

New Life Orphanage Needs Assessment and Building Project Nungua, Ghana



(New Life Orphanage, July 2011)

Angela Quashigah

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Supervisory Committee:

Renata Serra, Chair

Sharon Abramowitz, Member

Dedication/Acknowledgements:

This report is dedicated to Renata Serra and Sharon Abramowitz for their undying patience, encouragement, and teaching both inside and outside of the classroom.

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Abstract

This paper is a detailed report on a two-part project meeting part of the requirements for a Master of Sustainable Development Practice degree from the University of Florida. The project is a needs assessment for New Life Orphanage in Nungua, Ghana along with a building project which addresses several of the needs identified in the assessment. Background research was conducted on orphans in Ghana, education in Ghana, and the needs assessment process. The needs assessment and building project was conducted in a participatory fashion with the orphanage staff and several members of the local community. The orphanage had many needs, but through the assessment, the team was also able to identify many existing resources. The team used the needs assessment process to determine how these existing resources could be put to better use in meeting the needs of the orphanage with the assistance of the building project inputs. The main input called for by the needs assessment was a simple piece of infrastructure to be used for a variety of purposes, with the main purpose being a preschool classroom for the Jasper School. The Jasper School program is designed to then feed back into the orphanage as a major self-sustained funding source. The project described in this report contributed to the community not only by initiating a sustainable participatory process, but also by leaving behind a tangible piece of infrastructure which benefits the orphanage and provides for the expansion of the Jasper School program to sustain the organization into the future.

Introduction

I chose to work with New Life Orphanage in Nungua, Ghana for my MDP (Master of Sustainable Development Practice) field practicum in June 2011. I chose New Life Orphanage because the organization had great potential for development and the director had visionary ideas for improving the orphanage and contributing to the community. The director already had several projects underway and I envisioned how my project would fit in with the larger picture, supporting and contributing to the development process of the organization which was already in progress. When I met the director, Cephas Mensah Afotey, I learned that he was extremely hard-working and committed to creating a better future for the kids at the orphanage and for the community as a whole. He was a natural leader in the community and interested in development, so I knew that even after I finished my project's contributions and had to leave the area, the larger development process there would continue.

I began this project with a needs assessment to identify the greatest strengths and most important needs of the orphanage. My goal was to determine how my project could contribute to the orphanage and the local community while leaving an impact that would lead to self-sustainability of the orphanage in the future. Cephas was already an established leader within the community and had several ideas for incorporating community development strategies with orphanage improvements to enhance the lives of orphans, non-orphaned children, and residents of the local community. One of these ideas was a new school called the Jasper School which he had begun building across the street from the orphanage. He wanted to establish a program which would incorporate both orphans and non-orphaned students, provide an opportunity for learning vocational studies/job skills, and provide a funding source to support the orphanage into the future. We determined that the future needs of the orphanage could be met locally if the organization had its own sustainable source of funding, which would come from the new school program. Non-orphaned students would be charged school fees which would provide a self-sustained funding source for the school and orphanage, and orphaned students would be able to attend free-of-charge.

The most immediate needs of the orphanage and new school program could be met through the construction of a small multipurpose structure within the orphanage walls which would serve as a preschool classroom for the new school, among other

uses. Through the needs assessment, we were able to engage in a participatory process to identify this particular building project and the organizational changes that would accompany it as an important way in which my project could contribute to the development of this organization and community. I chose to carry out this particular project for my field practicum because the nature of this project and the way it fits in with the larger developments already going on at the orphanage allowed me to leave the biggest impact within the relatively short time constraints of the summer field practicum and limited resources available.

I visited other orphanages in the surrounding areas to get ideas for how they operated. SOS is a large, international organization with orphanages located in over 300 countries around the world. They have several orphanages in Ghana alone, and I visited one in the Tema area. They have successfully employed a strategy for self-financing similar to that of Cephas' Jasper School: They have schools open to the public which require school fees, and this income is used to support the orphanage. It is a bit different in that the public schools and the orphans' schools are located in separate areas. However, the orphans at New Life are already an integral part of the Nungua community and interact often with their non-orphan peers. They have non-orphan friends who come to play at the orphanage and attend programs there. In the Nungua community, an integrated schooling system including both orphans and non-orphans is showing much promise.

