



ZONGO water project

PHASE 3 community planning

[OBDL] open boundary design lab
Emily Williamson, Project Leader and Founder

3

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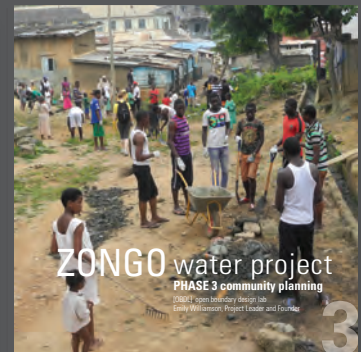
Dear Family, Friends, and Colleagues,

Thank you so much for your donation to this year's ZONGO Water Project, phase 3: community planning! Your contributions helped evaluate last year's efforts, implement 10 new rainwater collection systems, improve communication with local stakeholders, expand upon last year's soap-making by holding a workshop series on liquid soap-making and business development, revive the use of a community center, work with the students on a play about sanitation, and develop short and long-term sanitation planning strategies.

The residents were far more engaged and enthusiastic about the project than ever before and as one water committee member explained, "They are all very, very excited. They have even taken the project out of us.!" Thanks again for your contributions to these low cost, high impact initiatives that strive towards the development of a community-sustained economic, -social, and environmentally responsible urban infrastructure. I'll be sure to keep you informed as we continue to synthesize this year's work and make plans for the next phase.

Please let me know if you have any questions, comments, and if you're interested in being more involved in the future (either on the ground in Ghana or from the States).

Best wishes,
Emily



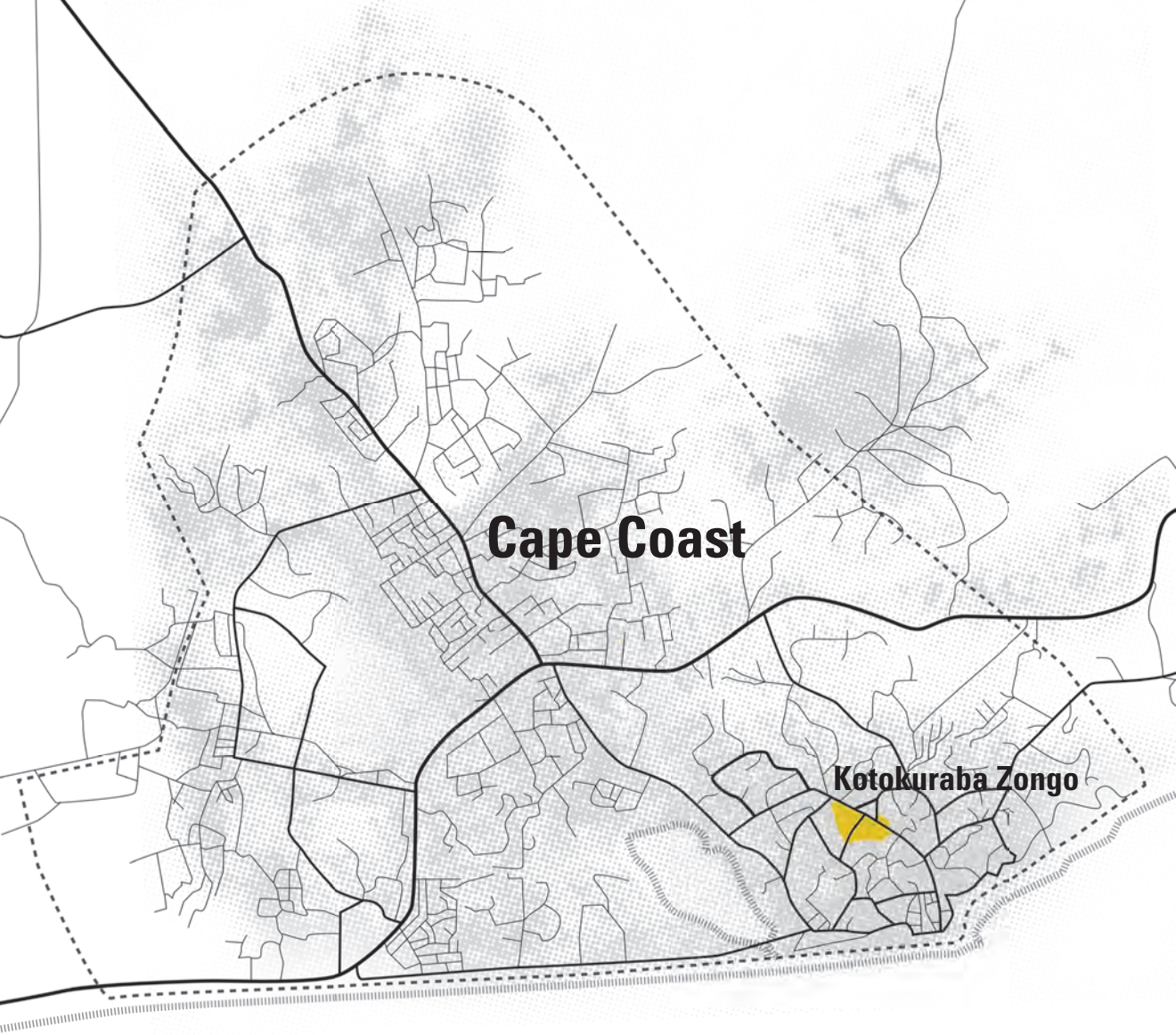
project introduction

The ZONGO Water Project is about using water as a way to improve the quality of life for the Zongo, a minority Islamic settlement located in Cape Coast, Ghana. Even though this migrant community has lived and traded in the city of Cape Coast for over a century, the residents are still treated as outsiders and most of the buildings don't have access to the city's public infrastructure. While the problems of flood and drought, sanitation, hygiene, and erosion are germane to the entirety of Ghana's Central Region, these issues are of particular concern for the visibly impoverished Zongo community. Rather than developing a master plan to be executed by the government, this human-centered approach creates a sustainable, long-term, community-based strategy for a new water infrastructure through the processes of engagement, education, and empowerment.

With support from the local non-profit, The Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust (GHCT), the first

goal of the project was to continue improving communication among local stakeholders including the Municipal Government, Oguua Traditional Council, Ghana Water Company, University of Cape Coast, and Residents of Cape Coast by hosting educational workshops, performances, and community forums. In addition to providing a social platform by which to mobilize residents and encouraging the creation of local committees centered around the theme of water, a second goal of the project was to continue last year's initiative of providing rainwater collection systems to households in which we supply the materials + education about the system and in return, the community provided the labor and long-term stewardship. A third goal of the project was to formulate and execute, with the community, a workshop series (every day for one week) in which the students (young and old) learn about the urban + architectural history of their community, describe what they saw using drawing, photography, and

collage, and imagine alternative futures sensitive to their culture and water livelihoods. The results of this workshop would be exhibited in Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust, the Mosque, or another public venue and also compiled into a booklet for the residents. In addition, depending upon the amount of funding raised, there was also the possibility of developing a small pilot project in a shared space in the Zongo that draws from the "alternative visions" generated from the workshop sessions. A fourth goal of the project was to work with GHCT to organize a series of business classes for the Zongo residents. While the residents learned to make soap in workshops last summer, these classes would further their knowledge of how to run an efficient, profitable soap-making business. Finally, the last goal was to monitor and evaluate the progress and results of the project through quantitative and qualitative analysis.



Cape Coast

Kotokuraba Zongo

Gulf of Guinea

ina kwana!

Good Morning! or in the Zongo language of Hausa, Ina Kwana!

I write to you this morning from the quiet and peaceful terrace of the Fairhill guesthouse where I will be staying for the next five weeks. Much more so than previous trips, I feel as though I have come home – to friends, colleagues, and a place so familiar that I notice when a single tree had been cut and a kiosk shop removed. Having just completed my

MIT thesis on the socio-spatial history of Cape Coast and The Zongo, I'm more attuned to when, how, and why the city and settlement has, and continues to evolve with changing social, economic, and political pressures. With this in mind, I'm particularly interested to see how this increased understanding of the urban and social history informs, overlaps with, and enriches The Zongo Water Project. Thus, I will begin the project in the next few days with a combination of in-depth

interviews with community members – residents I had conversations with concerning the history of the Zongo, participants in the soap-making workshops, and recipients of new rainwater collection systems.

From these conversations, I hope to gain insight into how the history of the Zongo might be able to inform its future by generating community knowledge and agency. In addition (and more short-term), I hope



to better understand the successes and failures of the rainwater collection system implementation and soap-making workshops from last year's Zongo Water Project. To what extent do the residents use these systems? Do the residents know how to use them? Is the water shared? If so, with whom? Who maintains these

systems and have there been any modifications since their installation? Are the residents able to make a profit from the soap-making? What business and profit-sharing models might improve the success of the business? What are the failures and successes of last year's workshops? Finally, from these interviews I also hope to receive direction from the community about a third and new component of the project – educational workshops with the children and residents that lead to visible, tangible

change (whether this be a small design-build project, an exhibition, or planning document).

Thank you so much again for your support of The Zongo Water Project. I look forward to sharing my experiences and the project's evolution over the next four weeks. I'll sign-off now to join the community in their celebrations of Eid Al-Fitr (the breaking of the fast at the end of Ramadan).





