

Education changes everything for Akrampa: Part 1

Dear Friends,

Greetings and best wishes for every one of you, our dear readers and cherished friends, from my family and the staff and pupils of Akrampa School, for this New Year of 2023. This is the first article of the new year and the first of a new series. In the closing three months of last year, I dealt with administration of the Ghanaian School System, of which Akrampa is a part. This series will look at the impact *the presence of the school* has made on the people of Akrampa and people of the neighboring communities. The story of Akrampa has been told in several ways from its beginnings, describing how the *village* has changed into what is now considered a *small town* by Ghanaian standards.

Population:

The first *visible* impact, the consequence of the *School in Akrampa*, is the population. The population of the **community** has soared! There were about 185 people (adults & children) living in the village back in the early 1990's, when we began work there. At that time, the village had no more than twenty small houses built with clay and thatched roofs. In that time frame, the mud house was the multipurpose building for the entire family, used for everything except bathing and the toilet, which were done in the bush.

Akrampa now boasts of houses made of cement blocks designed and built to have *more than one room*, in most houses. The story has changed with the presence of the school. People who are not indigenous have now come to live among them, building their homes there and making our school the choice school for their children. Now we see the population to be on average 4000 people, over the last ten years.

Utilities in Akrampa:

Before the close of the 1990's, there was no *water supply for drinking and cooking*, not to mention for bathing. The First Lutheran Church, Lorain, Ohio, provided funds for the connection of a water pipe from the main source into the village, over a distance of 2 kilometers; which is still the most appreciated gift in the community. With clean water, they're no longer suffering from water-borne

diseases such as elephantiasis and related infections from dirty water sources. The children no longer suffered from cholera or diarrhea so long as the parents ensured that they drank the treated pipe borne water.

Electricity to provide power for light in the homes and illumination at night was provided by the government institution responsible for doing so, the Electricity Company of Ghana, under their **rural electrification project**. In 2013, we drew their attention to the need and applied to the local officials who responded. So, the brand-new school Kitchen (built in 2020) has electricity for use in the building, to power the blenders, refrigerator, etc., and, of course, for each of the classrooms.

Because of congestion in the capital, the people who need to be close to the capital Accra, try as much as possible to get access to live in places such as Akrampa. Many such people are government workers who need to commute to work daily and depend on water and electricity to have a reasonably satisfying lifestyle for themselves and their families. They are particularly looking for functional and productive schools, for their children as may be found in the capital of Accra.

Commerce in Akrampa and surrounding area:

At the beginning of our mission, there was not even a single store in the village which is what any growing and developing community needs, to make a meaningful living. If anyone wanted to buy things as simple as salt and sugar, he/she would have to go into the bigger town - about 6 kilometers away - to get them. Now they have not less than 4 adequately stocked *small stores* in the town including two *over-the-counter* drugstores.

Whereas previously the villagers would carry most of their farm produce into a larger town, now buyers and consumers come to them for their food needs such as plantains, cassava, and other vegetables.

This is supported by simple means of transport. Until recently, if an individual didn't have a bicycle, he would walk to the main road, to find transport to continue to his destination. Now he only has "join" a vehicle right in the village. Now there are motorbikes (*the main*), that are used as fast transport between the village and the main road. This is a *phenomenon* now all over Ghana, and it's the *major* need in the community. Often you will see even a small motorbike with three people including the 'driver', and sometimes with the passenger carrying a load (baggage) on their head. I am scared when I see such, because there have been fatalities in recent times!!! My next article will continue from here. Blessings, Pastor Ben