefits. Especially they note that the sector has a positive impact on employment and that business opportunities have opened up. Although communities see positive economic opportunities, survey respondents from national-level institutions perceive only limited economic opportunities. The general observation of this group is that while there has been an increase in business opportunities for locals, jobs have been mostly low paid, with limited upward mobility, and local businesses have limited capacity to execute contracts offered by the mines (ICMM 2015, 7)

[Gold] mining and its challenges / WACAM

WACAM is a human rights and environmental mining advocacy NGO in Ghana with a community-based focus. Formed in 1998, WACAM has worked to respond to the social, environmental, and economic problems that had resulted from the increased mining investment of the third gold rush. Their work is focused on community mobilisation, organisation and rights-based education for empowerment, at local, national, sub regional and international levels to influence practices changes (WACAM 2016). Since 2005 the partnership of WACAM and DKA exists. Madame Hannah Owusu-Koranteng explained to us that land means a lot to Ghanaians, the chiefs are caretakers while everybody owns the land together. If a company or the government wants to buy land (e.g. for mining purposes) they have to consult the chief, however, this is not always practised. That is why struggles began in the time of colonisation. "Get gold, humanely if you can; but at all hazards, get gold!" (King Ferdinand of Spain 1511). Another important topic when it comes to mining is water. Often it happens, that because of the mining process rivers get polluted (heavy metals), which results

in people getting ill. What is more, also fish and plants are dying, that's why it lacks food. There are companies that ,clean' the polluted rivers, however to which extend this is successful can be discussed. One cannot underestimate how much space is needed for dumping the (dangerous) waste of digging the giant holes you need for gold mining. Again this effects nature and people (e.g. because they loose their land and fields). WACAMs work is among other things to provide information and education as tools for empowerment of affected people. Madame Hannah has told us that this is also sometimes dangerous for herself and her colleagues because there is a heavy lobbying. My impression is that there is also a lot of corruption and that many people simply still don't know about their rights or don't have the possibility to fight against a big company: A David and Goliath battle.



Gold mining communities

When visiting a gold mining community, we have been told that when the company came to take their land for mining purposes they haven't been asked. When they asked about their permission they've been arrested or even worse. In their opinion they need more legal support. One of the biggest problems they suffer from is, that even when the mining process is over and the company moves to another place, they cannot use the land for farming any more.

Apart of that, the companies disrespect the people living in this community. They have the power to misbehave because the topic has been politicized. Each day soldiers walk up and down the road to frighten the people. The community asked for people to help them out of this hopeless situation, they seemed to become resigned.

When it comes to [gold] mining in Ghana my impression is that there are a few people getting rich on behalf of many others and government and international companies are supporting this. It needs NGOs like WACAM to empower communities to fight against this system bottom-up.

Visiting a local gold mining community



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Cocoa and Ghana

So many people, including myself, love chocolate. You can eat it cold or warm, solid or liquid, in a cake, ice cream, as a drink or yogurt. It's one of the best gifts you can give for lovely people on every occasion. But chocolate is much more than just a boring sweet and has a lot to tell.

We had the chance to visit an organic cocoa farm in the eastern region of Ghana and to learn about the production of chocolate at its beginning. The farm is part of COFA – the cocoa organic farmer's association, and it is the first company in doing organic cocoa production in Ghana. The current owner of the cocoa farm, an old man with a passion for cocoa farming, got the farm from his father over 30 years ago and also he will pass it on to his children. The owner told us that they stopped 2002 with spraying synthetic chemicals and started organic farming.



In 2006 and after a lot of work, the farm got their first organic certification and started to transfer organic cocoa to Europe. To become and stay organic isn't easy, because of the high standards that exporters require, the farms need a lot of care and it also costs money to achieve the organic certification. The reason for organic farming is, that consumers, mostly from Europe and America, are becoming more and more aware of the ethical and environmental issues surrounding the production of food and as a result of that, organic products increased in popularity. The organic cocoa market and the request of organic cocoa beans get higher and hopefully the number of organic farms in Ghana as well. We went through the farm with a nice, calm worker and he showed us around. Some of the trees were really old and big, others young and still growing, some of the trees had cocoa pods on it, others none at all. In between the cocoa trees there were other trees and bushes.

