

# The Model Inclusive School Project Ho, Ghana

Rotary District 1080 Grants Fair April 2021

# Background

- In 2000, many countries, INCLUDING GHANA, signed up to the Millennium Development Goals
- Among these goals was the commitment to offer **every** child a free primary education.
- There was a great surge of hope but, bit by bit, inactivity led to the fading of this hope

## The Sustainable Development Goals

- But in 2016 there was a new impetus, a renewed faith in the commitment to humanitarian values
- 2016 saw the introduction of the **Sustainable Development Goals** which stressed **Social Inclusion**. No one should be left behind. There was to be 'Equitable Quality Education' for all. Could 'All' really mean those with a disability, any kind of disability?
- Hope was rekindled but only, it seemed, on paper

The reality was still life as it had always been. What was on offer for Mawunyo, bright as a button in spite of spending every hour of her life in this bowl just as she has done since birth? Could she hope for change?



Mawunyo was born before the changes in approach could be effected.

- But what of this little lad
- Born in 2017
- Who will offer him a life beyond his bowl?
- Who will offer him a quality education?
- His legs are not working but his brain...?



**So where were the people with the power and the influence to initiate change, to begin the journey towards social and educational inclusion?**

Put simply, they were out of sight, keeping their heads well below the parapet.

It was up to Carrie Brown, a young American who had been living in Ghana since 2006 and myself in the UK but well experienced in life in Ghana to take up the challenge of offering a new way forward.

It would be a long and difficult journey as we had first to tackle traditional beliefs about disability being equated with the Devil and the Spirit World.

These children were part of a necessary process of the expiation of family sins. Their suffering meant that the price had been paid. Family honour was able to continue untainted.

## Preparing the way

- Over the next two or three years Carrie's advocacy work took her into the many villages round Ho, talking again and again to the parents of children with a disability and persuading them to come out of their houses, to form parent support groups. These were crucial considering that many of the children had been hidden away from birth. Little by little they all gained in confidence and awareness of their rights
- My advocacy work took me to the International Services Committee of the Rotary Club of Norwich where Carrie's and my ideas were greeted with much interest and support.



In tangible terms all we had in 2017 was this land, secured on a long term lease after many difficult meetings. BUT our major need was for money to build a Centre, a safe and caring haven for families





To our joy, Australia Aid came to our rescue. They loved our ideas and gave us a grant to build our Resource and Assessment Centre on the land. This is Commissioning Day in 2019, proclaiming hope and trust in the future



**A Resource and Assessment Centre.** But what **resources**? What **assessments** could we make? The building was empty

- In 2019 the Rotary Club of Norwich approached PhysioNet in Yorkshire to collect together a fantastic collection of either new or totally renovated paediatric equipment which was piled into a 40 ft container and sent to Tema Port in Ghana and then overland to Ho.
- Now the wheels were starting to turn and the Spirit World was on the verge of loosening its grip

**A real moment of joy** - Unloading the container in Ho – wheelchairs, standing frames, walking frames, Zimmers, crutches, mats, special boots etc





The therapists and technicians from Ho teaching hospital came to learn how to fit and use the equipment, much of which they had never seen before. Learning how to use the equipment necessitated all sorts of learning about how the body can be trained



The joy which the equipment brought to the children was overwhelming. For many, standing was a new experience, a triumph!





**Paper based technology.** This is a technology developed in the UK and has been used to provide extra furniture. Cheap to make, a piece can last a year to 18 months before being replaced