Comparison/Contrast with other orphanages in the area:

Institution Name	History	Size	Staffing	Educational involvement	Funding Source
SOS Children's Villages	1971 given large plot of land in Tema, Ghana; other orphanages in other countries around the world	Large international organization	Family-style housing with one full-time and one part-time resident staff for every 12 children	Separate SOS school for public vs. orphan residents	School fees charged to the public; international donors; local companies
Teshie Orphanage	Organization founded in 1995; orphanage built 1998	Information unclear; majority of original children grown and gone but no new intakes (per in-person visit)	Several women "workers" living at the orphanage	Attend outside schooling (local Presbyterian school)	International donations; local churches; Presbyterian affiliations
New Life Orphanage	Orphanage founded and built in 2000	42 children, Currently at capacity	1 director; household responsibilities delegated to older children; separate daytime staffing for school = 1 teacher per grade level	New school built for orphans; will open soon to include public students also	Father's inheritance money; Private individuals; Local churches; Local in-kind donations

Background Information

Country Context: Education

Ghana is considered a lower-middle-income country at the time of the write-up of this field practicum (2012). About 39% of the population is under the age of 15, and 16% of primary-school-age children are not in school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011). Two of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are related to education: MDG 2 aims to achieve universal primary education, while MDG 3, the goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women, involves ensuring gender parity particularly at the primary and junior high school levels. With a net primary enrolment ratio (NER) of 83.7%, gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 95.2%, and 96%/92% female-male ratio in primary and junior secondary schools respectively, Ghana is on track for achieving both education-related MDGs by the target year of 2015 (Government of Ghana, 2010).

Despite Ghana's positive progress on the global educational goals, however, the country is facing its own specific set of obstacles and challenges to improving the educational system. The MDG goals focus more on quantity, such as enrolment numbers and universal access, but education in Ghana is suffering from a lack of quality within the educational system. The hasty approach to increasing pupil enrolment is a contributing factor to the decline in quality of education. The supply of educational resources simply cannot keep up with ever-expanding student numbers. In addition, pupil retention rates decrease continuously with progressive levels of schooling (Shabani, 2008). While increasing enrolment is a first step in educating Ghana's youth, it must be accompanied by an increase in retention and completion rates, as well as quality, to really make a positive difference in the educational opportunity for the population.

One major reason cited for children not attending school is the lack of relevance of schooling to future work opportunities and the economic realities faced by developing countries like Ghana. The introduction of vocational, technical, and entrepreneurship studies in senior secondary schools in Ghana is an effort at addressing this matter. Vocationalisation of the secondary school curriculum has received support from organizations like UNESCO and other African governments (Akyeampong, 2005). They indicate that it will increase the relevance of further education, encouraging positive changes in attitude. It is also designed to increase motivation and relevant skills for self-employment and further the capabilities for innovation. A focus on vocational studies in the school curriculum will help facilitate the transition from schooling to meaningful and productive work endeavors.

A comprehensive plan for including vocational subjects in the secondary school curriculum in Ghana was introduced in 1987. Ghana's efforts at economic reconstruction after the crisis of the late 1970s and 80s emphasized private sector development and embraced the idea that targeting the youth would create positive and lasting change for the future of the nation. Youth unemployment is a common crisis across the African continent, as well as in many other parts of the world. The formal sector is unable to absorb the sheer numbers of the unemployed population, even for those who meet minimal educational requirements (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2005). For this reason, it is important that the education of youth include a fostering of entrepreneurial attitudes, ideas, and skills so that they are better equipped to create their own jobs and

contribute to the capacity for innovative problem-solving and creative development of their societies. With training in entrepreneurship and vocational studies, a greater proportion of young people should be able to develop their own small businesses and find other employment opportunities beyond the formal sector, equipping them for jobs that would otherwise be unavailable. Development programs that focus on improving education should support the existing educational system and the country's efforts to improve its own schools. Development organizations could help local schools establish programs that meet these goals by helping meet the need for physical, technical, and financial resources to get programs started and plan how they will continue. Microloans could be offered in conjunction with educational programs in order to provide the infusion of capital necessary for promising young adult students to start their own businesses.