Eid Al-Fitr and Conversations on Education

Procuring a goat on the morning of Eid Al-Fitr (the breaking of the fast) was not an easy task. After hours of waiting for the seller to return from morning prayer followed by an arduous negotiation process, I managed to walk away with my very own male goat with an antiqued white coat and black spots. The most difficult part however, was not the negotiation itself. It was giving away my new sweet animal friend whom I had heartily fought for as a meal. Because I presented the goat to the Zongo community as a whole, it would be taken to the Chief Imam as a gift for the breaking of the fast. To try and distract myself from the ominous fate of my little goat-friend, I decided to join the sea of dancing people in the wake of a truck blasting music and carrying a number of men proudly wearing shirts and pants displaying the American flag. While some of my dancing partners wore

traditional Muslim dress, others wore jeans and T-shirts – some plastered with the names of their youth group such as “Jallo Boys” and others with photographs of celebrity Muslim leaders. The best part of the celebration though was how many of the men, women, and children remembered me from the past years of working on The Zongo Water Project. Just in the few hours of celebrating, I was able to talk with over twenty-five residents. I couldn’t imagine a nicer way to reengage with the community than during such a festive, important occasion such as this.

Many greetings, dance steps, and photographs later, I joined my friend and colleague in The Zongo Water Project, Hammad Abubakar, at his mother’s house in the Zongo. Despite my hesitation in speaking about work on the day of the festival, he insisted that it was not a problem and that it would be productive

to go over the schedule and goals for the next four weeks. We talked about when the entire water committee would meet to discuss the project, how and when we would receive permissions to begin from the Chief Zongo and Chief Imam, who to send invitations to for the opening ceremony, and the kinds of conversations to have with residents to be able to get a better sense of their needs and desires. We agreed that continuing the rainwater collection system implementation was very important and that business workshops to build upon the soap-making from last year could help the residents make a profit. Hammad did also explain however, that the problem is the capital – those who learned to make the soap had the desire to continue, but lacked the funds to start the business. Hammad expressed the importance of having “a partner”, someone whom they could trust and



from whom they could perhaps borrow money. I asked whether someone might be willing to make an investment in the business and/or whether the residents could take out a loan, but Hammad explained that Muslims “don’t take interest” and that if they borrow money, the person expects a payment back in full. “Another factor”, he explained, “is that times are hard right now. The economy is very difficult for us. The cedi (local currency) has gone way down.” It was true. Just

since my last trip in January, the cedi had depreciated almost three-fold. Whereas before, the exchange rate had been \$1 to 2 cedis, it was now \$1 to 3.42 cedis. Clearly, this would be a topic we would need to discuss further with the water committee and residents who had participated in the soap-making workshops last year.

Lastly, Hammad and I talked about the third and least developed aspect of the project – a component that

would involve education – working with the children to imagine alternative futures for the Zongo community. The moment I mentioned education, Hammad’s eyes brightened and he replied, “The main problem facing the community is education! Education is the way to capture the whole community.” He went on to explain that there had been another American who gave exercise books and desks to all of the schools in Cape Coast and that the Government had



been so supportive that they gave her a car with which to do her rounds. While Hammad understood that my mission focused on water, he prayed next time I would bring a friend who could focus on education. This is where our conversation became the most challenging and our cultural wires crossed. To him, the success of education depended upon having these material goods. While I recognized that one needs pencils, chalk, and blackboards to teach effectively, I also tried

to explain that The Zongo Water Project could contribute a less tangible, but very important aspect to education - one more focused on teaching creativity, design, and imagining how one's quality of life could be improved using water. This was a long-term investment in cultivating leadership and agency. From this conversation though, I could tell that I would need to find other ways of explaining the connection between education and the project. Or, perhaps demonstrate the children's

capacity through a tangible project to which the community could respond... what the project will be exactly, I'm still not sure.

Barka Da Sallah!

(a Hausa greeting used on Eid Al-Fitr)



ZONGO
a second story
by [illegible]

Discussions with Chiefs + Residents

Despite Monday's challenges of how to both build upon the previous years of The Zongo Water Project and satisfy community needs at the same time, the last couple of days have brought additional perspectives and suggestions which in turn, have provided us with a more confident direction. Prior to any conversations with residents, Hammad and I met with the Chiefs of the area to inform them of this year's mission. We met first with the Chief Wangara in what is often called a Zaura (or entry). After a warm welcome and discussions regarding the social and spatial history of the Zongo (another project I've been working on with the community), we arrived at the present and planning for the future – The Zongo Water Project. The Chief explained that whether the community stayed where they are now at Kotokuraba or whether they would be moved to another location, that it was crucial to

consider the long-term planning of the area. In other words, if the government decided to move them, that they would need to be provided with houses, a school, a lorry station, community building, and market. I heartily agreed and suggested that the community should also have the right to participate in the design of both the architecture and layout to make sure it satisfied their needs. Furthermore, I explained that through process of The Zongo Water Project, that residents will gain the knowledge, skills, and agency to imagine their own futures. The Chief Wangara nodded his head vigorously and mentioned that perhaps part of the planning this year could consider the community center – where all of the residents gather for conversations on political issues, marriage, funeral, + naming ceremonies, and educational workshops with the youth. "The community must contribute something to it," he explained. "We must

do that. For at the end of the day, it is the community that will benefit." This certainly seemed like a good possibility – especially if the rainwater collection system could be adapted for a more public use. And perhaps, when complete, that the building could host the soap-making business workshops. Conversations with the Chief Imam and Chief Zongo representative followed the same lines of thought. They all very much liked the ideas of improving the community center, holding business workshops and continuing the rainwater collection systems of last year.

ZONGO a socio-spatial *history for agency*

Information + Images from the Cape Coast Regional Archives and Interviews with Anonymous Cape Coast Zongo Residents. Illustrations and Layout by Emily Williamson. Translated and Edited by Muhammad Owal.



The following day, Muhammad Awal and I continued talking with residents about both the history of their community and planning for the future. We began by giving those we had interviewed in January a compilation of the interviews we had conducted and asked them to contact us with any questions, concerns, or edits. We then transitioned into The Zongo Water Project and asked them to consider how, if at all, this understanding of their history, might inform how they want to plan for the future. The responses from residents were overwhelmingly positive. While some of the residents corrected spelling mistakes in the Hausa language such as "Nagode" (thank you), others led us in prayer for our success and promised to come to Friday's opening ceremony. One man even promised to deliver us a map of the Zongo produced by the Municipal Government in 2012. According to him, the

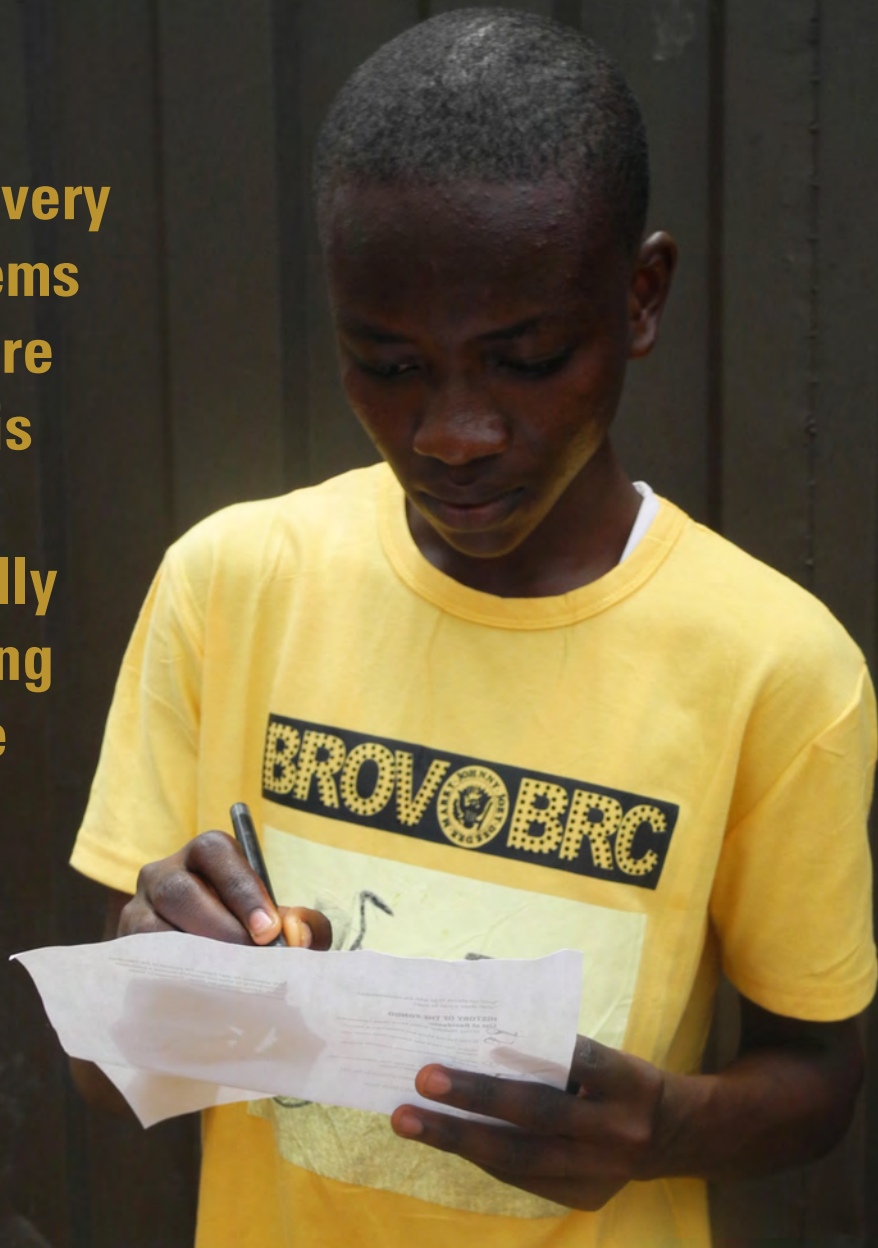
Government had labeled the area "abandoned" in order to sell it to the Japanese as an investment property. Luckily however, when the Japanese arrived to consider the purchase, they saw that the land was entirely occupied and left without a contract. "You see," explained the resident, "It was not their land to sell. The colonial masters gave the land to us. We have the papers to prove it." That evening at Hammad's new tailoring shop in the neighborhood of Abura, I described the residents' overwhelming enthusiasm and their promise to attend Friday's opening ceremony. To cite examples, I explained that one resident cancelled his plans to go to Accra in order to attend the ceremony and that another who could not make it due to a funeral, placed the closing ceremony on his calendar to assure that he would be there. Hammad turned to me and smiled, "Yes, I agree. They are all very happy. It seems like things

are changing this year. People are now really understanding what we are doing."

