

LIFE IN GHANA

VILLAGES

In the rural areas of Ghana the towns are generally called villages. The style and appearance of villages depend on where they are located. In a typical village there may be a few buildings and between 50-60 houses. Most houses or huts lack amenities such as electricity, telephones, and clean drinking water. Almost all the houses in the villages are built with mud or whatever is locally available. In the lush south, the huts cluster beneath the trees and are surrounded by bushes and banana groves. In the savannah land of the north they are stark and unprotected in the hot sun. Round, thatched, mud huts encircle open courtyards where many of the daily chores are done. There people gossip sitting on wooden benches or the ground. Along the coast the huts are more likely to be made of screens woven from coconut fronds, and spread out underneath coconut palms. Prosperous villages have several concrete one or two-room bungalows.

Only 35 per cent of the rural population has access to safe drinking water. It is carried in buckets and pots on their heads from the nearest standpipe or stream. Washing is done entirely by hand and cooking is usually done over a fire in the courtyard. Most of the villages are prettier and cleaner than the squatter towns that surround the cities, but access to the benefits of modern life is much more limited. There are no major transportation systems or good access roads to many of the villages. Conditions in the towns, though far from good, are considerably better than conditions in the villages.

THE PEOPLE

Families in rural Ghana have an income of less than one American dollar per day. Almost everyone living in rural areas is involved in farming and most are subsistence farmers meaning they only grow what they need to survive. Some people work on large cocoa farms but there is very little large scale farming and most of the land is divided up between families. The families farm their plot with hand implements that have been used for generations. Women and girls still pound cassava and maize with heavy mortar and pestles, as they have done for centuries. There is very little modern farm machinery. Even when it is introduced it may fall quickly into disrepair because of the problems of running and maintaining modern machinery in isolated and impoverished rural areas.

The people in the villages corporately supply the markets and roadside stalls in the towns and cities near them with produce to sell. Many people have moved to the towns mainly to find work. But most of these people still maintain strong links with the country. The country is important to them both as a source of food and because of family ties. On market days people travel many kilometers to bring their produce to sell and to buy things they cannot grow. At the market, dried fish, tomatoes, plantains, groundnuts, chilies, chickens and goats from the countryside are exchanged for tools, colorful cloth, soap powder, plastic and metal pots and pans from the towns.

Most people rely on major transport to travel any distance. Mammy-wagons laden down with people, animals and goods for sale travel along dirt tracks. They also carry large numbers of people to work in towns from the outlying shanty-towns and villages. Mammy-wagons are wooden frames on a truck chassis. Often they have names on their

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head boards like "No Worries, Time Changes", "Allah Saves" and "The Lord is My Fortress". The Mammy-wagons are slowly being replaced by buses and vans which carry people, often packed in like sardines, over longer distances.

In the countryside one or two teachers, in classrooms with disintegrating mud-walls and leaky thatched roofs filled with rickety benches, serve several villages. Children may get only two or three hours a day of schooling. Often they have to leave after primary school. A child who wants to go on to secondary school will have to travel to the nearest town, possibly several hundred kilometers away. Only two thirds of Ghanaians can read and write.

The people living in rural Ghana are vulnerable to diseases like cholera, malaria, typhoid, etc. There are no hospitals or medical clinics in the villages. They are unlikely ever to see a doctor and rely for medication on roving salesmen who pass through the villages on their bicycles with a case full of medicines strapped to the saddle. They sell aspirin, quinine, antibiotics and ointments. Even then, families often go without these supplies because of the high cost compared to their income.

Because their villages are so remote and difficult to access they very seldom have visitors. So, when westerners come to visit the children are very curious. They will react in a variety of ways. They may be frightened and hide or they may want to touch their skin or talk to them due to the differences in skin color and appearance of people who are not locals.

LANGUAGE

English is the official language of Ghana and the native language in and around Kumasi is Ashanti Twi.

Children's names may be given according to the gender of the child, the day they are born and the order in which they fall in the family. For example, a male child born on Sunday and the tenth born in the family would be named Kwasi (Sunday) Badu (Tenth born). Another way of naming would combine the day of the week and another meaning such as those listed below. For example a girl child that was born on a Sunday during a difficult delivery would be Akosua (Sunday) Brea (I struggle to have you)

Male Names for Days of the Week

Kwasi	Sunday
Kwadwo	Monday
Kwabena	Tuesday
Kwaku	Wednesday
Yaw	Thursday
Kofi	Friday
Kwame	Saturday

Female Names for Days of the Week

Akosua	Sunday
Adwoa	Monday
Abena	Tuesday
Akua	Wednesday
Yaa	Thursday
Afua	Friday
Amma	Saturday

Other meanings

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Adom - Grace
Anto - Born after the father died
Badu - Tenth born of the parents

Brenya or Brea - I struggle to have you
Nyamekye - Gift from God

Male and female names are also differentiated by suffixes. Add waa, maa to create female names. For example Owusu is a male and Owusuwaa is a female; Boateng is a male, Boatemaa is a female.

Other words from the Ashanti Twi language

Mother- Maame
Father – Paapa
Ghanaians – obibini
White man/woman - obroni

How are you? - Ete sen (*et-eh sane*)
Good - Eye (*Eh-yhe*)
And you? - Nwo sua (*nah-wo sway*)

Good morning - Maa'che (*mah-chay*)
Good afternoon - maa'ha, (*mah-ha*)
Good night - maa'dwo (*mah-dro*)

Thank you - Medasi (*med-ah-see*)
Very thankful - Medasi-paa (*med-ah-see-paah*)
You are welcome – Yo (*yoh*)

Walk well (used as a formal goodbye) – Nante yie
Please - Mepechew (*meh-pah-chou*)

Literally this means *I bow before you*. You'll often see street people say this holding their left hand out and moving their right hand from their mouth to their left hand. They want money.

Do you speak English - woh-teh broh-foh ahn nah?

Numerals

1. bee-ah-koh
2. ah-bee-ehng
3. ah-bee-eh-sah
4. ah-nahng
5. ah-nuhm

The National currency is the Cedi. There are banknotes of 1000, 2000 and 5000 cedis.

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SYMBOLS OF GHANA



The flag of Ghana consists of the colors Red, Gold and Green in horizontal stripes with a five-pointed black star in the center of the Golden Stripe.

RED represents the blood of those who died in the country's struggle for independence.

GOLD represents the mineral wealth of the country

GREEN symbolizes the country's rich forest

THE BLACK STAR stands for the lode star of African freedom

THE CITY OF KUMASI

Kumasi is the capital of the Ashanti Region. It is the second-largest city in Ghana, West Africa. Kumasi's population is comprised of 80 percent Christian and 20 percent Muslim. Trade, commerce, farming and mining are leading industries in Kumasi. Cocoa and high-quality hardwoods are major exports.

Kumasi was founded in the early 19th century by King Osei Tutu. The king named the city after the KUM tree, which he planted as a symbol of victory for the Asanti Empire over the British. The Asanti region has been independent since 1875 unlike the country which won its independence on March 6, 1957

There is a legend that a golden stool in the palace of the king in Kumasi descended from heaven and that near the palace grounds a copper sword was said to have been driven into the ground by an ancient priest, which no one has been able to remove by any means.

Kumasi is filled with avid sports enthusiasts who are especially proud of their soccer team, the Kumasi Asante Kokoto Football Club.