Policy is in place for including vocational, technical, and entrepreneurship studies in Ghanaian schools. However, these efforts have not yet resulted in real relevance at the secondary school level for the youth of the country. There are several challenges presented by these subjects in particular for meaningful inclusion at the secondary school level. Vocational, technical, and entrepreneurship studies are applied disciplines which cannot be successfully mastered using the rote classroom learning methods which have comprised the bulk of teaching methods in African schools for decades (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2005). The introduction of these subjects requires a major shift in attitudes from traditional ways of educating children to educational techniques that are more conducive to learning, such as hands-on and participatory methods. New teaching/learning techniques must be accepted by teachers, administrators, students, parents, and communities before students can successfully learn in these new ways, and this poses a cultural challenge. Another obstacle is the materials and facilities required for teaching hands-on subjects. These subjects not only require their own specific textbooks, but also necessitate specialized equipment and facilities which introduce costs beyond those required by primarily book-based curricula. Assessment of student learning must be conducted not only by written examination, but also through practical evaluation of hands-on work, so this poses another difficulty and further expenses involved in teaching these subjects. The most major challenge for vocational studies is the need for a cadre of competent personnel to teach and administer these subjects. These teachers must not only know their specialty field well, but also have knowledge of education and teaching methods. This challenge in particular reflects the biggest

challenge in general faced by the educational system in Ghana, which is a lack of enough qualified teachers and staff to cater to the sheer numbers of students who are or should be enrolled in school (Hardman, 2012).

Vocational/technical/entrepreneurship studies represent more than just a subject which has been neglected in secondary school or a missed opportunity for students inclined to pursue those paths. They may be the key to increasing the overall relevance or perceived relevance of education in Ghana which has been the major roadblock keeping children out of school. These subjects are of particular benefit to today's youth in Ghana as the country strives to develop. While providing the opportunity for these subjects in school requires a greater investment in resources, it is also more likely to produce a greater return on investment for the economy and the country as a whole into the future. My background research on vocational curricula in Ghana supports Cephas' vision of how his new school will contribute to the greater goals of education and development in the country.

Country Context: Orphans

Orphans, along with the disabled and the elderly, make up the "traditional poor" as identified in participatory poverty assessments (Masset & White, 2004). Double orphans are more likely to be below appropriate grade level for their age. While orphans are progressing faster than non-orphans on MDG indicators for education and nutrition, they still remain more deprived overall (Bicego, Rutstein, & Johnson, 2003).

In Ghana, institutional care for urban children began in the 1940s when the Ghana Hostels Association was established with the intent to find foster parents for children (Akpalu, 2007). In 1962 the National Trust Fund built the first orphanage. It was originally designed to be a temporary home for children while they waited to be placed in foster homes. The government of Ghana was fully responsible for the facility (and later additional facilities) through the Department of Social Welfare. Increased numbers of orphans and lack of foster homes or flaws in the system for placing children resulted in the orphanages becoming overcrowded with children residing there for extended periods of time. The government was officially responsible for the orphaned children, but it did not provide adequate resources for the facilities to ensure the children's well-being. Unfortunately, the institutional structure remains this way today. Many children live out their entire childhoods in overcrowded orphanages. While the

government develops policies regarding orphan care, it does not provide resources to support the implementation of appropriate care policies.

Physical, mental, and social factors all contribute to the development of a child. For the orphans residing at New Life Orphanage, the orphanage building, the organization, and its programs make up the developmental environment of the children. My project contributes to building improvements at the orphanage, financial sustainability of the organization, and programming for the school. Through its contributions to the orphanage and organization, this project will impact the immediate developmental environment of the children at the orphanage, as well as the orphans' and community members' opportunities for further personal and community development through the school.

Methodology

Needs Assessment

A needs assessment should be conducted upon entering a community before beginning a development project or intervention. It should be done as a preliminary step to any project/program because it provides a basis for making decisions about development (McKillip 1987). A needs assessment identifies the gaps between the current and desirable state of an organization or community (Royse et al 2009). It can also help identify the relationships among factors affecting the current or potential future state.