For example, banana trees are really good for cocoa trees to grow because they give them shadow, protection and fertilize the ground. A wild cocoa tree can reach a height of 10- 15m, but in plantations the trees are trimmed to 2-4m. One good cocoa tree can have up to 60 cocoa pods and in one pod are 25 to 50 beans. Some cocoa trees are getting more than 50 years old and when you cut a cocoa tree you can dig out the roots and put it somewhere else and the tree will grow again, because the roots are really strong. Unfortunately, when there are stones under a cocoa tree and the roots can't grow anymore the tree will die. There are different sorts of cocoa trees, some of the pods are changing from green to yellow and others are getting bright red. When a pod is black then they called it "Black Fox" and they can't use it anymore because it has a disease.

The process to harvest cocoa beans begins with cutting the tire cocoa pods from the trees and to collect them. Then they break the pods open with big knives and scoop out the beans mostly with their hands. Then they have to cover the beans with leaves so they can dry afterwards. After seven to ten days of drying they can weigh and pack the beans so they are ready to ship. Other companies, in Europe or America are then making the chocolate out of the organic Ghana beans.

For me the visit to the cocoa farm was amazing. To walk through a natural farm, where everything is mixed up and where the ways are just somewhere between the trees and plants you can really feel the pureness of nature. Everything is handmade and the owner loves his farm and also his workers are proud of what they are doing. The trees and pods looked really healthy and it was such a nice atmosphere to learn and see organic cocoa farming.

*“Chocolate comes from cocoa, which is a tree. That makes it a plant.
Chocolate is salad.”*



Shea butter production in Ghana

Shea butter is one of the most important local products in Northern Ghana. It is made from the nuts of the shea tree that grows in savannah regions from Senegal in the west to Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda in the east. In Africa shea butter has been mostly used as cooking oil and for skin care. In Europe and America shea butter is nowadays very popular in cosmetics.

We stayed with a local family in a village close to Tamale city for five days, where like in almost every village in Northern Ghana women and children are producing shea butter. I had the chance to witness the whole manufacturing process, which is very long and difficult, using traditional methods and almost completely done by hand, just like centuries ago.

Shea butter is derived from the nuts inside the shea fruits. One shea tree, also known as karité or tree of life, can produce around 40 kilos of fresh fruits, which can be collected from May to August.

As a first step, fruit skin is removed and nuts are well dried by placing them in the sun. When dry, the shells have to be cracked with stones or other hard materials. Shea nuts are then washed, dried again under the sun and broken into small pieces. This used to be very slow and hard work done by hand and is nowadays facilitated by the use of grinding machines.

The small nut pieces are roasted on fire which gives the final product its pleasant roast scent. Roasted fragments are then taken to the grinding machine again and turned into a thick paste. This paste is placed in big basins and churned by hand for at least half an hour. Water is added gradually, usually by small children who are helping their mothers.

During churning a buttery oil separates from water which is carefully removed and put into a bowl of boiling water on low fire, where it melts and separates into layers. The liquid that floats to the top is then strained to remove impurities and placed in big basins in a cool and dark place. After around 12 hours the oil turns thick and is ready to be used or sold.



The production process is an ancient practice which in Northern Ghana is solely reserved to women. In most cases this is their only possible income source and therefore shea butter is often also called women's gold.

It leads to some kind of economic independence and empowerment and contributes to a better overall life standard of women and children. Also, the production process has an important social role: Women gather under a big tree outside their compounds, where they are protected from the sun and can work from early morning to late afternoon. They form cooperatives, work together and help each other to make the hard, dull work easier and more interesting.



