



WOMENSTRUST  
POKUAUSE VILLAGE

## Fall 2007 Update from Susan Kraeger, Executive Director

Summer 2007 has been our busiest and most productive to date. We took giant steps in moving our mission forward by integrating education and healthcare into our microlending base. WomensTrust hosted over 20 guests and visitors from the U.S. and Ghana.

On the microlending front, as our total loan program – including affiliates – approaches the 1,000-client level, our Pokuase office is becoming a hub where visiting students and other microlenders come to observe and train.

### In June

- WomensTrust loan administrators (“Team Pokuase”) were hired to train the staff of a start-up microlending program in Central Ghana. We hosted founder Nick Caccavo and his team of U.S. students, who in turn sent their Ghanaian team to Pokuase for how-to instruction. They returned to their town fully equipped with our best practices and our template for success.



Nick Caccavo (left) and associate with Team Pokuase

- We also hosted a team of New York University students participating in the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service Summer Institute held in Accra. They were referred by Professor William Easterly, who is the author of *The White Man’s Burden*, and who personally honored us by visiting Pokuase. The students spent three days interviewing our administrative team, visiting with clients, and observing a microlending program first hand.

### In July

- Hannah Davis, a freshman at New York University, arrived to continue a science program for girls that we piloted last year. Working with the Trust’s scholarship administrator, Hannah quickly identified the need to educate junior high school girls in the disciplines – including science – to pass the national exams required for high school entrance.

Choosing twelve motivated ninth graders, three of them WomensTrust scholarship students, Hannah founded the Girls Exploration and Empowerment Club (GEEC), a class that meets weekly for two hours every Saturday. The curriculum includes Internet training (unheard of for girls in Ghana), science experiments, a book club, and a community oral history project. Supporting education for girls is paramount to improving a woman's and a community's economic success, and we are delighted the project is being funded by Hannah's grandfather and his Rotary Club International in Rhode Island.



Hannah Davis with the Pokuase GEEC Club

- Three graduate students enrolled in Seattle University's International Development Research Program came next—Kathy Keefe, Josephine Garric, and Emily Koft. The women spent six weeks in Pokuase conducting extensive research to understand the impact and outcomes of all our programs. Their findings are being compiled to form the foundation of a database that will support program impact analysis as we go forward and validate our position as a successful microfinance institution.
- Two exceptionally talented high school students from The Derryfield School in Manchester, NH—Hannah LeBlanc and Taylor Nagel—arrived for a four-week internship with WomensTrust. The young women collated the data that we collect on our loan applications; received and recorded loan repayments; shadowed Pokuase's community nurse; helped out at the weekly government-sponsored well-baby clinics; registered women for our August blood pressure and anemia screenings; and tutored our scholarship students. A report of their experiences can be found on our website. We feel strongly that this kind of cultural exchange encourages relationships and supports global understanding.

## In August

- Seeking to impact the staggering statistic that one in five women die of pregnancy-related causes in Ghana, Linda Messenger, president of the NH Nurse Practitioners



Above: Rosemary Theroux; Pokuase's traditional birthing attendant and her daughter; Linda Messenger; Robin Klar; and Pokuase District Health Officer Victoria Owusu

Association, invited Rosemary Theroux and Robin Klar of the University of Massachusetts/ Worcester Graduate School of Nursing to participate in a series of screenings for blood pressure and anemia that we offered to Pokuase women of childbearing age. The team saw 430 women in six days and dispensed a full increment of iron-infused vitamins and blood pressure medication to cover the period until our return in January. Rose and Robin are creating a

database at UMass with baseline health outcome data to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions initiated on this trip. Equally important, they returned home with a growing understanding of how healthcare practices in the country of origin translate to Worcester's large and growing immigrant Ghanaian population who have the highest rate of infant mortality in the state.

- We took skill building to a new level with Bo Grove, a retired two-star general from New London, NH, who carefully crafted a small business development curriculum expressly tailored for our clients. Seventy women and men attended Bo's daily classes. Afternoons were reserved for private consultations with clients and site visits to their businesses. The idea that a woman's labor should be factored in as legitimate expense was a new concept, and it was extraordinary to observe the impact this class had on our clients. Bo will be back in January with more classes and a one-on-one session, helping our clients to become more strategic in the use of their loans.



Bo Grove with the WomansTrust Entrepreneur Group

- As our affiliates returned this summer, we received total affirmation that our model continues to inspire others. They came to witness the growth of their loan programs and to strengthen relationships with their clients and communities. Our affiliate, World Class,



Kathleen (center) and the women of Medie

agreed to provide funding for the electrical hookup in Amasaman’s newly built Area Council building and is working with the town on a sanitation and water plan. Another affiliate, Women’s Center – Ofankor, took steps to establish a local emergency clinic in response to their clients’ list of priorities. We also hosted Kathleen Gibbs from San Francisco, who will become our third affiliate – Joy2theWorld – launching a loan program in the town of Medie in January

2008. At the meeting held to introduce Kathleen to the women of Medie, she was presented with a sheet of paper listing the names of nearly 50 women who had formed their own groups and opened bank accounts in anticipation of her arrival. They were ready and waiting.

Meanwhile, in our thriving Pokuase hub, the loan program has grown to 650+ clients; we have 103 girls on scholarship; our two-year-old adult literacy program is adding a beginner class; and 35 village elders – all 85 years to 115 – continue to gratefully receive their stipends.

Congratulations to all of you in our extended community for this wonderful progress. Your commitment encourages us and your contributions are the foundation for our success. And as Dana is so fond of saying, “We have just begun.”

**Womens Trust, Inc.**

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