'Needs' are relative and change over time. Similar issues across different contexts must be addressed in different ways. To determine how to conduct the needs assessment, one must first consider motivation, the time and resources available, scale, level of complexity, potential impact, who is going to use the needs assessment and for what purpose. Different methods can be used in the needs assessment design for gathering, analyzing, and presenting data. One may use focus group discussions, questionnaire surveys, interviews, and observations to get qualitative information (Sofaer, 2002). During analysis, patterns and themes can be identified. Since there are usually many needs, especially in a developing-country context, they must be prioritized during the analysis process so that choices can be made among them

(McKillip 1987). Charts, tables, and graphs help visualize and present this information. Potential paths between the current situation and desired future state should be highlighted and intermediate steps identified.

There may be issues with qualitative data interpretation due to the reviewer’s own biases, so ideally, needs assessment should be conducted by a team made up of reviewers with varying backgrounds, including members of the local community. For example, a World Vision team conducted a needs assessment of livelihoods in northern Ethiopia to develop a risk management strategy for livelihood change. Their team was comprised of two US-based academics, two Ethiopian academics, one local office staff member, four program staff members, and two government employees based in the local area. Project review documents highlight the importance of the Ethiopian team members’ assistance in interpreting the data based on their own in-depth knowledge of the local context (Coates et al 2010).

I developed the needs assessment for my project with reference to a model for a project conducted at an orphanage in Bolivia. They called their needs assessment an “Action Identification Matrix,” which was used before implementing their project to determine how their building project would meet the needs of the orphans (Chatterley et al 2007). They identified problems (effects and causes), solutions (objectives), and potential actions (outputs). (See chart below for model). The needs assessment for my project (see results section) is based on this model because it addresses similar problems (the many issues facing orphans living at an orphanage in a developing country) with a similar intervention (building project at the orphanage in a developing country context of limited resources), while integrating sustainability considerations throughout the process.

Action Identification Matrix		
Problems <i>(Effects and causes to tackle)</i>	Solutions <i>(objectives)</i>	Potential actions <i>(outputs)</i>
Lack of family stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide healthy family environment for orphans • Provide education for parents on proper care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce orphanage with focus on family stability • Build facility to hold educational programs

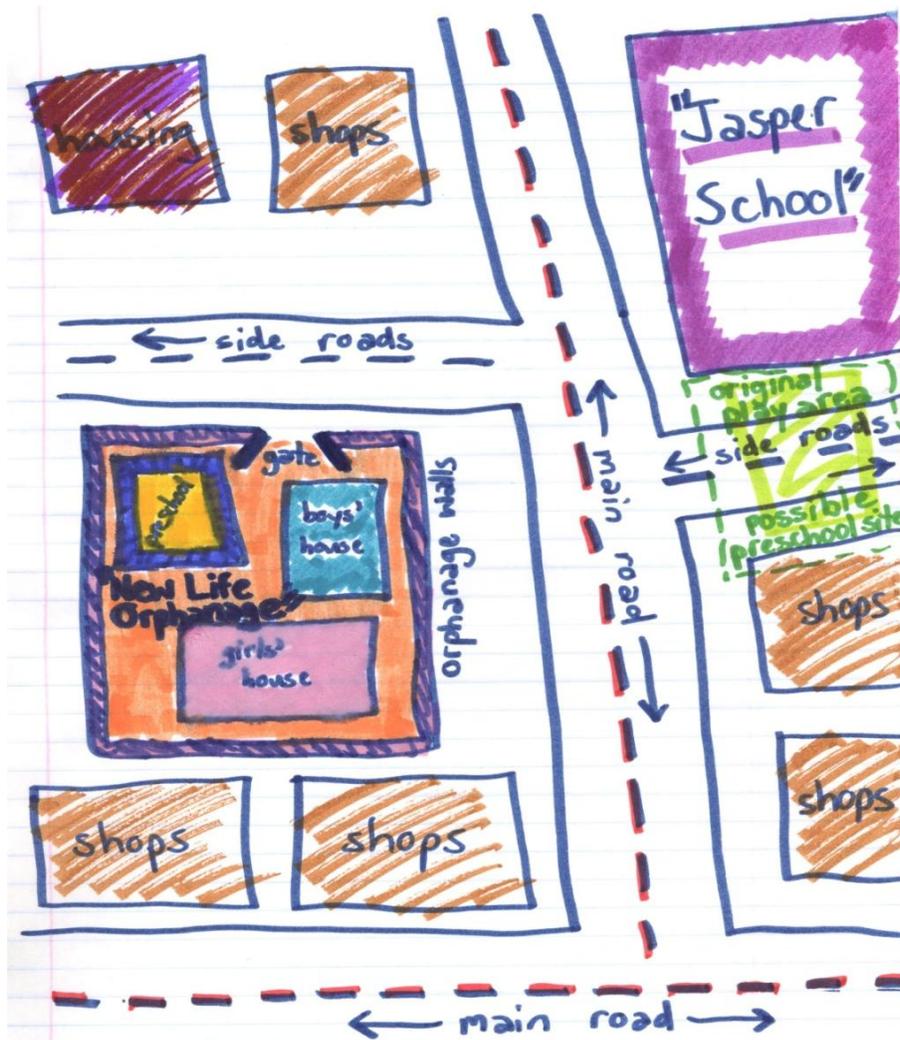
	for children	
Malnutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide nutritional education • Provide stable environment with sufficient source of nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce orphanage with focus on family stability • Provide enough resource for food
Lack of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tutoring • Research alternative education programs • Create a home environment that will allow children to enroll in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce orphanage with focus on family stability • Provide enough resource for the child to get an education • Build facility to hold tutoring sessions
High cost to provide care for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a cheaper energy source • Minimize energy use • Improve income • Education to improve individual income in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briquettes made from biomass waste • Biogas • Solar cookers • Solar panels • Passive solar • Family planning • Education/job training