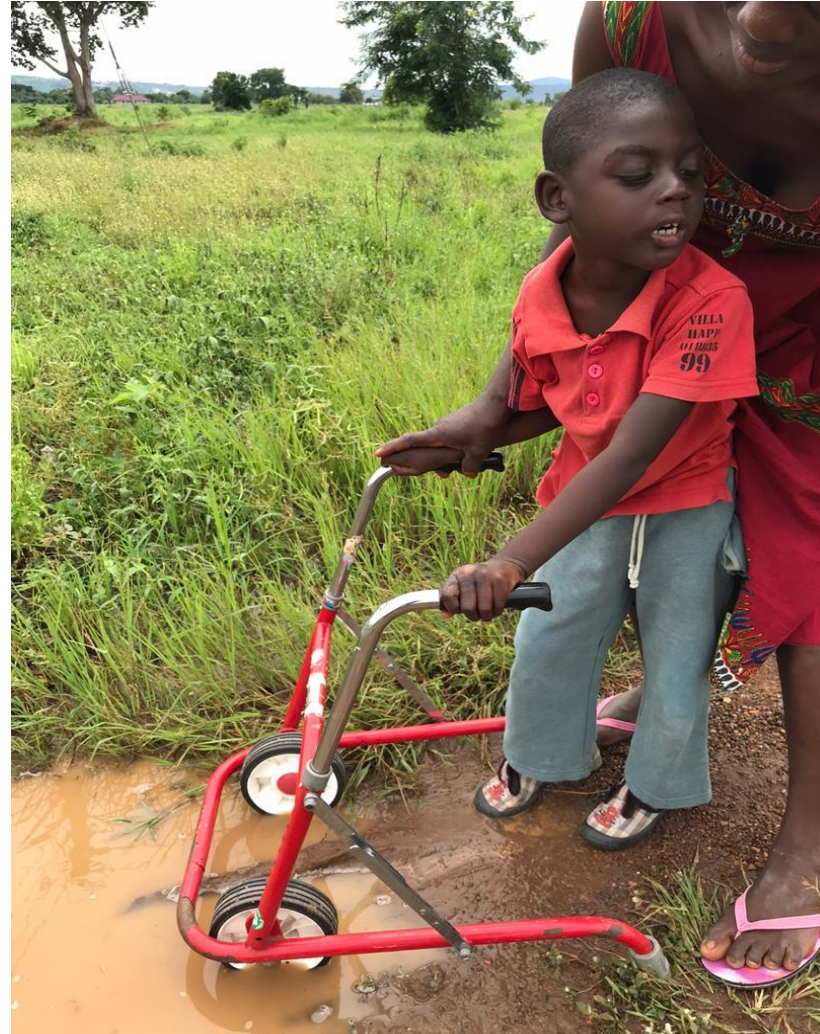


Having learned of the project in Ho, the Rotary Club of Nice - the Rotary Club of Norwich's twin club in France - was able to secure a District Grant to provide water tanks for storing rain water and a diesel pump so that the toilets could be used. Our grateful thanks to RC Nice.





Essential as the rain is to provide water, it soon gave rise to a problem of access for all the new users of the Centre





To our delight, Franciscan Aid gave us a grant to build the much needed road leading from the highway to the Centre. Thank you Franciscan Aid.



So what else could we possibly wish for?

To understand our next development you need to meet Sampson, born with only one proper leg.

The rest of his body and his brain functioned normally.

What was the problem?



## **Put simply..**

Sampson couldn't go to school. Why?

Reason 1 – he just might be a Devil Child. Although the local population was seeing children with a disability coming and going at the Centre, it was a much greater leap forward to accept them in school, mixing with their able-bodied peers

Reason 2 –there are no ramps and access to all the classrooms involves steps, frequently narrow and broken. It was too much to ask of a child dependent on crutches



A very generous donor in the UK paid for Sampson to have a prosthesis which he adapted to remarkably quickly





**Problem solved?**

**Surely Sampson could go to school now?**

No, he couldn't because the Head of the local school insisted on him wearing short trousers. Why? School Policy.

Why does Sampson need short trousers? Putting aside any wish to conceal the prosthesis, the consultant advised keeping it covered to provide for some protection for it.

Very fortunately, the Head of a fee-paying school has allowed Sampson to attend school wearing long trousers. A group from the Rotary Club of Norwich is paying his fees. Happy Boy!





But what about these children who are learning to walk and talk? Don't they deserve that promised education? Where do they figure in that **'fair and equitable education for all?'**