Under the fluorescent lights of his shop, Hammad and I worked on the budget late into the evening while fighting the mosquitos the entire time. After many of my unsuccessful attempts to kill these "soldiers" as he called them, Hammad laughed uncontrollably and said to me, "They will bite you and then you just clap for them."

“Yes, I agree. They are all very happy. It seems like things are changing this year. People are now really understanding what we are doing.”

-Hammad Abubakar



Stakeholder Meetings

Even though today's original agenda had been to first meet with my local non-profit partner, Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust, and then to complete evaluations of the rainwater collection systems installed last year, one stakeholder meeting suddenly turned into three. I've come to realize that my most productive days are counter-intuitively those when my plans change drastically – when one conversation leads to new ideas and requires unexpected collaboration. This is exactly what happened today.

It all began with my conversation with Mr. Nyaaba at Heritage House. Upon my arrival, I noted that the large colonial building, once the seat of the colonial government, had been freshly painted since January, that a newly crafted seafoam green sign had been inserted into the same sea breeze-rusted frame, and that even the interior office furniture had been re-arranged. When I asked Mr. Nyaaba about

the renovations, he smiled and said that GHCT has been doing very well. He further explained that they are currently working on an expansion to Kakum National Park and engaging the local communities in water, sanitation, and environmental tourism initiatives. What is important about sanitation in particular, he explained, is to gather the information from the community and then presenting a convincing case to the stakeholders – why and how all members would benefit from the project (health, economy, and the environment). We continued to talk at length about The Zongo Water Project and how we should collaborate on a similar sanitation effort here in Cape Coast. He expressed great interest in collaborating on the project and we finished our conversation with the beginnings of a plan – for GHCT, a member from the Municipal assembly, and members of the Water Committee to meet next week to see what could be done. “It is important to make a road map,” he explained, “it is so every

can understand where to go from here.”

Thus, this first conversation led quickly to the convergence of the Water Committee at Saied's tailoring shop in the Zongo. After a lively discussion, all of the members agreed that sanitation was extremely important. Baba Haruna explained that currently the Zongo beats “the gong gong” (a set of two metal bells of different sizes) signaling that it is time for “cleaning exercises” to begin. The process does not happen on a regular basis however, and it costs money to hire the gong gong beater, feed the residents who help, and borrow materials such as rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows, gloves, and a nosegard. “We need to bring in the Municipal Assembly, Zoom Lion (a privately owned waste management company) and Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust. We need to put our heads together to see what can be done,” reiterated one committee member. A second

member added, “Another problem is the collection and the dustbins. Right now we have nowhere to put our rubbish.”

A few calls later, Hammad directed me to follow Baba Haruna to the Municipal Assembly to meet with Waste Management Services and Director Mr. Frampong. At this point, I knew the day had taken an entirely different turn and that the interviews I had planned would occur on another day. Now in Mr. Frampong’s office, Haruna described the project and our reasons for coming. He finished by adding, “The assembly is higher than us, so we were hoping you could come in.” The Director responded that he was grateful we had come and provided us with two different waste collection options for the Zongo – one in which would be more centralized with two large dust bins (dumpsters) on either side of the Zongo and the other which would be more decentralized with every few houses maintaining

their own dust bin. Haruna believed the second option would be better because it would require less land in one location and require more ownership of the project among the residents. We continued the discussion by touching on how to potentially cross-subsidize payments, how to effectively educate the residents, and whether we might begin with a small pilot project in which we test the quantity of trash/recycling/compost is collected by each house. Mr. Frampong pondered, “I wonder if the Zongo could even set an example for the rest of Cape Coast!”. With this last hopeful comment, he promised to call me to set up a larger meeting with all of the stakeholders next week.

As opposed to the previous two years, this particular sanitation project has the capacity to engage many more of the Cape Coast stakeholders in The Zongo Water Project – an opportunity I had been waiting for, but had certainly not expected to emerge today...



“Another problem is the collection and the dustbins. Right now we have nowhere to put our rubbish.”

-Zongo Water Committee Member





Made in China

Text describing the impact of Chinese goods on local markets.

"Women Empowerment, yes! This is a very laudable idea. The women need this."

Text describing a meeting or discussion about women's empowerment.

Does the completion of the map-making, the women on the left have already made and sold for some time? Just, the women on the right have been collecting crop-making materials to make a crop-making machine with her husband.

Text describing the process of making a crop-making machine.



a workshop

Text describing a workshop or training session.

Text describing a conversation or meeting.

empowerment

Text describing a group of women, likely related to the empowerment theme.

Skills training and leader

Text describing skills training and leadership.

Expenditures + comparisons

Text describing expenditures and comparisons.



The Opening Ceremony

“Today is Friday. Today is Friday.” Hammad reiterated smiling as we greeted each other in the Zongo this morning.

By 2:30, the eighty plastic chairs we had carefully placed in a U-shape around the exhibition were all occupied – the women sat in the middle and the men flanked either side. We had more participation at this year’s opening ceremony than even last year’s closing ceremony – “This is a good sign,” I had whispered to Hammad and Saied sitting next to me. The program moved smoothly and quickly from “opening prayers” and “the purpose of the gathering”, to the introduction of the chairman and the chairman’s response. After my own speech which reminded the audience of

what we had done last year and what we were planning to do this year (10 more rainwater collection systems, an additional system for the community center, soap-making business workshops, and sanitation planning), an energy unlike I had seen yet erupted from the crowd and the members of the water committee as the question and answer session began.

Clasping his coca cola dripping in condensation in one hand and gesturing with the other, one man asked how we would get the initial capital for the soap-making and even more importantly, how would we sustain it. Other concerns also arose such as the need to more effectively inform the community about the activities and events, whether the community might be

able to provide a small place for a sanitation office, and where we could do the soap-making in the community so as to not need to travel all of the way to Heritage House. In response to this last question, the Chief Wangara suggested that he would be pleased if the community center could be used for this very purpose and that we as the water committee should talk with the soap-maker to see if it would be suitable. Women also stood up and announced how they had benefited from last year’s soap-making. One resident also added, “Last year we learned the bar soap and the powdered one. Is it possible to learn the third one, the liquid soap this year?” Unlike previous years in which the response had always



been somewhat subdued and contained, questions, suggestions, and ideas ricocheted from one side of the tent to another with every member of the water committee eagerly responding. At the end of the day after passing out rainwater collection system applications and photographs with all of the attendees, the committee, still in deep discussion under the collapsing tent, suggested we reconvene tomorrow afternoon to discuss next steps. A satisfied Hammad turned to me and summed up the afternoon,

“They are all very, very excited. They have even taken the project out of us.”







Rubbish Revolutions

In between sewing a shirt for a local police officer and managing the construction of a new dressing room in his tailoring shop, Hammad and I reviewed and finalized the budget for the rainwater collection systems. "There is a lot of pressure on me," he explained while thumbing the blue and white material. "You see, at the same time I need to get the roofing sheets, buckets and finish this dress." Jokingly, he added, "If I don't finish it, the man will arrest me!" After completing the budget, I was left to watch over both the shop and the carpenter hammering away at the dressing room while Hammad went to confirm the final prices of the items. Upon his return, Hammad shook his head and let me know that we were lucky they were willing to honor the original price because in just one day the price of the roofing sheet had escalated by two cedis. Hammad implored sarcastically, "Emily, please, talk to the dollar, have it wait for the cedi."

Despite grand plans for meeting with the water committee to revisit

the opening ceremony and plan for the following week, a combination of heavy rains and funeral arrangements led to an unexpectedly delightful afternoon with four children in the Zongo. Following a demanding photo-shoot replete with every pose one could imagine, the ringleader of the group stood up proudly and said, "Let me sing you a song. This one is a Christian song. I call it O'er the Mountain." This first vocal was then followed first by a "Muslim Song" and second by a "Fante Song" with back-up from the other three children. "You see," the lead singer confided, "I am from the north and stay in the Cape Coast Zongo. I am a Christian, but I want to be a Muslim." Though perhaps directly irrelevant to The Zongo Water Project, this recital and exchange provided invaluable insight into the complex and nuanced social and cultural dynamics at play in the Zongo. At the end of the day, the lessons learned from these types of conversations were some of the most valuable towards understanding of, and planning with

the residents of the community.