(modified from Chatterley et al 2007)

Results

The needs assessment team consisted of me, Cephas (the orphanage director), several older children, and several community members. Teachers at the Jasper School gave input through focus group discussions. During the needs assessment portion of the project, the team identified several major immediate and longer-term issues concerning the orphanage. Since the orphanage conducts its own fundraising activities outdoors on the property (dances and shows put on by the children and church activities) and it is located so close to the coast, many times the threat of inclement weather has caused the activities to be canceled. There was ample open space within the orphanage walls for these activities, but overhead shelter was needed. Another concern with the opening of the new Jasper School was the fact that it is across the street from the orphanage, not walled in, and very close to traffic (see map below). This is okay for

older children but not safe for younger ones. There is enough space inside the orphanage walls to conduct preschool activities for the younger children, but there was a need for shelter and classroom space to allow this. Severe weather had caused damage to the orphanage's transportation vehicle several times in the past, so there was also a concern for a parking structure to protect this vehicle. The vehicle is very important to the orphanage because it provides transportation for children to the hospital, which is a government requirement of all orphanages. It is also used to pick up needed supplies for the orphanage.



(Map of New Life Orphanage and Jasper School)

We considered building an attachment to the new Jasper School to provide space for these considerations, but there was some conflict over the potential building site (shown in green on the above diagram) because it is technically owned by the orphanage and should not have a road running through it, but people had been using it as a right-of-way for so long that they refused to acknowledge any private rights to that piece of land. The location across the street from the orphanage also posed safety and security issues for younger children, so we decided to focus our efforts on improving the space within the orphanage courtyard walls (see diagram labeled above). This area is protected by cement-block walls, secured with a solid locking metal gate, and made safer by the constant presence of adults and older children in the immediate vicinity because office work and household duties take place nearby. This secure but unused space was an important existing resource which we identified. With several improvements, we could make better use of that safe space within the orphanage courtyard walls. We decided to build a multipurpose structure which could serve as a space for the orphanage to conduct both children's and community activities (see yellow box in above diagram). One section was to be designed specifically to be used as a preschool classroom, and another area for a computer lab. The orphanage had received computers as a donation in the past, but they were not set up previously due to lack of space. The structure was designed with large, moveable side panels which could be opened on nice days for fresh air and closed during inclement weather. The mobility of the side panels also allows the car to be parked inside for protection during inclement weather.

