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1. Summary of Current Developments

PAMF (Projects-Abroad Microfinance) is currently working with 3 groups of women in three different villages in the New Juaben District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The first group are from the well known village of Akokoa and is formed up of petty traders and food sellers. Projects Abroad have a long history working with this community, and over the years have contributed a great deal of their building efforts there. It was a natural progression for Projects Abroad to target their micro-finance efforts in Akokoa first. The Akokoa group are now in their 10th week of their loan repayment which was an amount of **GH¢1200.00**

The second village is called Akwadum, where meetings are held every Thursday at the Christian Orphanage Village and School. Currently there are about forty petty traders who have enrolled on the microfinance project, with **90%** being female mothers whose children are enrolled at the orphanage's primary school. Currently only one group, Peace & Love, made of two seamstresses have been given a total loan amount of **GH¢880.00**. This loan was for the cost of an electric sewing machine and embroidery machine, which are necessary to increase the efficiency of their work and boost turnover.

2. Volunteer Information

Between May and June 2013, two volunteers have been part of the Microfinance Projects in Koforidua. These are Frankie Bates from Ireland who setup the first loan for the group at Akokoa, and Sienna Hickey from USA, who set up the loan at Akwadum. Frankie was a model volunteer and very instrumental in setting up the business plan and structure for the project. Sienna designed the loan profile write-up, the guarantor and loan agreement forms, and other loan structure documents that would help incoming volunteers to understand PAMF loan product. Several training workshops were organised by both volunteers and these helped immensely. Both volunteers were in regular contact with their groups and were on hand to help whenever possible.

3. Beneficiaries & Current business

Currently, there are about sixty (60) petty traders who have had the privilege to be part of the PAMF projects (workshops, training and financial support) and among these about 95% are female mothers who really need assistance. Currently only twelve (12) people have been giving financial support totalling **GH¢2880.00**. Ten (10) of these traders are into the retail of foodstuffs such as cassava, plantain, rice and other basic consumer products. The other two are seamstresses who had an electric sewing and embroidery machine bought for them to boost their work output. The 28 are new members who are being trained, while the remaining are awaiting some loan support. Repayment is on weekly basis and amount being paid on the average is GH¢14.50 per head. This is a manageable instalment considering the gestation period of two weeks, which is given to each beneficiary before they start repayment. This has made the entire loan portfolio default free as at now.

4. Loan Portfolio

Group Name	Location of group	Business type	Loan disbursement	Total repayments	Total defaults	Total outstanding loan
Akokoa Group	New Juaben district, Akokoa	Cooked rice and sellers and food crops	GHC1200.00	¢867.50	GHC0	GHC332.50
God With Us Group	Christian village and school, Akwadum	seamstresses	GHC880.00	GHC64.00	GHC0	GHC816.00
Peace And Love Group	Habitat, Kwamoso village	Food crops and provisions sellers	GHC800.00	GHC48.00	GHC0	GHC752.00
TOTAL			GHC2880.00	GHC979.50	GHC0	GHC1900.50

NB: last two groups started their Loan repayments on the 1st and 4th July, respectively. Loan for the third group was raised from some repayments from the first group and balance from the purchase of the electric sewing and embroidery machine for the second group.

5. Monthly Achievements

Thanks to PAMF, Madame Fauzia Razak and Madame Cecilia Opata have both received brand new electric sewing and embroidery machines, respectively and this has greatly increased their work output. Agnes Torsah, Juliana Kwakutse, Deborah Torsah and Doris Amedonu have been given a total loan support of GHC800.00 on the 17th June. This was to help them increase their inventory and meet up to the demand in the market. Their loan repayment begins on the 1st of July and ends on the 30th of September. With the inventory top up, they can sell more than usual on Market days (Tuesdays and Thursday)

6. Future Developments

We are expecting two Microfinance volunteer, David Hassel on the 11th of July and Dayna Williams on the 20th of July. They would handle a group at Kwamoso Christian Village after they are brought up to speed on the microfinance projects. We plan on disbursing some of the monies collected from repayments to other ready and deserving clients. After which there is going to be a grand workshop for interaction and training.



> University College Dublin graduate kick-starts a microfinance project in Ghana

Twenty-five-year-old Frankie Bates, a Business Strategy student from Dublin travelled to Ghana to volunteer at the Projects Abroad Microfinance Project. Frankie spent two months working in underprivileged communities around the country's Eastern Regional capital Koforidua.

He became the first volunteer to kick-start the new project by Projects Abroad which is aimed at providing business support to small scale traders and farmers in order to maximize their profit potential and to make their business and livelihoods sustainable.

Before Frankie travelled to Ghana, he had always had plans to travel to West Africa; partly for leisure but more importantly to have a career break and to do something worthwhile. Both Ghana and the Projects Abroad Microfinance Project had come recommended: "Koforidua is a good place to start. Volunteers are needed because they manage the project and assist the Projects Abroad coordinators with financial and business ideas to effectively run the project for the benefit of the local men and women."

On being asked what difference Projects Abroad may be making in these communities Frankie said: "We don't know what it is yet. Our hope is to self-empower the people. Hopefully, we can get to employ people if the project grows; if the structure is good and the project is sustainable, we will make a huge difference."

Frankie is convinced that he has learnt and improved on many things. "It is good to see the way business principles are practiced in a different continent and a different country. Here, businesses are spread everywhere unlike Ireland where there is a huge business centre."

He described the contrast of Ghanaian culture and that of his home country: "Working time here is shorter so one has to manage time very well. In Ghana, using the left hand and crossing one's leg is culturally unacceptable especially when it is a business meeting."

During his leisure time over weekends, he recalled travelling to witness the "Aboakyire," a festival of the people of Winneba – a festival where a team of men hunt for a sacrificial deer with their bare hands. "This and other places like Ada Foah and its amazing estuary are memories that I will keep forever."

"It is easy to find your way around Ghana. There is a lot to see. You don't have to travel far to see new things. The people are very friendly too. It is more open and sociable; more publicly acceptable. Ghanaians have a bigger sense of community than Ireland."

Frankie encourages future volunteers who are interested in the Microfinance Project to come with some business knowledge and to accept the cultural difference and be tolerant. "Be willing to be flexible with your time. The faster you embrace everything, the more you enjoy it."