Meeting a chief

An experience from beginning to end

Back in Austria, when I had looked into the program and saw that a visit to a female chief was scheduled I was very excited and curious. Was a chief something like a mayor? Or just a spiritual leader? Are female chiefs an exception or standard? And how does something like a chieftaincy survive in „modern times“?

Recognized and guaranteed by the constitution a definition of a chief can even be found in the constitution of Ghana. According to the Constitution and the Chieftaincy Act 2008 (Act 759) a chief is

“a person who hailing from appropriate family and lineage, who has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queenmother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage”.

Honestly, when the day had come and we were finally about to enter the compound of the female chief of a village close to Tamale my mind was rather focusing on the formalities, Martin had introduced us to before the visit, than on facts and data. When greeting a chief, male visitors will squat and clap their hands while female visitors squat and snap their fingers. Furthermore we learned that we were not supposed to look directly at the chief and that all our questions should be directed to the chief's official spokesman, the linguist. The exchange and chewing of kola nuts, a bitter, caffeine-rich nut, is often still part of the greeting ritual.

„Look down...kneel...clap....questions about a potential succeder are not appropriate“...so I was reminding myself once again of the proper etiquette just before we stepped in...well, it's not every day that you get to meet a female chief!



Looking back, the atmosphere felt very friendly. Personally I had the feeling that there was **humility, calmness and awe in the air** at the presence of the chief, while the presence of the village's children – they had been invited in by the elders as well – transmitted some kind of lightness and intimacy. The children kept very quiet though and clearly the situation commanded the respect of everyone.



Visiting the transitional
Paramount Chief of Yendi (yip,
the one in the back on the "couch/stool")

The female chief as we had learned did not speak to us herself, **the questions were answered by the linguist and the Elders** sitting in the room. I recognized that not all of the questions were forwarded to the chief, some were just answered directly by the present elders.

Very curious to hear about differences to male chiefs, we were told that there were no significant ones. We learned that **her main concerns at the moment were the settlement of some land disputes**, that she was married but as a chief didn't live with her husband and that she was also the Tindana (the person in charge of the shrine; Dagbanli term, literally means – the one who owns the land).

The **Tindana (earth priest)** holds control over land ownership and is traditionally the community's spiritual leader. As such the Tindana acts as a link between the community and the spirits of their ancestors.

So at that point I came to understand that chieftaincy is much more than just an administrative unit.

A chief is a leader, a politician, a mediator, a priest, a teacher and a soldier at the same time. Chieftaincy can be considered the custodian of the indigenous traditions, customs and society of Ghana as well as it creates a bond between the dead, the living and the yet unborn.

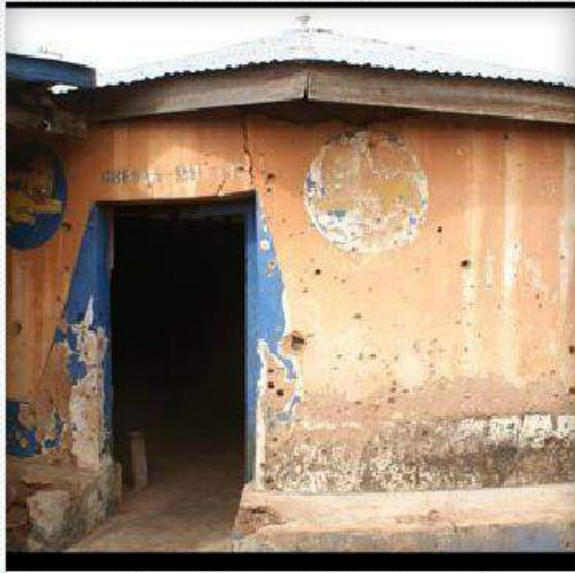
*** Chieftaincy is much more than just an administrative unit. ***

The institution of Chieftaincy is a vivid example of how the country continues to cherish and maintain ancient values and tradition. It is one of the few institutions that have survived all political phases of Ghana's history: From pre-colonial times to the challenges of the post-independence phase. Still today 80 % of Ghanaians claim allegiance to one kind of chief or another.