The decisions for this project were made with input from all the partners but under the final direction of Cephas because he is the most knowledgeable about the orphanage's needs and operating procedures, and he is also a natural leader in the community. The main reason for choosing this particular project was an attempt to address multiple needs simultaneously with limited resources. It was vital to identify existing resources which were not being utilized to their fullest potential, such as the open space within the orphanage walls, the donated computers, and the time and energy devoted by volunteers and teachers for children's activities and fundraising purposes. Volunteers wanted to have more activities at the orphanage for the children and the community, but they needed a safe and weather-protected space to do it.

The following needs assessment (see below) was developed through interviews with Cephas, focus group discussions with the teachers of the Jasper School, participant observation, and contribution of ideas from the older children who are responsible for many of the daily tasks at New Life Orphanage. The first column identifies the most important needs of the orphanage. The second column lists ways of solving those problems and existing resources that could be utilized in the development of those solutions. The third column states how this project will specifically address those issues through its own outputs as well as inputs that allow for better utilization of existing resources. The needs are prioritized and listed in priority order, while solutions overlap. The project was designed to address multiple needs simultaneously. The needs are categorized according to the following scheme: financing and space for funding-related activities is shown in green, needs related to children’s activities or daily activities of the orphanage are in yellow, and safety concerns are in pink. Need #7 is depicted in green-and-pink stripes because it involves both financing (a major purpose of the Jasper School for the orphanage) and safety (the location of the classroom itself). Funding and enabling future self-financing of the orphanage was the main concern because having its own funding source would allow the organization to then meet many of its own needs without relying on outside help. Children’s development activities were another priority, followed by safety and sustainability. There have been some past projects in this community which were unsustainable because they were focused on short-term aid during a water shortage but did not consider long-term development concerns. While all the needs are important and the project addresses each of them, the main priority was the construction of the preschool to enable timely opening of the Jasper School which will in turn support the orphanage financially as well as provide an opportunity for education.

New Life Orphanage/Jasper School Needs Assessment:

Problems:	Potential Solutions: <i>(overall objectives)</i>	How project will address these: <i>(project outputs)</i>
1. Lack of regular funding source	school open to public who pays school fees to fund orphanage	Construct classroom area for pre-school section
2. Lack of space for local fundraising activities	Utilize space outside of orphanage house within courtyard walls	Weather-proof roof to cover large multi-purpose area; refurbish outdoor tables and

		protect equipment from weathering
3. Lack of space for extracurricular activities	Make use of donated computers and other materials for extracurricular learning and provide space for volunteers who want to do extracurricular activities	weather-proof structure in which to set up donated computers and extracurricular materials; working space in secure location which can be utilized during evening hours
4. Dark and cramped conditions in the evening when kids must be indoors prevents successful homework completion	Do homework outdoors	Create safe space for homework and tutoring with access to light and electricity
5. Cancellation of church services due to inclement weather (compromising an existing venue for raising local funds and awareness)	Replace tent used to protect from weather during services	Replace tent with permanent shelter
6. Lack of sheltered cooking space during inclement weather	New cooking facility	Incorporate space for cooking in building design
7. Lack of safe spaces and learning environment for pre-school children	Move preschool classes to safer location	Construct pre-school and elementary grades' classroom across street from main school (within safety of walled orphanage compound)
8. Damage to moveable property during inclement weather	Storage unit for items such as tools, outdoor furniture, cooking supplies, sports equipment	Incorporate storage space into building design
9. Lack of protection of orphanage-owned transportation vehicle (vehicle fulfills gov't requirement for	Weather-proof garage	Moveable walls so vehicle can be secured inside

transportation in the event of emergency)		
10. Unsustainability of past projects	Sustainable methods and materials	local materials suitable for coastal weather, local carpenter for structure design; involve older children and director in planning and building to increase knowledge of project development and building design

Building Process

The first steps of the building project were to design the structure and gather the materials. The structure was designed to be architecturally sound with the help of a carpenter in the community. The materials were acquired through Cephas’ personal connections in the local Nungua marketplace, and a connection in Accra for bulk wood. Some materials were scraps from other construction projects in the area, so these were given as donations or for a reduced price. These had to be modified slightly to fit our needs, but the discounts and donations we got through Cephas’ connections saved a great deal of money for the project.