Sunday, perhaps even a quieter day than Saturday, consisted of visiting last year's rainwater collection system recipients to get a better sense of how they use the system, when they use it, and what could be improved for this year. Most of the residents had similar responses. They used the water for a range of activities including drinking, washing, cooking, and praying. They all knew how to boil the water and add chlorine tablets for drinking, but a common complaint was that some of the old roofing sheets (fabricated of mostly iron and not coated aluminum), in some cases dirtied the water. This year then, it would be a good idea to give more direction to the carpenters to arrange the new roofing sheets and gutter in a way that began at the ridge of the roof and cascaded all of the way down to the gutter. Every recipient was very appreciative of the work thus far and demonstrated their gratitude in different ways – from





KOTOKURABA DUMPING

leading us in prayer and escorting is towards our next interview site, to even giving me a beautifully tailored white dress with pink intricate patterns.

Following the questions about the rainwater collection systems, we decided to also take this opportunity to ask residents about

sanitation in the Zongo – where the households dump their rubbish, what the rubbish consists of, who dumps it, and how often. We also asked the biggest challenge the Zongo faces in terms of sanitation and if they had any ideas of how to improve the situation. Again, many of the answers overlapped. The residents all dump their trash at one

of two “dumping sites” (consisting of a couple of large dumpsters): either on the hill behind Kotokuraba market or in a neighborhood called Aboom. When we had asked who dumps the rubbish and how often, all replied that it is mostly the children who dump it on their way to school everyday. The rubbish consists of Politan



SITE

bags, dead leaves, rubbers (plastic bags), rice, stew, other foodstuffs, kenke peels, fish heads and bones, pepper stems and garden eggs. The biggest challenge residents lamented was that there is no place to put the rubbish and that although the compounds are well taken care of, that it is the public areas that are neglected – people

just throw the rubbish wherever they wish. One woman complained that she had just finished cleaning the public area in front of her house and the rubbish was enough to fill three large politan bags. Many residents echoed that a way to remedy the situation would be to have “community labor days” and “dustbins at strategic points

throughout the Zongo.” Awal Muhammad, the resident helping me with the interview translations pointed out that the dustbins should be marked. He said with determination, “The date should definitely be there – so that even a small boy would know the year the revolution took place.”



GIZO GIZO!
Tale from the Zongo Lagoon
By [illegible]
Illustrated by [illegible]
Published by [illegible]



The day ended in conversations with Yusuf and Awal – two of the Quranic School teachers – to talk about how to engage the children in activities related to the project. Even though I had begun the discussion thinking we would do something other than a children’s book, Yusuf explained that we should definitely continue with “Gizo Gizo” and that it should become an “educational storybook series” about water, sanitation, and erosion. He went on to explain that because the children now know the characters and the water issues they faced in the last story, that this year we could build on that knowledge to develop a story more focused on sanitation in the setting of the Zongo settlement. Yusuf pondered whether we might begin with the individual and hygiene and then work outwards to include the house and finally the community. He explained that this way, “we could have both theory (the themes in the storybook) and the practice (a clean-up exercise in the Zongo)”.



Archival Gospel and Chicken Fingers

The following two entries will be brief as the last couple of days were filled with the always unexpected, yet always present “life events.” Two residents had passed away and another was just admitted to the hospital. Thus, the entire water committee had dispersed to play their customary and familial roles. Rather than let the anxiety of our rapidly deteriorating schedule take hold of me, I

decided to take advantage of this time and visit The Cape Coast Regional archives to see if I could dig up any additional information on the history of Cape Coast and the Zongo. In my approach, little had changed since my last visit in January. The cavernous, modern concrete structure streaked with an oily black film from the pollution stood against what was now a now barren cornfield. The documents inside exhibited a similar appearance to that of

their larger container. Stained yellow from age and humidity, as I flipped from one brittle page to the next, the paper left a moist chalky residue on my hands. While waiting for the next set of documents (I was only allowed to take out three at a time), I smiled to myself as I recognized the song blaring from the radio – it was “O’er the Mountain,” the same song the girl in the Zongo had so proudly sung to me yesterday.

About thirty documents and one photograph later, I sat uncomfortably in a rather bony group-taxi with tatters of



fabric hanging from its decrepit seats headed for downtown. Relieved to be walking again, I spent the remainder of the afternoon in town taking note of what had changed since my last visit. Much of the coastline had remained the same in that its main attraction was the castle around which huddled the familiar tourist traps replete with a cacophony of cries such as “Come into my shop and have a look. Looking is free,” There was however, a single drastic change – a new library was now being erected on what used to be a large open space in front of the castle. How

funny, I thought to myself. Why would anyone want to obstruct such a perfect view of the main tourist attraction? The tourist’s view however, was only been a peripheral concern and was more about removing one’s view of the fishermen who used to mend their nets in this place to a view of political power as made manifest in the new library.

I ended the day by spending a couple of hours in the Zongo visiting with residents and planning the next steps of the Zongo Water Project with Awal. Once our tasks were complete, our conversation diverted to

food – American food. “Why do you Americans always eat such junky foods?” he asked with a smirk. I replied, “Well, our foods tend to be much more processed and I guess we like sugar – and cheese!” I added, “I guess we also like to eat too fast – you know, we eat foods on-the-go like hamburgers, hot dogs, and even chicken fingers.” Awal scrunched up his face in disgust and responded credulously pointing to his own hand, “Chicken fingers?! You eat the fingers of a chicken? Americans are strange.” Clearly, he didn’t believe me and had just wanted to give me a hard time.



A Water Committee Meeting

I spent the following day, still filled with funeral activities, in a similar way – first at the archives and then into town where I would at last meet with the water committee. Already deep into a conversation in Hausa when I arrived, I glanced around the tailoring shop where we were all seated on smooth, wooden benches. The walls were a vivid blue and upon them were pasted advertisements of men wearing gowns with the text, “Men’s Desire” at the top. Awoken from my gaze at the poster, Hammad exclaimed, “Emily, let’s begin. I can see you are lost. You don’t understand what we are saying.” Having switched over to English, the committee proceeded to explain to me that they had begun the process of selecting this year’s ten beneficiaries. When I asked them to elaborate, Murtala said, “ You see, we are looking at a number of factors: those who are in need, those who participate, and those who

have spent the time to fill the application. In addition, we have divided the Zongo into four zones.” He cut through the air with his hands and explained, “You see we have the zone close to the central mosque, the one close to Mallam Hammad’s, the one close to the road here, and finally the one on the other side of the road. It is important that every zone benefits from the project.” These discussions continued and surprising, yet promising comments surfaced such as the importance of The Chief Zongo attending the closing ceremony. “After all, we are doing this work for the community and he is the head – he ought to be there, one of them shouted. Another exclaimed, “Yes, and we must keep good records. It is very important. How else are we going to remember what we did the previous year?!” This observation was especially promising to me and could be added to a pile of other similar remarks made by the committee

and residents this year. Rather than seeing the project as a “one time wonder” as they called it, they seemed to be solemnly committed to an envisioning of, and planning for, the Zongo’s future. (I’m hoping over the next couple of weeks that voices from those of the committee and other residents will be included in this journal.)

Finally after attending to agenda items such as the soap-making, logos for the rainwater collection containers, and Thursday’s sanitation meeting, I set off for the guesthouse. Later that night I received a phone call from Awal checking in about the day’s progress. Towards the end of our conversation, he asked me mischievously, “Did you have chicken fingers for dinner tonight?”

You see we have the zone close to the central mosque, the one close to Mallam Hammad's, the one close to the road here, and finally the one on the other side of the road. It is important that every zone benefits from the project.




The Power of the Map

Gingerly, I took a seat on a rickety wood bench in front of the brightly painted blue and yellow madrasa in the Zongo and eagerly awaited Baba. He had called me yesterday with the exciting news that he had discovered a map of the Zongo community – according to him, it had “bounced” from the Zongo to the Municipal Assembly and then “bounced back” to the Zongo. Pulling up a chair next to me now, Baba explained that the Municipal Assembly must have used the map when they tried to sell the Zongo to the Japanese in 2012. He pulled out a weathered piece of paper protecting the map within. As he opened it, and my eyes focused on its contents and I couldn’t help but gasp. My throat felt clogged with a mixture of feelings – dismay and guilt– but at the same time I shouldn’t have expected anything else. The map was ironically my own. Working with the Zongo residents in 2007, we had developed it together as a way for them to feel ownership of their settlement and to aid me

in the production of my thesis. Unfortunately, once wielded by the Municipal assembly, the powers of the map were used against the very community I was trying to help. This is just one example of many throughout the years where I have stopped in my tracks and asked myself to what extent my presence is truly benefiting the community. In what ways are their livelihoods threatened and/or enriched by the initiatives I have developed in the Zongo? So far, I don’t have a good answer and just try to listen as carefully as I can to the needs of the community. Though I bring my own skill sets to the table and provide a framework for orchestration, that at the ends of the day, The Zongo Water Project has to satisfy resident needs and inspire their imagination for the future of their community. The less focused the project could be on me, the better.

