

Holidays in Ullo

Volume 3

Winter Travel Team

December 23rd-25th



Christmas Day excursion to Mushroom Rock for some bouldering.

Issue III Updates

- Collaborating with Self-Help International
- Preparing for and presenting the new Ullo Clinic
- Christmas celebrations in Ullo



Zack introduced the team to the community during Christmas Mass at the local Catholic church.

Thursday, December 23rd

Rebecca Crawford Global Resource Systems

Merry Christmas Eve Eve from Ullo, Ghana! today looked a little different for some of our team members. As you may or may not know, EWB-ISU recently started a partnership with Self-Help International, an Iowa based NGO. Self-Help works in Nicaragua and Ghana, mostly within nutrition and microloans for women. Their home base in Ghana is in Kumasi; they recently decided to move an office to Jirapa (about 45 minutes from Ullo) to work more in the Upper West Region of the country. The partnership between EWB-ISU and Self-Help is part of a longer commitment to continue work in the traditional Ullo area. Part of my role on the travel team is acting as the Self-Help International Liaison. Leading up to the trip, I have been communicating with staff from the organization about their work so far within Ullo and surrounding communities.

Keeping that background in mind, today Dr. Maier, George, Jen, and myself traveled down to Jirapa - courtesy of our driver, Zack - to meet with Constantine. He is the Self-Help Staff based in the Upper West Region.

Zack continued onto Wa to pick up some supplies needed for the Irrigation project and some paint for those staking the clinic site.

During our meeting with Constantine, I was able to gather more information about a needs assessment that had been done, as well as learn more about the survey Constantine will be conducting next week. It is the hope that I am able to accompany Constantine to the different communities being surveyed next week.

Jen, the Shea nut team representative, learned more about other women's groups selling and processing shea in the area. What followed was a discussion all about the value of food processing and preservation and how that could be applied to the women growing and selling shea nuts in Ullo.

Jen and I were able to explore Jirapa a little more after enjoying some lunch with everyone. We were both really excited when the beans we had were not super spicy.

As we walked around Jirapa, what struck me was how different wealth looks in Ghana versus in Iowa/the United States. Business and economy look much different in Jirapa. but that does not necessarily mean it is not as good as what I am used to seeing. In Iowa, it is typically for towns to have a central downtown business location, probably off the main road. But in Jirapa, and most communities, the "downtown" shops are located right up against the one or two roads running through.

It looks different, and can be overwhelming to take in, but it is what works. There are constantly cars, vans, motor bikes, and other vehicles driving through. At least 3 or 4 are bound to stop and buy a pack of Malta or a snack; maybe even a new outfit!

In other, engineering-related news: Matt Dunning, Mary, Libby, and Joe returned to the site of the new clinic to continue staking the buildings and rooms for phase one of the clinic project. Tomorrow, the plan is to chalk out the lines in case a goat or a little kid runs through and breaks the yarn.

Matt Butler continued to work with Paul and Justin on the irrigation system for the school. This week, there has been excellent progress made; we are excited to have KNUST here next week to show them the work so far and have help as the team continues work.

When the team returned from Jirapa, the power was out at the house, so we all enjoyed a lovely head-lamp lit dinner of rice, cabbage stew, chicken, and yams.

We have not even been in Ullo for one week, but already, all of the Travel Team has had experiences that have completely changed how we look at the world and how we will continue on with our lives when we get back to Iowa. We are so excited to continue sharing our stories with you!



George, Rebecca and Jennifer visiting Constantine at the office Self-Help International opened in Jirapa to work with the people of the Ullo Traditional Area.

Friday, December 24th

Matthew Dunning

VP Programs, Environmental Engineering

It's been a week since first arriving in Ghana and so much has happened. We've been staying at Inas house (Zacks sister) since arriving in Ullo. It's the only two story building in the area and newly constructed.

We've been introduced to a new breakfast dish called rice water, which is essentially cooked rice with water. It's bland so I prefer to mix it with instant oatmeal to give it more flavor.

Joe, Libby, Mary, and I went to the new clinic site to paint the stakes and outline the buildings in chalk so they would be more visible. Chalking the total perimeter of all the buildings seemed like an impossible task but with the help of several Ghanaian kids, we comfortably finished in time for lunch. In total, Phase I of the health clinic will have 1,090ft of perimeter for all six buildings.

After lunch, we went to the weekly market held in town to purchase textiles. I purchased the best design and walked to a tailor to get measured. Needless to say, I'll have a fresh Ghanaian shirt to wear back in the US.

We went to mass at the catholic church in town at 10:00pm. The service lasted until after midnight and there was lots of dancing. It was very interesting to see the pastor busting out moves after communion.



Saturday, December 25th

Joe Kim

President, Industrial Engineering

Merry Christmas from Ghana! Although there was not any snow on the ground, the Christmas spirit filled the house; Matt Butler had brought in a couple of green shrubs from outside and placed them in the middle of the living room, and Rebecca's mom's gifts were placed under "the tree" making for a very festive mood. We were greeted by warm breakfast sandwiches, rice porridge, and the classic donut holes. After eating, we all popped open the Christmas gifts (thank you so much, Mrs. Crawford, they were awesome), and we put on our little crowns (see our Christmas card picture attached) while playing with the little gifts. After our little celebration, we all hopped into the van and started driving to Mushroom Rock, which was a natural monument a little over an hour away. Shockingly, two large boulders looked like mushrooms. As a group, we all had a blast climbing around the boulders (it felt like a playground for adults) and exploring the area. We spent a fair amount of time there before we all got hungry and headed out to a restaurant in Jirapa. This restaurant had a lot of traditional foods like balebale, banku, and fried plantains; it might have been a bit too traditional for our team since some of us struggled to get some food down. The reactions made to some of the foods were priceless, and George and Zack were having an absolute blast watching everyone else down their plates. After somewhat making it through the meal, we returned home and took a much-needed break/nap, especially for those recovering from the meal. After a couple of hours, we were all somewhat ok, and we got to eat our next meal, a tomato chicken stew on rice. We had to eat pretty quickly, though, to get into the community and present the clinic's status, where we showed them the designs.

Over 100 people gathered around a projector where images from the design were shown as we went through over a dozen images. Their energy as the project was shown was incredible, and there were multiple times when we had to pause for singing and cheering.

I think for all of us, seeing all their support and excitement really encouraged and made us so grateful to be part of such an awesome community. It's hard to capture just how special the moment was, but if you ask anyone on the travel team, I'm sure they'd feel the same way and might show you a video capturing just part of it. After finishing everything up, the air was still buzzing with excitement and happiness, which morphed into singing, dancing, and celebrating. Many of us got roped into dancing and were even taught some traditional dances, like the boa. The celebration lasted for hours later, but being a part of the community was a great way to end Christmas.