Next we dug the foundation. Recycled thick metal poles had to be straightened and cut to form the base of the structure. These poles were then cemented into holes deep in the ground for sturdiness. The remainder of the structure’s skeleton was constructed out of wood. Everything was done by hand. We did not have scaffolding so we stacked four picnic tables on top of each other to construct the roof (see flowchart below). Once a few boards were up, we could get around the rooftop on the boards as we nailed them down. Two of the walls were already in place, as we constructed the shelter in a corner of the courtyard where we could make use of the outer cement walls already in existence. For the remaining two sides, large wooden panels were made which could be put up and secured for safety and shelter or removed for fresh air or to allow the car to park inside. For the roof, we chose a synthetic material which was stronger than the other alternatives but still available locally in case of need of repairs. This material had been used on some other buildings in the area previously, and it was

known to outlast the alternatives as well. The synthetic material was more expensive, but upon calculating rate of repair/replacement in comparison with the other materials available, we determined that the synthetic material would be more efficient in the long run. Lastly, we ran electricity out to the new structure for access to computers and lighting for the children's schooling, homework, and other activities (see below).



Discussion

The structure built through this project will be utilized extensively by the orphans who currently reside there, but the greatest contribution is to the future sustainability of the orphanage, the school, and the operation of its programs for the community. Cephas, the orphanage director, is also a leader in the community and is working on several development issues through his efforts. Beyond providing a safe haven for children, the orphanage serves as a gathering place for community events. Cephas leads church services on the property, hosts community meetings, and conducts adult educational activities such as HIV/AIDS awareness and education on other health issues like water/sanitation. While the orphanage currently still serves as a home for the needy children of the community, Cephas is gearing his resources and future plans towards education. His plans for expansion include the establishment of a

vocational/technical institute at the school and job placement/apprenticeship programs and activities. These will help address some of the bigger problems in the community, among the most outstanding of which is youth and young adult unemployment.

The Jasper School at New Life Orphanage in Nungua, Ghana, is an effort at meeting the demand for quality education in the community while providing education for the orphans and a self-sustained funding source for the orphanage. The vocational component is a major focus of the Jasper School. Plans include having a student-run vocational market where students learn through hands-on services provided to the community such as auto mechanic, hair braiding, dress making, etc. This will provide reduced-cost services to the community, additional funding for the orphanage, and entrepreneurial experience for students. For my project I conducted a participatory needs assessment to identify the greatest contribution needed that would further the vision of the organization within the proposed timeframe utilizing the resources available. I then worked with the leading stakeholders to complete the implementation of the project we identified. We began and completed the building of a preschool for the Jasper School at New Life Orphanage during the project's implementation. Both the processes utilized and the school itself left a positive impact on the organization's development for the immediate and longer-term future. The stakeholders were involved in a participatory planning and building process, which they indicated would work well for future projects. The preschool for the Jasper School increases the capacity of that source of income for meeting the financial sustainability goals of the organization.

Reflection

If I could do my project again, I would do more prior planning and research before entering the community, while leaving space in my project plans for input from local leadership and community stakeholders. The biggest challenge I had with this project was meeting both MDP summer practicum requirements and the needs of the local community at the same time, considering the limited amount of time and resources available, along with the academic requirements for my degree. This was a good challenge relevant to learning about future development work, however, because it represents the common scenario of meeting funding requirements, timeframes, and donor's wishes while considering local needs and culture. Funding requirements and timeframes are usually more rushed than is common practice in the local culture for this

type of work. Major change in society naturally happens slowly and over time, but development project schedules do not always allow for this. Communities can also become research-fatigued when repeated short-term projects enter the community to collect data in accordance with outsiders' goals, without ever leaving tangible benefits to the local people involved. I tried to ameliorate these tendencies by having a two-part component to my project, in which I not only collected data to meet the academic requirements of my project, but also left an impact in the form of both organizational improvements as well as a tangible piece of infrastructure.