Perhaps because of the way the day began - with the re-emergence of a map I had created years ago and its ripple effects on the community –

that today I became acutely aware of how my long-term engagement combined with a product (whether it be a children’s book, rainwater collection system, or documentary) affects the way the community operates and the way they see themselves. For example, I’ve communicated with residents that I’m keeping an online journal and they are aware that every phase of the project has resulted in a booklet documenting the process complete with photographs and text. More so than the previous phases, I’ve noticed a change in how a select few of the residents respond to my taking their photograph and even to some extent how they answer questions. It is almost as if they see themselves as part of the product and see the project more as a collection of images of a changing physical environment rather than the physical environment itself. This is certainly very concerning and tells me that perhaps the residents need to be more involved in the project’s photography and

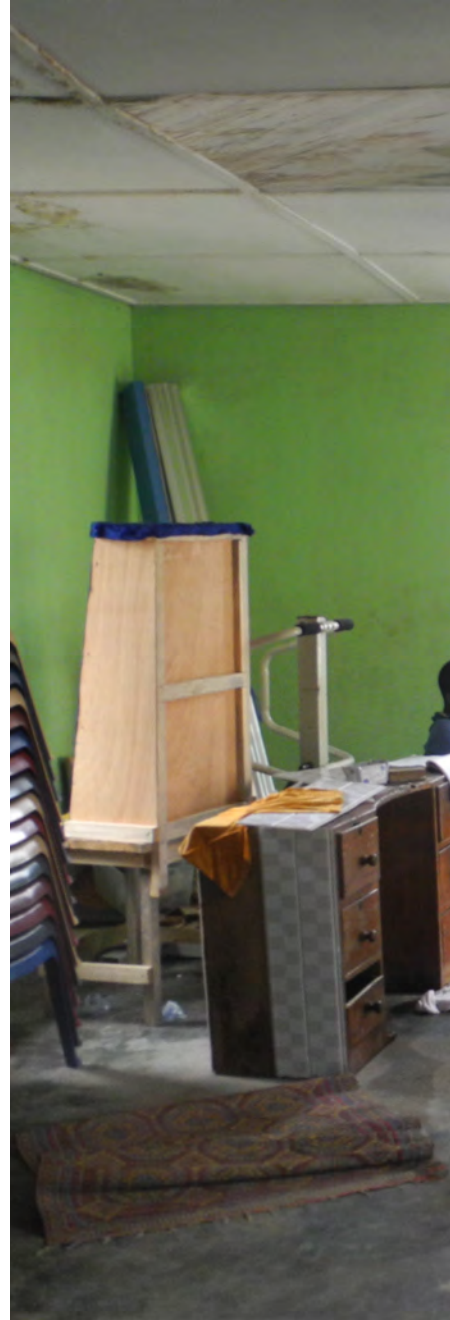


contributing to the online journal – perhaps with added voices and perspectives this could fragment and complicate what is now becoming too homogeneous of a representation. A “community-based initiative” therefore, needs to include not only collective actions and diverse voices, but also collective representations of those actions and diverse voices.

Though I’m sure I’ll revisit these reflections, I want to touch briefly on the other activities of the day. Working with the soap-maker, we negotiated an appropriate budget and program for the making of liquid soap. It would be a two-day workshop to be held in the community center (aka: Chief Wangara’s Palace) under its new rainwater collection system. To follow the making of the soap, the water committee is also organizing a business development workshop to teach residents how to begin and sustain a soap-making business.

Later that afternoon, I worked with Awal to measure the existing conditions of the Community Center that included not only the building itself, but also the distances to surrounding buildings and drainage systems. The roofing was in such poor condition, that the entire wood paneled ceiling was mouldy and dipped to such an extent that it looked like it could fall in on us at any moment. Later that evening, I briefed Hammad on the day's activities and we discussed the itinerary for tomorrow. First, we would meet with the stakeholders at the Municipal Assembly about sanitation. He responded fervently, "It is wonderful to have Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust and the Assembly to support us. We need their support for the sustainability of the project. I pray that this project will continue and that we have an office within which to do our work." We then discussed that

second on tomorrow's agenda would be having conversations with this year's rainwater collection recipients. "Yes," he confirmed, "Tomorrow, we will go 'round to all of the houses. We'll see if they can support with the extra roofing sheets and also the labor. They need to do their part."





ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ADVERBS
Adverbs are words used to modify
a verb, an adjective and other adverbs.
Adverbs modify verbs in terms
of time, place, manner, degree and
frequency.
Time - when
Place - where
Manner - how
Degree - how much
Frequency - how often
degree - to what extent

Knowledge walks slowly
The teacher gave little time
in the lesson.

the community center

A Waste Management Meeting

I awoke this morning to my heart already pounding. I couldn't quite figure out why I was so anxious, but I'm sure it had something to do with the importance of the meeting and concern that the stakeholders would want to reschedule, arrive so late that the meeting would be canceled, or forget about it completely.

Glancing at my watch in front of the peach-colored Municipal Assembly building, it was now 9:57. I recalled Hammad's assuring words from yesterday afternoon when we had talked about the importance of being on time. "Don't worry," he had assured me. "We will meet at 10am American time, not African time." Thirty-five minutes later, my heart finally returned

to its normal pace – we had somehow managed to get all of the major stakeholders (the Zongo water committee, two Assembly members, and a representative from Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust) into a single room.


The meeting began with the typical formal exchanges followed by my giving an



introduction to the project – how it began, what we have accomplished so far, and our goals for the future. Baba added, “Last week Emily and I came here and talked about the question of sanitation in the Zongo.” The Assembly man nodded his head solemnly and replied, “Thank you for all that. I see that the success of this project relies on sustainability.

If we provide dust bins and the like, how is the community going to be prepared to accept it and follow through in the long-term?” He went on to explain, “The Assembly, we are well-equipped. We have door-to-door collection, there are some dust-bins available, and there are also private contractors such as Zoom Lion that collect waste for 15 cedis a month.” Leaning

in as if to tell us a secret, he went on, “Waste generation in the Zongos is different though. There is a high generation of waste because you have 20-25 people living in a single household. A typical household generates two times the amount of waste of households outside the Zongo. This is not favorable.”



The sanitation in the Zongo of Cape Coast could be a case study for all Zongos in Ghana. Everyone would benefit. With a cleaner and healthier environment, more people will want to come visit. The tourism will be booming and everyone will benefit.

We then began a discussion about whether a large shared dust-bin could be located between the Municipal Assembly and the Zongo. The Assembly man responded (mostly to me), "This might work. You see, here in Africa we are shy of waste. We do not like to be seen with waste." Though it was agreed upon that this was the very reason the dust-bin should be placed in that location (because the Municipal Assembly would want its image to be preserved), before long, the conversation degenerated into cacophony of voices tinged with politics. It became about who ought to be providing what services and when and who was doing their job and who was not. One of the water committee representative members exclaimed shaking his head, "When it comes to development, we don't have to mingle politics." I was particularly relieved when the member from the

Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust chimed in, "Let me bring in a wider point of view," he explained patiently. "The sanitation in the Zongo of Cape Coast could be a case study for all Zongos in Ghana. Everyone would benefit. With a cleaner and healthier environment, more people will want to come visit. The tourism will be booming and everyone will benefit." He went on to say, "I myself am a Zongo boy and so I understand. The Zongo pays taxes and so they should also benefit from development." Hammad added quietly, "If I can also come in. We need sanitary inspectors to come around. . . We need the people to be held responsible for their actions." From here, the meeting's conversations sharpened to focus on immediate steps for improving the sanitation. Throwing up his hands as if giving in, The Municipal Assembly member stated sheepishly, "It is your right to be served. There are

so many problems that we usually choose to close our eyes. But, you have forced us to open them. When we see the problems, we have to help." By the end of the meeting, the Assembly agreed to provide a regular, scheduled rubbish pick-up for The Zongo two times a week and suggested we meet the Chief Executive to talk about acquiring smaller dust bins for public spaces, executing the sanitation exercise, installing a large dust-bin to be located between the Zongo and Assembly, and other long-term planning issues. As the meeting came to a close, everyone present expressed the "success" of the meeting, but I left highly skeptical of whether these loud promises would be kept.

We spent the remainder of the afternoon meeting with each of the recipients for this year's rainwater collection system to explain why they

had been selected, what their responsibilities entail, and to inform them about both the soap-making + business development workshops next week.

It was late when I returned to the guesthouse that night and we had "lights out" (a black out). I sat in the darkness under a flashlight-lit dinner eating my curried vegetables and rice. Just as I began pondering what I would accomplish that evening without electricity, I heard a buzzing sound and the fluorescent tube above my head flickered on. The woman sitting across from me clapped her hands with delight, "Ahaaaa! It is has come back! You know," she divulged with a grin, "I like light. I would even like light in my coffin. Other people down there would ask why and I would say wouldn't you like light too? If you like light, you can connect."







The Chief Zongo and Material Distribution

This morning I sat under the shade of a roadside kiosk while waiting for the other members of The Zongo Water Committee to accompany me to the Chief Zongo's house. Before long, Baba had arrived and without a word, motioned for me to follow him. We weaved in and out of vendors and vehicles for nearly a mile and it was only when we arrived at the lorry station that he looked back at me to explain (as if I didn't already know), "We are going to the Chief Zongo's."

The Chief welcomed us warmly while at the same time trying to discipline his young son who was running around blindly in his father's maroon taqiyah. Though all of the water committee members were present, Baba did the most talking and briefed the Chief on what we have accomplished so far – from the rainwater collection systems, soap-making, and children's book, to the business development

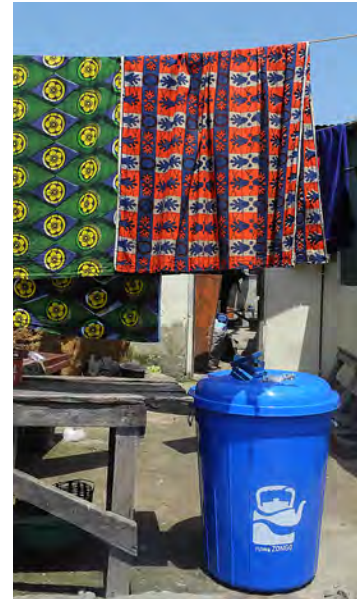
workshops and sanitation planning with the Municipal Assembly. One of the members added details regarding the criteria by which the committee chose the recipients of the rainwater collection systems. Another explained that we hoped the Assembly would pay for the dustbins and rubbish pick-up. "We don't know what they will provide us yet, but we'll know when we talk with the Chief Executive." With amusement, the Chief Zongo replied,

"Well yes, let's see what we can get. We aren't going to get free lunch all over. The community will have to contribute."