A few days later we visited the **Paramount chief of Yendi**. Already „experts“ in the meeting of Chiefs ☺, we were looking forward to this experience with much less nervousness, nonetheless we were all amazed by the level of security (Ghanaian army guarding the palace) and especially the ~10 surveillance monitors in the meeting room we were witnessing.



Kampakuya Na Yakubu Abdulai Andani
Regent of Dagbong, Yendi
Born 1965



Bullet holes
at the Old Gbewaa palace
Photograph: Yidana Kobirbilla/Guardian



Full concentration
on not facing the chief directly...

Unfortunately we heard that the background of this measures is an ongoing, **unsettled dispute and tensions between the clans of the Abudus and the Adanis regarding the Chieftaincy of Yendi**. In 2002 - after three days of violence the Gbewaa Palace (the residence of the king) together with 30 surrounding houses were burnt down. The king, thirty members of his household and other members of the community were killed, many injured. This chieftaincy dispute, like many in Ghana, involves large amounts of money and thousands of hectares of land.

The chieftaincy conflict is considered to have been further deepened, as the two gates (Abudus, Adanis) have aligned themselves to NPP and NDC respectively.

As we could experience ourselves on that day, Ghana's traditional sector is facing numerous challenges and changing roles of chiefs. Unclear succession rules may lead to chieftaincy conflicts that undermine its legitimacy. Nonetheless the courses and excursions showed us, that the inclusion and co-existence of the traditional chieftaincy system inside and next to the State structures contributes to the Ghanaian stability and success.

Last but not least – a personal conclusion?

Throughout our whole journey I was truly amazed by the way Ghanaians balance 'the modern' and 'the traditional'. While the chieftaincy system is facing many challenges, it can fill the vacuum created by Ghana's modern political structures at the local level.

Quellen:

Isaac Owusu-Mensah (Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung): Politik, Chieftaincy und Gewohnheitsrecht in Ghana; verfügbar unter:
http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_35433-544-1-30.pdf?130919094400

Kurzüberblick über die Chieftaincy Institution:
Republic of Ghana, Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs: A Look at the Chieftaincy Institution, verfügbar unter: <http://www.mcta.gov.gh/doc/article1.pdf>

Die NGO Norsaac - welche wir auch besucht haben - hat ein Buch zur Female Chiefs in der Northern Region herausgegeben:
<http://www.norsaac.org/launch-picture-diary-women-chiefs-northern-region/>

At last – a few cheerful side notes:

- A sporty chief! We discovered a treadmill in the back of his stool!
- Marriage proposal by a chief: X
- Conny discovered that feeding a royal horse has its own rules of etiquette;)

Shekinah Clinic



A visit to the Shekinah Clinic was, as in all the years before, part of our TICCS programme and for me, a highlight throughout the four weeks of LernEinsatz. This extraordinary clinic is financed exclusively through donations from all over the world, addresses healing the sickness as well as the whole body and soul of the poorest people in the Northern region, and additionally, people with

mental diseases. Many people in this area can't afford insurance, so they don't have the possibility to get treatment in the public hospitals of the country. Furthermore, people with mental challenges often find no social network for their assistance – they simply get excluded from their communities. As the Shekinah clinic runs “pro bono”, it's depending, apart from financial support, on volunteers who dedicate themselves to this clinic with its patients (some of them find even their new homes there – I remember especially one man, who has the allowance to set fire in his room every day because he's somehow forced to do so).

For me, the area of Shekinah Clinic finds itself in a very peaceful surrounding full of warmth which comes from the heart of the people who work there. When walking around, one can easily feel the trust and mutual understanding ruling there – in my point of view, it resembles rather a family system than a health institution.

