

## Rural Life in Ghana &amp; in Akrampa - Effect of the COVID-19 -Pt. 2

Dear Friends,

I find Part 2 of this article even more difficult to write than Part 1, from last month. The topics of poverty and desperation that I am about to share with you break my heart. But the truth must be brought to light, so that we can pray and seek God's intervention. Please keep your heart open and your prayers ready as you read this article. If you missed Part 1, it can be found online, in the *Ghana Archive*. [www.firstlutheranlorain.org](http://www.firstlutheranlorain.org) > Outreach > Ghana > Ghana Archive

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath have worsened the already dire financial circumstances of many rural people in Ghana, causing people to resort to all manner of destructive behaviors to make ends meet, to survive, with special reference to young people.

In talking about the *young people*, I am referring to some in the age range of between eighteen & twenty-five years old. These are young Ghanaians who have either finished Junior High or Secondary School (High School) and who should be in college, but are not, and are now unemployed. These young people are frustrated and deeply bitter. They see the *apparent* affluence of others who are employed and have the money to take care of personal needs and are also in stable relationships, like marriage. In their frustration and despair, some of them resort to all manner of anti-social means and go into all kind of activities to get money quickly, without earning it in gainful employment. All over the world the anti-social menace of burglaries, and the like, are not 'unusual', and have become part of our humanity. However, sadly, in our part of the world the phenomenon of getting rich instantly, and very wealthy by means of **juju** (a quick glance in a dictionary should help to get information about **juju**) and similar practices is becoming a scary thing for many citizens. This practice is prevalent in some countries in Africa, but I want to speak to it from the Ghanaian context. Juju is a practice that is raising concern, causing the general populace to ask the government to exercise the political will to arrest those involved in this menace. A fetish priest will direct that a very young child (boy or girl) should be murdered, and then specific body parts are brought in for rituals, which will make one *rich instantly*. This is referred to as '*sakawa*', wealth gained by means of *juju* and rituals. Then there is another phenomenon whereby *jujumen* entice people to take their monies for multiplication. These practices have enticed the

young men who are unemployed and hungry to resort to any means to have money to survive.

The social restrictions put in place as a result of Covid-19, particularly, on gatherings have contributed to the economic hardships of the rural folk like the people of Akrampa. The young men and women are facing real hardship to make ends meet, and there's not much we can do for them. It is the government that has to provide to meet their needs. During our lockdown, the government went around with food, and that helped to assuage the intensity of the need to be fed. That situation brought to the fore the serious condition of widespread hunger and the need of households to be able to feed their children. It was a grievous scene to behold. It made me realize how vulnerable the people were, which was akin to how Jesus saw them gathered on the hillside, which eventually caused Jesus to have compassion on them (Mark 6:34). Jesus taught them and then **fed them**.

Hunger is what is also making some of the young men go into what has become a serious phenomenon of land degradation - the destruction of the forests and water bodies - as a result of the activities of illegal gold mining known as '*galamsey*'. The term is used to describe alluvial, surface mining of gold, and because it is mostly illegal and unlicensed, it is referred to as '*gather them and sell*', hence, "galamsey". Many young men (including those of Akrampa) have joined this *menace* that is going on all over Ghana in any place that gold deposits are found close to the surface. Our major river bodies have turned from crystal clear to thick flows of mud because the soil is washed in the *flowing river* in the process of the extraction of the gold from the excavated soil. The youth go in and become the labourers of the mining companies who exploit their situation of joblessness and hunger. It is causing what I describe as local migration from the villages to the mining sites, some are very far away from home. When some are fortunate and make money, they come back to display their 'wealth' and some affluence, thus making those they left behind want to go and also *become rich*. (*Real wealth is gained by holding an honest job, sweating for it, and it takes time.*)

These anti-social practices have on occasion, seemed to interfere with the preaching of the gospel and life with Jesus Christ. This is because some of the youth only think of the *here and now*, the temporal, material gain against the value of eternal life with in Jesus Christ.

In light of all this, please pray for Ghana, and Akrampa, as we continue to interact with the people and to make them disciples of Jesus Christ.

## ■ Blessings, Pastor Ben