The Chief seemed extremely pleased with the project's progress and, using the same familiar proverb he had employed in 2012, he explained, "You see, a journey of a million miles starts with one step." This time however he added, "You have already taken many steps. Thank you for all you have done." Just as we thought the meeting had come to a triumphant close, the Chief Zongo hesitated and added in a reticent tone, "Next time when you come, you must bring kola nuts. It is tradition. At least 2-3 pieces of kola. It is in line with the African tradition, in the line with the Hausa tradition, in the line with the Muslim tradition..." He paused for a moment. The water committee members all fiercely nodded their heads fiercely and one piped up, "All the lines, all the lines." The Chief Zongo chuckled and made a gesture with his hands extending outwards, "Yes, all the many lines."



The rest of the afternoon consisted of the formal presentation of materials for the rainwater collection distribution systems and their distribution to each of the houses. Though I was not present, according to the water committee, the Chief Wangara was so pleased when he learned that all of the roofing would be replaced on his Palace (community building), that he stood up in a profound silence because he was so thankful. Other residents were equally appreciative. Most often, their thanks were expressed through prayer – with their palms up, they would pray to give us strength. “Amin,” we would say in response, “Amin.” That evening I rushed back to the guesthouse to meet with the man who would be running the liquid soap-making. When he was a ½ hour late, I called. “Madam, Madam. I am on my way from Accra. Please, let’s make it tomorrow.”







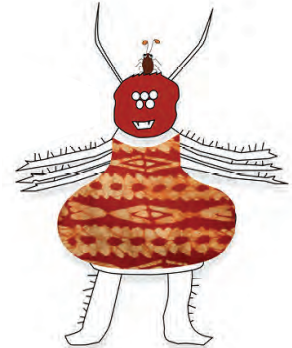
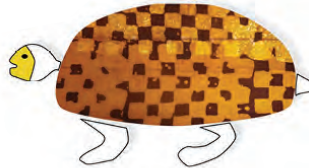
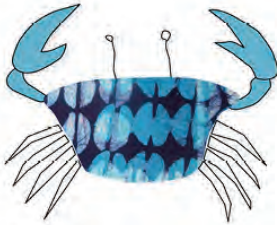


An Educational Skit

Despite the other teachers' avid interest in taking the book *Gizo Gizo* and making it into a series about water, hygiene, and sanitation, I was concerned we wouldn't have the time to develop as intricate a plot or illustrations. Whereas last year I had nearly five additional weeks in Ghana after the project had officially ended to finalize the illustrations and ultimately give every child their own copy, this time I would be leaving following the closing ceremony. After sharing some of these concerns with others, it was an avid Zongo Water Project supporter who

gave me the exciting idea of crafting an educational skit with the children that could be presented to the community at the closing ceremony. I was thrilled with the concept because not only would it build upon last summer's work, but also that drama is commonly used here in Cape Coast as a way to educate communities. In this way, it would not be a foreign, imported concept. To further make the skit their own, I would work with the students over the last couple of days to choose the setting, develop the plot, incorporate new antagonists, and design masks for each of the characters.

Three workshops later, we now have a working script, the actors assigned to their roles, and initial mask designs. In brief, Spider has the gift of communication; Tortoise has the gift of education; and Crab has the gift of empowerment. These three friends leave the Zongo for jobs in Accra, but while they're gone, bad behavior ensues. Cock litters everywhere, Ram defecates wherever he desires, Cow drinks water without boiling it, and Lizard doesn't wash his hands. They get sick and it spreads to their families and before long, the entire





community is sick. Through the news, Spider, Tortoise, and Crab hear about the outbreak in the Zongo leave with Dove the Doctor to save their community. After the Dove provides prescriptions to every resident, the three friends make a plan to ensure something like this never happens again. Spider uses his gift of communication to bring everyone together, Tortoise uses his gift of education to teach the community members about water, hygiene, and sanitation, and finally, Crab hands over the responsibility of health to the residents themselves. Ruwa Zongo!

At the completion of today's workshop, I sat on a wood bench putting my things away when the same girl who had confided that she had wanted to become a Muslim sidled up next to me. "Hi!" she grinned. She was clutching the photograph I had taken of her last week close to her chest. "I wish I could be in the play," she said sadly. "My mother, she told me she will put my name in here so I can join." I replied, "You would be excellent! I already know you're a wonderful performer. Maybe we can find a way for you to participate."



a play about sanitation





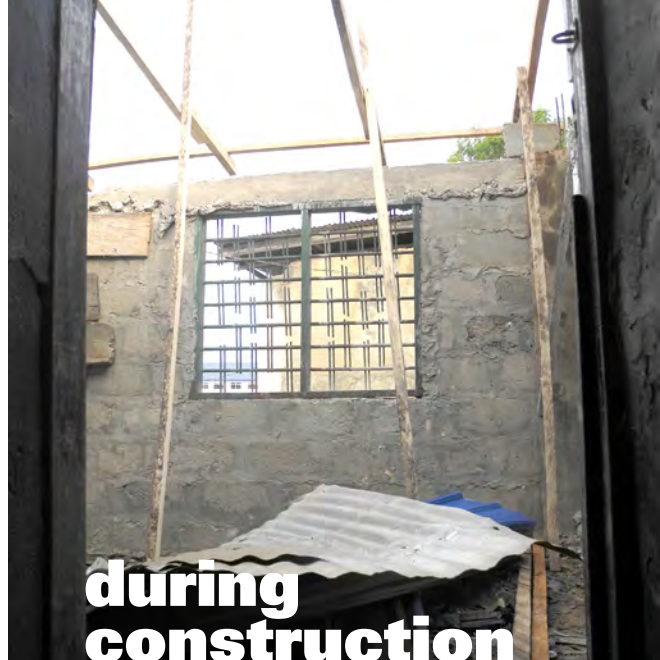




This same day, we had also met with the Chief Executive – I could go into detail here, but the gist of the conversation was similar to what was said at the Municipal Waste meeting – vague and skeptically hopeful. While I had thought this meeting would be the last in the political chain, apparently one last meeting had needed to be arranged during which time the Assembly would officially

decide how/if they would help us with sanitation in the Zongo. Though also frustrated with the lengthy process, Hammad explained to me that at least this new Chief Executive “is very open.” He explained, “The other Chief was sacked. He did not even fix his own road! It is just there,” he pointed. “The road is not even full of potholes, but manholes!”

Following this conversation, Saeed and I made visits to the households who had received the rainwater collection systems to ensure the system installation was in-progress. To my surprise and pleasure, all were completed except one. Because this particular household (upon receiving the system) had decided to completely reconstruct their roof, we gave them a one week extension.



I once again rushed back to the guesthouse that evening to meet with the instructor for the soap-making. I called his phone. "This phone number cannot be reached," the taunting voice at the other end retorted. I tried again a half an hour later. "This phone is switched off. Please try again later," the voice rejoined. Frustrated and nervous that this man would not show up for a program

we had been advertising for a week, I paced back and forth between continuing to call his number. Three hours later, I tried one more time out of pure desperation. The phone rang... "Hello? Hello Madam," was the response at the other end of the line. "I was feeling sick this morning and was at the hospital. Let's make it tomorrow morning." Through my teeth, I responded heatedly, "We must meet at 7am if this

going to work. We have a big program tomorrow and it starts at 8am." He replied, "I will be there madam. I will meet you at 7am." I certainly hoped so.



Liquid Soap and Business Development

Prior to beginning this next entry on the two-day liquid soap and business development workshop, I owe an apology for not having written in the last few days – this has been in part due to very full days working in the Zongo and in part due to my husband's arrival here from the States. Now, to begin...

After much pacing back and forth the previous evening and multiple nervous calls to the Zongo Water Committee about whether the instructor for the soap-making would actually show up for the workshop, I was relieved when he emerged from a taxi at 7:30 this morning. Astoundingly enough, we arrived at the Chief Wangara's Palace (the Community Center) early. I spent this extra time scrambling to obtain the remainder of the materials needed for the workshop – water, plastic bowls, and a bench - as well as finalize details with today's business

development lecturer from Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust. Just before settling in to begin the liquid soap-making, I also spoke with the Chief Wangara about further renovations to his Palace beyond the bright blue rainwater collection systems. "You see," he explained in a soft tone pointing up,

"Now that we have this new roofing system, I'm trying to mobilize the funds to do the ceiling and the floor. We have to do that. We have to contribute."

Though they trickled in slowly at first, by 9am there were nearly 50 eager participants seated in a large circle poised with pencil and notepads in hand. While I had initially thought women

would form the majority, there were many men as well including the Chief Wangara himself.

Already wiping his sweaty (and I feared also feverish) brow, the instructor began the workshop with an introduction to the materials – base, salt, thickener, perfume, preservation, color, and foaming. The participants leaned in eagerly to see better and immediately began asking questions: Where in Accra may one purchase these materials? What are the prices and how have they changed over the course of the last year? What kind of perfume do you use for the soap? These questions continued as the instructor began mixing the base and salt together in a slow rhythmic clockwise motion. Once the mixture had become thick and a similar texture to marshmallow Fluff, he began adding water (and the occasional droplet of sweat that escaped from

his brow). Many ingredients, instructions and questions later, we completed the first day of the workshop with two large tubs of liquid soap – one a light sea-foam green and the other a rich pink. According to the instructor, these needed to sit overnight in a cool place and by morning they should have changed into the familiar liquid soap color and texture.