Sharing experiences with former participants of LernEinsatz in Ghana, the Shekinah Clinic and its “spirit” always fascinated a lot of returners to Austria. For me, returning back there after 4 years, it was just wonderful to see and observe that nothing of this got lost during the years. My personal belief is that the founder, Dr. David, is the reason for this. I hardly ever met a person with that amount of faith, hope, inspiration and charisma as he holds. Unfortunately, this year, we didn't have the opportunity to meet him because he was staying in the South of Ghana for a medical retreat. Everybody in the area of Tamale who knew Dr. David was very upset due to his very bad health status, people told us different things about his undefined state of health and about very large costs of his treatment. So now, a little bit more than a month after our return, we received the very sad and terrible news of Dr. David's passing away at the beginning of October. He was buried in Northern Ghana, the man (some people might call him crazy – but in the best way) who dedicated his everything to healing the whole person, not only the medical condition and symptoms of a human being.

For more information:

<http://www.shekinah-clinic.com>

Hint for a Movie:

Under the mango tree

EPA & Environmental Protection in Ghana



Protecting the environment and the topic of waste management is one of the most crucial issues, Ghana has to deal with in the future. The good news is – there has been an awareness of the need to protect the environment in Ghana since the 1970s and nowadays environmental protection is even part of the Ghanaian constitution. As a result of the UN Conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, the Environmental Protection Council (EPC) was established in Ghana two years later. The EPC itself was mainly an advisory and research organisation having no enforcement power to ensure compliance with environmental management issues but its work formed the base for the foundation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1994. The official mission of the EPA is managing, protecting and enhancing environmental issues in Ghana.

What is interesting is the fact that in Ghana the term environment is not only limited to nature. Environment as used in the Ghanaian context includes natural resources, socio-cultural and economic conditions and the institutional conditions in which decisions are made. Due to the fact that environmental protection is part of the Ghanaian constitution, there are laws and regulations concerning environmental matters. It is one of the most important tasks of the EPA to ensure the adherence of these rules and regulations and even though a lot has been done in the past, there is still a long way to go. Despite the fact that there are laws and regulations in theory, they are often violated or simply disregarded. What is most striking is the fact that these violations are not always a lack of awareness. It also happens when economic factors become more important than the protection of local communities and the environment as we have witnessed ourselves when visiting the gold mining community in Saamam.

According to Jimah Loury, staff of EPA Tamale, there are several

challenges in the implementation of environmental assessment regulations in Ghana. One of the main factors is the capacity of environmental consultants and regulators to administer the process and the enforcement of the regulations. They simply have too little staff to control everything. When giving his speech at TICCS, he told us a story that reflects the situation perfectly. In Ghana, there is a company that operates nationwide and is responsible for waste management and waste disposal called Zoomlion. Zoomlion provides local dumping grounds in communities where the waste of villages and cities is collected. Usually the people from the community bring their waste to the local dumping ground and a staff of Zoomlion picks it up to bring it to an official dumping ground where the waste is either burned or buried. It sometimes happens that the driver comes to pick up the waste from the local dumping ground but instead of bringing it to the official dumping ground which might be an hour away, he brings it to the land of a nearby farmer, gives him a few Cedis and dumps the waste there. By doing this, he saves time and fuel which he takes off the lorry and either keeps it for himself or sells it in order to earn some more Cedis. So even though there are laws and regulations and a system for waste management it is impossible to observe everybody. This example clearly reveals another important factor namely the lack of education and awareness of environmental protection on different levels. It's not only found in local communities but also in official positions like the judiciary, the police, some politicians, media, financial institutions and legal practitioners. Therefore, environmental education through campaigns and professional educational activity is another main task of the EPA in order to raise awareness for the importance of the topic.

Positive examples like the conviction of the Accra City Council which has been taken to court because they were dumping waste into the sea by EPA help to sensitize the population for the topic and mark a silver lining.