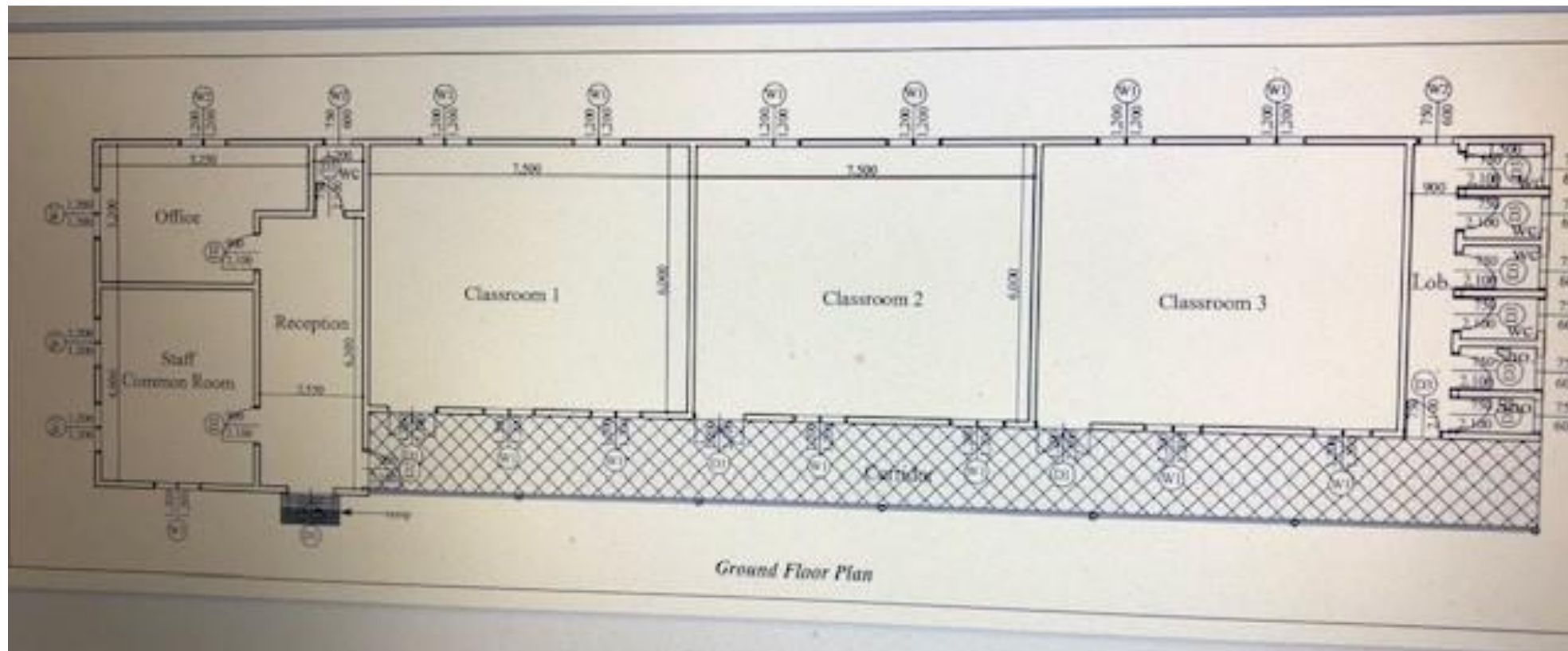


## **Creating that 'fair and equitable' future**

As more and more children pass through the hands of the therapists working both at the hospital and at the Centre, we see them ready for so much that life should offer them. Learning to walk and talk is wonderful but as in the normal way of things, they are increasingly ready for further challenges, further opportunities.

Once given these opportunities, there is no reason why they cannot contribute to the economic and social development of their country instead of being the drain that they have been forced to be for so very long.

**Once again,** we have a plan and once again Australia Aid is preparing to help realise it. This will be the Nursery and Kindergarten block. A Rotarian in Ghana has provided sacks of cement to help build the concrete blocks. Cement is very expensive in Ghana.



# MODEL INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

- This has always been our project title and Sampson's experience has been a timely reminder of the need to provide our own school where children both with and without a disability will be given the education which is appropriate to their needs. As the children learn side by side, we hope to begin to dispel the fear and prejudice which traditional society holds towards all those with a disability. Our belief is that once we provide a school, local children will soon arrive as their parents begin to accept that there is nothing to fear from disability. Moreover, there is currently no school in the community round the Resource and Assessment Centre so local children currently have to make a long journey for their education
- It will be a MODEL School as we believe that Heads from other schools will visit and begin to think about the possibility of doing the very same thing. As we know, success breeds success.



**But once again, Rotary has a vital role to play. The new building will be no more than a shell unless we can provide all the specialist equipment needed for the teaching and learning. Equipment is a given for us in the developed world.**

- All teaching and learning materials and equipment is costly and we need to provide across the range of ability.
- Our successful track record to date with the Ho project gives us confidence to take this next step to establish the Model Inclusive School.
- It is time for the Rotary Club of Norwich to start preparing the way for applying for a Global Grant - we are asking for your help. Any contributions you can make towards the equipment for these children will be enormously appreciated.
- We know that, like us, you support the aim of creating a more fair and just society and our **Model Inclusive School project** in Ho, Ghana presents a wonderful opportunity to do so. With my close connection with Carrie Brown and the Kekeli Foundation, feedback is quick and consistent. You will not be disappointed.

Thank you!