If I had another opportunity for a similar project with additional time and resources, I might decide to incorporate a gender component. Upon reflection I realized that most of the people I worked with were men, and most of the children involved in helping with the construction of the project were older boys. This is a biased sample of the group at the orphanage because there were about equal numbers of older girl and boy residents. There were also several community women interested in the project, but none of them became involved in the actual construction part of the project. I had an incident the first day upon hiring the carpenter in which he refused to work with me because I was a woman. He demanded extra money so that he could bring some more men to work with him because he thought I would be unable to climb up on the roof. He proceeded to explain to me that we had to do everything by hand, which meant climbing and hauling things up onto the roof without machinery. I indicated to him that I was aware of this, I had prior experience building things on heights, and I was willing to do whatever was necessary to get the job done. We were able to work out a deal in which he would let me work with him the first day, and depending upon my performance, I would let him bring more men if necessary. I passed the test, and we later became friends. His mindset was changed by this experience; however, I am not sure if he still fully understands the capabilities of women in general or if he attributed this instance to my being a 'white woman'. In this area, anything western seems to be revered above its local equivalent, even when quality differences may actually be the other way around (personal experience). This could be because of novelty or an influence from past colonial times. Nungua is situated on the outskirts of the Greater Accra area, so it has some access to western things but supply is limited. Its coastal location also invited heavy influences during colonial times. A combination of limited supply and preconceived notions could serve as contributing factors towards this general attitude. With regards to gender perceptions, I may have been able to shift some

mindsets through my own presence and work in the area, but this may have also exacerbated the racial preconceptions. I could have potentially addressed both through the inclusion of a well-thought-out gender component to my project. This would have possibly helped discount the notion of my 'whiteness' being what allowed me to do so-called 'men's work' as a female and instead made a more lasting impact on gender perceptions in the community. However, this was not a gendered project from the beginning, as this project's focus was on the priorities of self-financing and infrastructure of the orphanage as identified in the needs assessment. While a gender component may have delivered additional benefits to this community, time and resource constraints did not provide for additional project components beyond the focus on orphanage self-financing and infrastructure.

One thing that surprised me about the area in which I worked is the language factor. In my project alone, which is located in the small town of Nungua along Ghana's coast, I conversed with people whose primary languages were as follows: Akan (Twi), English, Ewe, French, Ga, and Yoruba. These different language speakers all lived in the same community, so it could be an effort at times to find a common language. For me this highlighted a larger issue for Africa in general in terms of unity. With so many different languages commonly used in close proximity to each other, it can be a challenge to find unity while retaining individual cultures in the development process.

Among all of the orphanage facilities that I visited, New Life Orphanage is the most progressive in terms of envisioning and working towards a better future for the children and community. Some orphanages focus only on food and shelter, and then the children have nowhere to go and no employable skills upon leaving the orphanage. Older children may even keep their age secret in order to stay at the orphanage due to lack of opportunities elsewhere (personal experience). Other orphanages are part of large international organizations with many more resources at their disposal, but they are dependent on outside funding and direction for their programs (SOS Children's Villages). I feel that my project resources were used most efficiently in contributing to New Life Orphanage because this organization has been making outstanding progress with limited resources thus far, since its fairly recent founding in the year 2000. It is a community-based organization which functions mostly on local resources. My project involved a minor influx of outside resources designated for a set project for a limited time period, but the chosen project's impact will drive the further accumulation of

locally based resources into the future by enabling the establishment of a self-sustained funding source. New Life is under the direction of quality local leadership with visionary ideas and improvement plans now in progress, so it should continue to make a positive impact on the community above and beyond the daily care of the orphaned children who now reside there.

BUDGET

ESTIMATED GHANA LIVING EXPENSES FUNDED BY MDP GRANT:

Weekly:

Housing = 50 GHS = 35 USD

Food = 50 GHS = 35 USD

Transport = 100 GHS = 70 USD

Personal items = 50 GHS = 35 USD

Internet/Printing/Academic materials = 20 GHS = 14 USD

Phone credits = 10 GHS = 7 USD

Misc. = 5 GHS = 3.50 USD

TOTAL WEEKLY EXPENSES = 285 GHS = 200 USD

TOTAL LIVING EXPENSES OVER TWO MONTHS = 2280 GHS = 1596 USD

WOOD PURCHASED FOR BUILDING PROJECT = 570 GHS = 399 USD

ADDITIONAL ROOFING MATERIALS FOR COMPLETION OF BUILDING PROJECT
(**SELF-FUNDRAISED**) = 2857 GHS = 2000 USD

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