Women empowerment projects

Gender roles in Ghana



During our stay in Tamale we had a lot of different courses, but one of them really kept my breath and interest. It was the lecture with the title “Gender Roles”. The most impressive aspect of the course was the lecturer Prof. Agnes Apusigah herself. She is such a self-confident woman, a professor working at the university in Tamale, speaking up for thousands of other women which are suppressed by men.

Through her talk she tried to allow us an insight that gender roles in Ghana, especially in the North of Ghana, are still quite traditional. In rural areas men are used to go farming, while women are responsible for the

household and taking care of the children. When there is a marriage, women have to move from their families to live within the villages of their husbands. Living in the compound of the husband’s family women mostly have to follow the orders of other family members like the brothers-in-law. Therefore, women are mostly depending on their husbands.

Nowadays gender roles are starting to change. Especially in urban areas an increasing number of women are graduating from university and starting up with a working career. For example, quite surprising for our group was the high number of female police officers that we saw on the streets. Concluding, the gap in Ghana between traditional and modern gender roles are quite huge.



Visiting a local NGO: NORSAAC

Additionally, to our courses in Tamale, we also undertook a lot of field trips. One of them led to a local NGO.

NORSAAC is a women and youth empowerment Organization, located in the North of Ghana. To enable a self-determined life for marginalized groups, the organization is working in the following four areas:

- Sexual Rights and Reproductive Health
- Gender and Governance
- Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development
- Education

Due to a lack of sexual education and information many children, especially girls are suffering from sexual violation. Therefore, NORSAAC started programs to inform the girls about their rights. Additionally, the organization is doing advocacy, for example to address the topic of child marriages.

The organization also supports girls with trainings and education, to reach a high level of qualification and to be able to compete also in men dominated areas.

The talk with NORSAAC was very interesting, because they gave us an overview of gender problems they have to deal with, which showed us the importance of their work.

Women empowerment in Damongo and Daboya



During our third week in Ghana we had the chance to get to know a women empowerment project in Damongo over three days. Directly after our arrival in the local factory in Damongo, the women presented their excellent batik technique with really beautiful material. After getting in touch with the women, our group was invited to have dinner at the house of Mister Anthony and his wife Rabi, which are the directors of the women project. Due to the very friendly nature of the couple and the excellent cooking skills of Rabi we took both immediately in our hearts.

The aim of the empowerment project in **Damongo** is to provide trainings and income possibilities for women. This should reduce and prevent the migration, especially of young women, from the North of the country to the Southern cities of Kumasi or Accra, where most factories are located. The project provides a trainee program for 20 women each year. The women are taught in four different areas: tailoring (dress making), bread making, soap making and batik.

On the second day, we made a daytrip to the village of **Daboya**. Mister Anthony explained to us, that it is very important that there is

not only one training center in Damongo, but instead there are more establishments within the villages, to directly address the women where they are living. The women are participating, like in Damongo, in a trainee program, which lasts over three years, and which gives them a small income for themselves and their families. After the program the women are able to open their own businesses, for what, the project is also providing microcredits. But even if the women are not getting an employment after the trainee program, their skills are still very useful for their daily life.

“Wealth creation through advocacy & skills training” – was written on the T-Shirts of the women

On the third day, back in Damongo, we were impatiently waiting for a special experience – doing batik with the women! Every one of us created her own material under the “strict” supervision of the women. I have to say the fabrics are just beautiful! All in all, we really want to thank Mister Antony and Rabi for this extraordinary experience and the heart-warming habitation in Damongo.

Village immersion



Right from the beginning of our trip to Ghana, the village immersion was one of the most polarizing topics. One part of our group was filled with excitement to experience the daily life of the locals and really see, what the traditional Ghanaian way of living looks like. The second part of the group, thus equally excited, was a little more hesitant towards staying in the villages. Life without electricity and running water, things most people from European countries take for granted, seemed unknown and therefore somewhat difficult. Nonetheless, after having attended one week of intensive classes on topics describing the Northern Ghanaian way of life, everybody felt ready for the challenge.

