

Rural Life in Ghana & in Akrampa - Effect of COVID-19 - Pt. 1

Dear Friends,

By the grace and mercies of God, Ghanaians, and particularly, the people of Akrampa, have come out of a full year of COVID-19. At the time that I am writing this article, the data shows that Ghana is ranked as #93, of the countries with the most cases in the world, with the following statistics:

Confirmed: 92,740

Recovered: 90,376

Deaths: 780

Active cases: 1,584

Ghana has a population of more than 31 million, now with 849,527 people being given the first shot of their vaccines. Julie and I were fortunate to receive our first shots in March and were told to come for our second shots on April 28, but at this time, we have no news of when we will get the second shots.

The total population of Akrampa is about 1,800 and of this number only some 10 adults have received their first vaccine shots!! But, dear friends, life in Akrampa appears unhindered in any way, with people going about their life as if nothing has happened, as if nothing is happening, and that is what bothers many of us. The three basic protocols, 1) social distancing, 2) washing of hands with soap and running water, and 3) wearing of masks, are very poorly observed.

The exception is in the Akrampa school, among the staff and the students. There is close to 98% adherence to the protocols while *inside of* our school.

Effect of the COVID-19 on Akrampa Life:

Much as all over the world, the Coronavirus has brought terrible things on the lives of people, as it did on Ghanaians, particularly on rural people like those in Akrampa. The people of Akrampa are basically agrarian by nature, even though some are beginning to seek sustenance in other economic ventures for their livelihood. Some work elsewhere while maintaining their **gardens/farms**, but some have actually stopped working on the land. The reason for either of the two activities is not far-fetched: the land has either stopped producing adequately, or availability of land to enlarge their **garden/farm** is no longer reliable.

You'll notice that I am referring to the activity as **garden/farm** because technically, a **farm** is a huge plot of land, of acres in size (which, of course, can be found in other parts of Ghana) while a **garden** is a small patch of land where foods like tomatoes, cassava, peppers, and other vegetables are grown.

From this garden/farm way of life, the harvest may be described as *pocket change* since it is nothing substantial. But it is also one of the reasons why most of the children (some eighty percent of them) never continue their education to the levels where they obtain qualifications/degrees/certificates that could be used to take care of themselves, and their future family (when married). This perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

When COVID-19 hit Ghana, the local government, like other nations all over the world, instituted legislation against activities that would cause the virus to spread. People in the rural areas, like Akrampa, that normally eke their living off of the land were so affected that the already poor people became even more poor. I noted in my last article that one of the effects of COVID-19 was how it affected the *cultural base* of life among the people. Farming, as an occupation or activity for the people was changed in such a way that the *will* to farm, or produce food for the market, was severely affected. The local farmers go to the *garden/farm*, to work but because of *social distancing*, buying and selling was severely affected. The new rules decreased how much produce/vegetables could be carried to the market at any one time (off of their farms) from what they normally carry to the market to sell. This leads to very obvious social and psychological issues for the people of Akrampa and its local economy.

The Implications of COVID-19 on Ghana ... in 2021:

This menace, COVID-19, has wrought terrible hardship on people all over the world, but I'm looking at it from the Ghanaian perspective, and Ghana's particular circumstances. Needless to say, COVID-19 has affected the cultural base of most Ghanaian communities but has also affected the **value base of societal norms**. In my April article, I said that the younger generation was tending to be reckless and disrespectful of the values of the society. Some younger persons are now pursuing a very anti-social agenda, such as seeking to be wealthy by the power of witchcraft and other heinous means. It might seem abhorrent to you if I were to describe what some young men did recently, even to the extent of killing a 10-year-old boy, for the terrible reason that they want to be very wealthy, instantly, without working for it. The point I'm making is that, with parents not being able to be the bread winners in the home, children are tending to fend for themselves, by any means, most of it being very anti-social and against cultural and moral norms. It's not as if to say this is new, far from it. Rather, in some respects, because of the increase in poverty, because the means to make a living has become worsened by the COVID-19 restrictions, children are now beginning to seek their own means of survival. Please pray for our country.

This article will be continued in June to talk more about the subject of the ongoing implications of COVID-19 on the people of Akrampa and Ghana overall.

Pastor Ben Wilson