Next, the business development officer from Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust, wearing a smart custom-tailored dress-suit and high heels, stood up to give her lecture. She explained how important it was to set money aside for the business and that one must have self-discipline in order to gain the capital needed for soap-making. Other topics covered included mobile banking opportunities, the need to acquire an array of skills to be successful, competitors, advertising, and cooperation with other residents interested in the same business. “You

shouldn’t expect a profit right away,” she explained. “You should have at least 100 Ghana Cedis to start and remember, the customer is always right.” After a series of questions, I was surprised at the end of the day when the participants all put down their pencils to give the two instructors a hearty round of applause for usually (at least from my experience) the community has tended to air on the reserved, quiet side when it came to large group gatherings. One young woman even came up to me at the end of the first day and said, “Emily, thank you. I have already learned so many things. I look forward to tomorrow.”

CLAP-clap-clap-clap-clap-clap-CLAP!

“What is the first step in making the liquid soap?” Baba Haruna asked the participants with enthusiasm. The same young woman I had talked with at the end of the day yesterday stood

up and explained the first step. “Toh!” Baba affirmed in the local Fante language. The same clapping pattern thundered across the room,

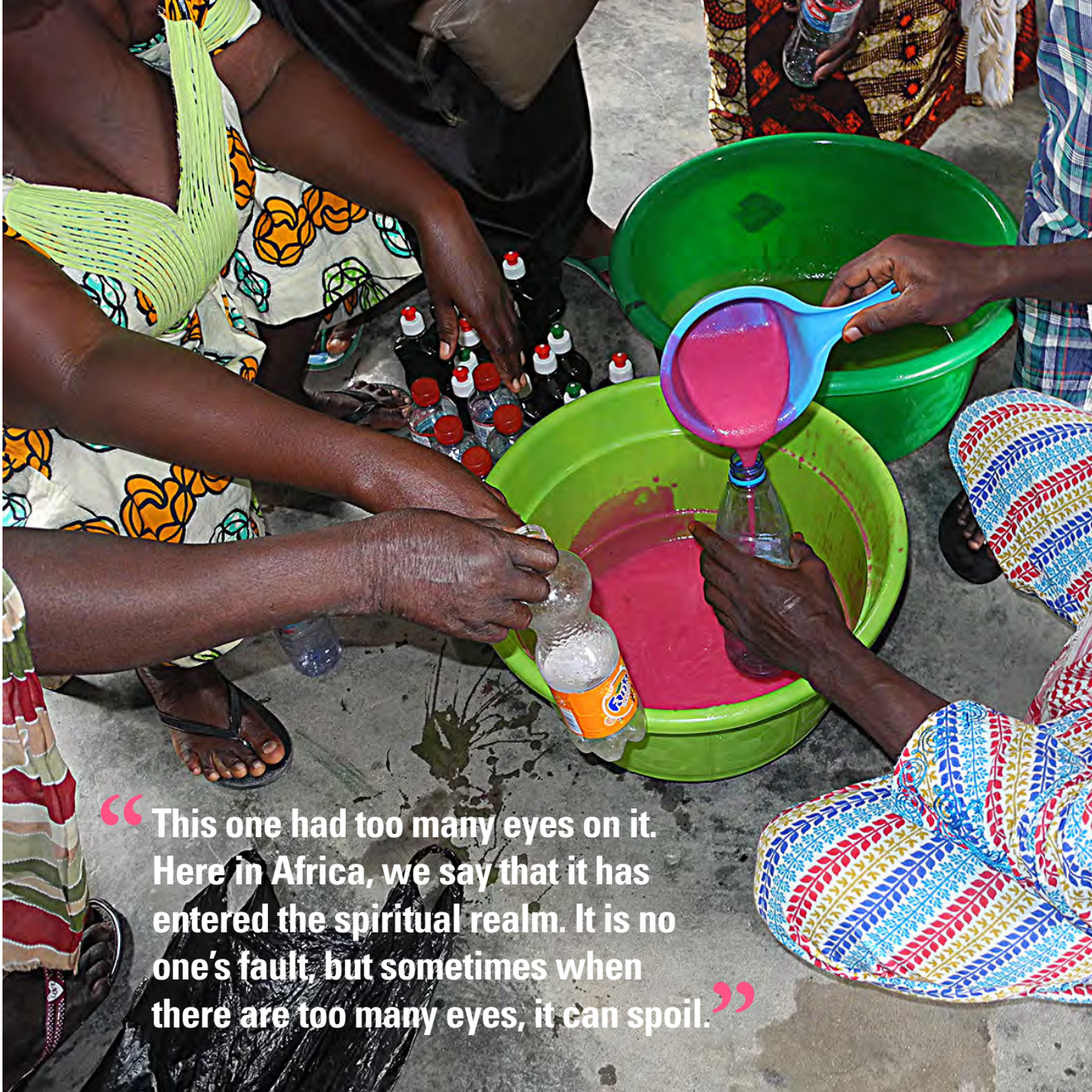
CLAP-clap-clap-clap-clap-clap-CLAP!

and was followed by another question, “How does one stir the liquid-soap mixture?” he asked. A sea of hands shot up and Baba picked an older woman to answer. Without speaking she used her hands and arms to pull her body in a large circular, clockwise motion. “Good!” Baba responded in Fante.

CLAP-clap-clap-clap-clap-clap-CLAP!

I peeked down at my watch – 9:15. We were supposed to start at 8am, but luckily Baba’s questions had kept everyone very entertained.





“ This one had too many eyes on it. Here in Africa, we say that it has entered the spiritual realm. It is no one’s fault, but sometimes when there are too many eyes, it can spoil. ”



Finally, the soap-maker appeared looking only slightly better than yesterday. "I had to take my malaria medicine this morning," he explained to me as he peered frowning into the large liquid soap tubs. I couldn't possibly believe that taking a single pill would make him over an hour late, but I soon forgot this minor hiccup when the workshop began on a problematic note. Because he was speaking to the residents in Fante, I couldn't quite understand what the soap-maker was saying, but I could get the gist. The soap mixture we had made yesterday had not properly changed into the liquid soap and had retained its light color with no opacity. To my surprise, the residents didn't seem in the least bit annoyed by this. In fact, many of them shrugged their shoulders and nodded in understanding. "You see Emily," Murtala said, "this one had too many eyes on it. Here in Africa, we say that it has entered the spiritual realm. It is no one's fault, but sometimes when there are too many eyes, it can spoil." To rectify

the situation, The Chief Wangara suggested that the soap-maker invite three participants, one from each "zone" to another smaller workshop with fewer "eyes". This way, these trainees could become experts and it would be their duty to teach others in the community. Once the trainees had been decided upon and the date set for next week, we began the second half of the workshop – again focusing on business development. The lecture, graciously given by Murtala, an economist and a member of the Zongo Water Committee, focused on how to raise capital – whether it be in the form of personal savings, from family and relatives, the bank or government.



Rather than emphasize personal savings as the GHCT representative has done yesterday, Murtala focused on government-provided programs such as YES (Young Empowerment Synergy program) and EDIF (export development and investment fund). Hammad leaned over and whispered to me, "He is really, really educating them." Murtala went on to explain that the participants of today's workshop could form 5-6 groups. Each group could then write a business proposal and provide it (along with a sample of soap) to the Assembly and they in turn will give a small amount of funding from which to begin the business. He translated into English for me, "We don't want this business to die a natural death. We must be the managers of these funds."

The workshop ended with reminders about the upcoming sanitation clean-up exercise and the importance of participation. One older and very well-respected man in the community stood up and

interjected, "Is it because of Emily that we are doing this?" He pointed at me and continued, "Why does it take her coming here for us to do this exercise? This is something we should be doing on our own." Many heads nodded vigorously and with that hopeful response, we ended the workshop with closing prayers. Amin.

Still concerned whether the children would be allowed to present the play at the closing ceremony, I hesitantly called Hammad that evening. "I was even going to call you yesterday," Hammad responded at the end of the line. "We have full approval to go ahead. They (the board of the school) even really liked the idea." Relieved that the play would work out, I added, "I was also thinking we could distribute dustbins to each of the three schools in the Zongo as a way to reinforce the messages in the play." Hammad replied, "Oh wow. That would be very nice. I will arrange for the headmasters of the schools to all be there to receive them."



First Impressions

by David M. Fenchel

Day 1: While sitting in Boston Logan Airport I had already been transported to a far away place. Corralled into undersized Terminal E, numerous delayed flights were simultaneously queued up to make their departures to Frankfurt, Unites Emirates, London and beyond. Burkas, babies and weary travelers were all pushing their way to board their plane. When I had finally boarded my flight, sitting at the gate ready to push off, I glimpsed out the window to see a familiar sight, one I had long forgot, the Boston skyline. I arrived in Accra an hour late and after an anxious waiting-game of roulette, my bag popped out from behind the metal curtain and onto the conveyor belt. A quick dash through customs, and the customary gauntlet of peddlers, swindlers and chauffeurs, I saw my wife's smiling face - Phew! The next morning we left Accra and headed to Cape Coast. Our driver, Kofi, narrated much

of the trip pointing out all the roadside wares, "see, see that's grasscutter", or "see, see those are coffins", or "see, see those are giant snails". Every town seems to specialize in something different, and the larger ones have them all.