On Friday night, at this point in the last quarter of our whole journey, we finally got to meet the village helpers, who would be providing us with guidance and advice for the next five days. After letting luck and lot decide, the selected pairs got time to sit down and chat with their designated village helper and create the bond that should hold us together for the coming days. In the course of the next afternoon, our driver Paul and his Pick-up set out to take the eight excited Austrian (also one German among of them! ;)) women into their villages, “little” luggage in our hands but a ton of expectations in our hearts. Martina and I were the penultimate to be taken to our village, named Napayili, which is the smallest but most rural of all the selected villages. Our place to sleep in, the traditional Northern Ghanaian compound, was located at the end of our lovely village. Immediately after the arrival the children living in the surrounding, came to greet us and say Hello. We also got our new local Dagbanli names, from this day on we introduced ourselves as “Chantiwuni” which means “Give everything to God” and “Wunpini” translated as “God’s gift”. During our stay we took part in a Catholic mass as well as visiting the local mosque. We were also wandering around the village for half a day, to say Hello to our neighbors, which soon became an impossible task, because there were simply too many friendly faces to greet. Especially memorable was the afternoon we spent, with women, who are producing shea butter. Only after a short amount of time working with them and also earning a lot of laughter, for not being specifically talented, we came to realize how hard their work is and appreciate the butter used in our products even more. Compared to this, playing with the children felt a lot easier for us and up to today we keep singing the Ghanaian hit “Wunpini”.



Competing in the local soccer scene, Martina and I proved our skills as striker and goalie, and left the field proud, but with two soccer balls less. The evenings were filled with long and intense conversations with Simon, our very kind village helper, who took the time to explain the development of electrical and water infrastructure in rural Ghana, as well as the political system and the upcoming elections. He gave us an insight in what it was like to come to Austria in 2012 and how impressive and enriching things were for him. Another highlight was preparing fried yam together with our host sister Mary, who was taking such great care of Martina and me.



Also, Lucy and Cecilia quickly felt like sisters, welcoming us into their families and sharing their love. We will never forget the romantic nights, snuggled up in our little castle made out of Mosquito nets (thank you for your patience, Simon!), sleeping under God's celestial canvas, spangled with thousands of stars.

Once again we want to thank Simon from the bottom of our hearts. He is the one who made this wonderful experience possible - especially by translating for us which allowed us to enter the village life even deeper.

Hinweis für zukünftige Lerneinsatzreisende:

Was tun bei stundenlangen Busfahrten?

Vorschläge für Aktivitäten:

- Haare flechten
- Nacken massieren
- In jeder Lage schlafen
- Flirten mit den Autofahrern der Nebenspur
- Skript für Verwaltungsgerichtshof schreiben
- Hotspot einrichten für wichtige Gespräche
- Näharbeiten an allen möglichen Kleidungsstücken
- Suchen von verschwundenen Gegenständen
- Blinde Passagiere wie Geckos und Moskitos betreuen
- Lieder aus fremden Ländern wie Vorarlberg singen
- Wasserflaschen verteilen und entsorgen

Themenvorschläge für Gespräche:

- Haben Ziegen ein Zuhause und wo lebt meine Ziege in Afrika?
- Können Hunde Suizid begehen?
- Welche Tiere, die am Straßenrand angeboten werden, kann man essen?
- Wie schwimmt ein Krokodil?
- Wie heißt die Hauptstadt von Gabun, Gambia und Ghana?
- Reden über Beziehungskrisen, Beziehungskisten, Beziehungsprobleme
- Fremdwörter aus Österreich wie Tschurdl, bumsegal, durchjodeln, etc. erklären
- Bibelstellen raten und überprüfen
- Übersetzung für „post no bill“ finden
- Wann und vor allem wo gibt es die nächste Klopause?







Thanks a lot to everybody in Ghana and in Austria
for this great opportunity!

