



*“Never doubt that a small group of people cannot change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has”*

Margaret Mead

# **The Victoria-Taiama Project**

## **Update on the Victoria-Taiama School Project...**

**SEPTEMBER, 2010**

*Our project is restoring the opportunity for education to the children of Taiama, Sierra Leone.*

### **Update on the School (Feb.-May, 2010)**



Once again, we were able to send Eric Sama to Sierra Leone to oversee this year's projects. His goal for the Ahmadiyya Primary School was focused on upgrading and finishing earlier projects:

In 2007, we had partially completed a second 5 classroom wing. Unfortunately, the roof blew off last winter. Consequently, the building has been unoccupied since January 2009.

Because of generous donors and a Kenoli Foundation grant for \$15,000, Eric was able to have the roof repaired, ceiling tiles installed and a concrete floor poured in the new wing.

He was also able to have all ten classrooms in school painted in the school colours of green and gold. He had bars installed on the windows and drainage dug around building for rainy season.

When the work was done, the community organized an opening ceremony. The celebration culminated with the handing over of the completed project of 10 classrooms and a latrine block to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission

The added space has enabled the school to offer junior secondary level classes for the first time. This will allow students to continue their education in Taiama. Students will now attend in two shifts - Grades 1-6 in the morning and Grades 7-9 in the afternoon. While this will benefit all students, we anticipate that it will allow girls, who normally drop out as their families can not afford to send them to other communities, to stay in school. The total cost of the work on the school was \$19,000.



## 40 foot container sent to Taiama



We were able to send a container filled with books, bikes, toys, school supplies, clothing, team uniforms, sports equipment, and medical supplies. The items were collected from Victoria community. The boxes were packed and labeled by charity volunteers and the container was shipped on February 19 through the Compassionate Warehouse.



The container arrived, to great fanfare, in Taiama on April 30<sup>th</sup>.



The contents were enthusiastically received. Eric and village elders distributed the clothing to the villagers. The rest of the goods were distributed through the school.



The total cost of buying the container and transporting it to Taiama was \$13,500.



Many thanks to families at Marigold, Doncaster, Campus View, Lakehill, St. Margaret's School, Lambrick Secondary, Spectrum Secondary, as well as Victoria General Hospital and Compassionate Warehouse for the donated items. Special thank you to Fran and Peter Hancock for storage in their garage, and to all those who helped load the container. A big thank you to Compassionate Warehouse's Del Wergeland and volunteers, especially Mervin Black for help in organizing the shipping and expert packing of the container.

## Taiama's First Health Education Centre



Eric's next major project was to build the Health Education Centre.

The Health Education Centre was made possible through donations from Donna and Grant Faint as well as friends and family of Judy Smith, Donna's sister. The Centre is dedicated to her memory. The 1800 sq ft building will be opened within four months and will be staffed with one nurse, one community health worker and one custodian/registrar. The Centre will be visited weekly by a doctor from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission.

The services will include

- basic health care for all students of Ahmadiyya School
- daily (M-F) primary health care clinic for community(referrals to larger centre in Bo if more treatment is needed)
- Pre and post natal clinics, well baby clinics
- School education programs: nutrition, malaria, HIV-AIDS awareness, sexuality
- health insurance program: yearly fee for a set (to be determined) number of visits
- midwifery support (not a full maternity clinic)



A business plan is currently being developed. Our goal is that it be self-sufficient within five years.

Clients of the Centre will be charged a small user fee to offset costs, as the local consensus is that a fee must be charged or the clinic will be overwhelmed and unappreciated. The price will be determined by local economics and there will be provision of a barter program for those who cannot pay the user fee. All in need will receive medical assistance.

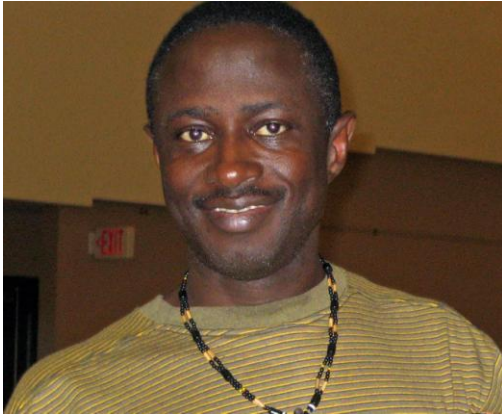
The cost to build and staff the clinic for one year is \$45,000.

Garth and Donna Faint have committed to underwrite the costs of running the Centre for the next 5 years. Their continued support of the Victoria-Taiama Project has made an immeasurable difference to the lives of families in Taiama. Thank you.



## Project Management

The Victoria-Taiama Project has been successful to date because of the close relationship between Maureen Mark and Eric Sama. This project is one of their life passions. We have been able to ensure that almost all of the donations we receive go directly to Taiama as Eric personally takes the money there. As a member of the Taiama community with knowledge of local people and business practices, he is able to negotiate with the school, parents and contractors to ensure that we get the best possible value for our funds. He then coordinates and oversees the work. On this visit he instituted a highly effective "Food for Work" program to ensure sufficient labour for the building projects.



Tragically, Eric has been stricken with congenital kidney disease. He has been undergoing dialysis for the past 2 years. Despite his illness, Eric was determined to continue his work in Sierra Leone. For this trip, he arranged with VGH for a portable dialysis machine and, with it in tow, he headed for Taiama. The work was well underway, when Eric developed an abdominal infection which made him extremely ill. He was required to return to Canada where he spent 6 weeks in hospital. Now 80 lbs lighter, he spends every other day in

dialysis and is on the waitlist for a new kidney. Amazingly, he continues to be involved in the Victoria-Taiama Project.

Fortunately for the Project, Andrew Sama, Eric's younger brother, has taken over for Eric. Andrew arrived in Taiama at the end of June. He continues to organize and manage the opening of the clinic, and to prepare a budget for renovations of an older building for a library. We are most grateful to Andrew for disrupting his life to help out!

## **The Victoria-Taiama Project**

### **Thanks you, our supporters!**



For more information or to donate to this worthy cause...

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