We arrived at Fairhill Guesthouse and were warmly welcomed. After dropping my bags we headed to town for a quick overview of Cape Coast. Hopping out of the shared taxi at Kotokuruba Market, almost immediately I hear, "Habiba, Habiba!" and two smiling face children waited for the familiar response "Hi!"

The market area was full of life, people browsing, buying, selling, or just hanging out. Cars and motorcycles weaved through the sea of people, using their horn more than their steering wheel to get through the crowd. I learned immediately that it's my responsibility to get out of

the way if I want to avoid being struck! The smell of food was everywhere- smoked fish, fried chicken parts, grilled maize, and many brightly colored fruits such as watermelon, pineapples, bananas, tomatoes, and oranges (with green peels). These delicious sights and smells were occasionally interrupted with a shift in wind and a brief reminder of the open sewers not too far away. We turned a corner and I was suddenly being introduced to Saeed and Baba Haruna, of the Zongo Water Committee, as well as a Yusuf and a local shop owner who was so incredibly welcoming. Saeed and Baba Haruna were quick to discuss business with Emily- they had a big day in front of them with the Zongo Sanitation Exercise the following morning. They assured Emily that everything was in place, but that didn't ease her uncertainty that the people would show up.







We ended the day in a familiar place to the ending of many of these journals, Hammad's shop. It was an incredible place to be and having heard so much about Hammad, a wonderful person to finally meet. Gracious, generous and kind, he welcomed me like a brother.

Day 2: We hit the ground running before dawn. We quickly made our way to the Zongo to commence the Sanitation Clean-Up Exercise. This was my first introduction to the Zongo and the municipal representative in charge of sanitation was watching.

Emily and I swiftly moved through the Zongo, ascending the eroded landscape and straddling the open drains, we arrived at a small gathering of people wielding rakes and shovels and ready to work. I hesitantly put on a pair of rubber gloves and began collecting trash. I cherry-picked my work, not exactly sure what I was collecting and slightly

offended by the disturbed sludge that was being shoveled out into the open drains. We eventually settled into a groove and the mounds of trash were piling up. We worked our way around a corner and much to my surprise there were other residents cleaning up too. It was amazing, at least 2 dozen people had been hard at work and when I turned another corner, another dozen people. By the end, many of the various groups working on different sections of the Zongo had gathered to finish the biggest open area. Without a head count, I'd estimate over 60 people of all ages were working together. It was really an amazing experience to be working side by side with so many wonderful and welcoming people. Plus, I have the honor of being the husband of Emily who has earned much respect from the community over many years. While thinking about my wife in this role and her given Muslim name Habiba, I found myself being introduced to Anatu Mohammed, the elder who gave Emily this name.

She smiled and expressed how pleased she was to meet me, gave me a warm welcome to the Zongo, and proclaimed me as Mohammedu!

Exhausted from the clean up exercise, we still spent the afternoon working with the children on their script and rehearsing. Afterwards, Awal, the youngest member of the Water Committee and teacher at the Quranic School, also played the role of tour guide and friend. He led us to Cape Coast Castle where we learned more about the region's horrific past in human slave trade to the West. In the fading daylight we parted ways until tomorrow.



The Zongo Water project by Awal Muhammad

Sanitation is a major problem facing the whole wide world, but serious and dangerous in least developed countries which Ghana is no exception. The increasing population of industries that produces goods to meet human needs has met less measures to put in place for the proper disposal of waste which is the end product. By so doing, people dispose of their waste carelessly and are not concerned about the serious problems it could cause.

Also, the increasing population of the country saw no measures put in place by the government to tackle solid waste which led to people disposing of solid waste anywhere and anyhow. Most of the homes in Ghana have no toilets surprisingly and so there is a heavy burden on public toilets which sometimes in a whole community there would be

none. So you can imagine how solid waste is disposed. As I write this journal, there is an outbreak of cholera in the capital town of Ghana which is Accra and about 4,000 are infected and a hundred have died so far.

Choked gutters are common in Ghana which the district, municipal, and the metropolitan assemblies are doing nothing to solve this problem and also residents who live close to these gutters are doing nothing to help themselves. Choked gutters serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes which accounts for the high number of malaria cases recorded in the country. And, it is also the cause of cholera which is going on in the country's capital and we are praying with our fingers crossed that it does not spread to other regions of the country.

All of these problems can also be found in a small community called the Kotokuraba Zongo which can be found in Cape Coast which is the former capital town of Ghana. This community is in the center of the town and is the heart of the town. Choked gutters, careless disposal of trash, and solid waste among others are friends of the people living in the Zongo. And, when residents like me who know the consequences of all these see what is going on in the Zongo, it's like a sharp dagger being driven through our hearts slowly.

That is why I was excited and I beamed with hope when I learned about Emily and her project some years back. It was very good to know that someone cares and feels the same way I feel. I was happy and I said in my heart, "the almighty ALLAH has answered my prayers."

Last year was a success with the distribution of rainwater collection systems and also a workshop whereby residents learned to make soap. Last year before Emily left, it was not certain whether she would come again or not and so when she told me that she will be coming, I was excited. This year when Emily came, we kicked off with some important meetings and also the opening ceremony which everybody was happy with the number of people present. After that, we went round to ask the beneficiaries of last year's rainwater collection systems some questions to know what is working, what is not working, and whether there is the need for any form of modification or not.

There was also a workshop where residents learnt about how to make liquid soap and also there was a business workshop where they were

taught how to get capital to start a soap business of their own. Last but not least, there was a clean-up exercise where residents came together to clean up the community. And I must say that is made me excited the most. At least, it reduced the amount of trash in the Zongo.

What really excites me the most about Emily's project is that, she does not only help the community, but also she empowers the community to do something on their own. A great philosopher once said, "don't give fish to someone, teach them how to fish." And that is exactly what Emily is doing. Luckily, one of the committee members working with Emily is an assembly man and so after the clean-up exercise the items used were given to him and he has promised to organize the community to have a clean-up exercise at least once a

month. If things continue this way, I can see a Zongo without trash and disease in the near future. Although a lot needs to be done, I am hopeful with the commitment of the committee members and the community we will achieve what we want in the near future. Thank you Emily and may the almighty ALLAH richly bless you. "Nagode."







The Closing Ceremony

I awoke this morning to the sing-song voice of my cell phone. It was Hammad. "Do you think you can come to my shop before going to town?," he asked in a slightly desperate tone. "Yes, of course. Is everything okay?" I asked curiously. "Everything is okay. I would just like to see you and David before town." he responded mysteriously. With posters, closing ceremony programs, masks, liquid soap, certificates, gifts, video camera and much curiosity in tow, we arrived at his shop slightly out of breath. Upon seeing us, Hammad stood up from his sewing machine and disappeared for a moment behind a changing curtain. When he emerged, he proudly dangled two beautifully designed garments in front of us. "These are for you. I made them in the colors of The Zongo Water Project," he explained.

Without having even measured us, the outfits fit perfectly. "Thank you so much Hammad. These are just beautiful. How did you ever

find the time?" I asked completely dumbfounded.

Upon our arrival to town, Dave and I received many compliments on our much improved look. "Are you newly weds returning from your honeymoon?" one woman asked. "Looking nice!" a Zongo community member added with full approval. When Awal and Yusuf saw us, they exclaimed to Dave, "Wow, you're looking sharp. You should wear that on the first day of your new job when you get back to Boston!"

Similar to when we arrived for the sanitation exercise the week before, almost all the preparation details had already been taken care of before we arrived. The tents were up, the chairs neatly stacked in a corner, and the students were ready and eager to receive their masks for the play.

Though the order and content of the ceremony was remarkably analogous to other years - opening and closing prayers with

drumming, speeches, distribution of certificates, refreshments, an exhibition in between, what was different this year was the participation. We must have had over 300 residents present. Adults who couldn't find seats stood behind the sea of full chairs craning their necks to see and children sat perched on rock and wood piles around the tent. Hammad sidled up next to me. "You see? This year is different. They have come in their numbers. We even need to make this a two-day program next year," he joked.

After my speech during which I outlined the mission of the project, what we had accomplished so far, and next steps in the planning process, the students presented their play on sanitation. And, despite my nervousness about whether they would show up, remember their lines, and project their voices, it was a huge hit - the audience, especially the other children, laughed almost the entire time and even the students acting

in the play couldn't help but grin as they articulated their words into the old land line phone acting as a microphone. Following the play, we distributed dust bins to each of the Zongo schools, certificates for the participants of the soap-making and business development

workshops, and small gifts to each of the Zongo Water Committee members.

What was personally most touching part of the program was when the Chief Wangara, paired with a many kind words about the project,

presented me with a "citation" from "The Office of the Sarikin Zongo Cape Coast." It read, *This is to express my deepest appreciation for your desire to see improvements in the Zongo Community and creating the necessary enabling environment*



needed for accelerated business and economic growth. Your painstaking effort by dint of handwork and dedication, in collaboration with the Zongo Community established the Zongo Water Project through which the following skills and services

have been realized: provision of roofing sheets for the needy, rainwater conservation, training and manufacturing of soap products and other allied skills including business development workshops and sanitation. In recognition of the above dedicated and sacrificial

effort which started way back in 2008, I, on behalf of the entire Zongo community present you the above citation. May the Almighty Allah (God) bless you abundantly.





This book
Sheikh Ahmad
the former
Imams of the Cal
who established
Quranic School

Some Reflections

Though I had developed five specific goals for this year's Zongo Water Project implementation, before setting foot on the ground, I knew these would probably change in response to both conversations with residents and my own observations. Establishing these goals however, was of utmost importance because they provided multiple, triangulated starting points – each of which constituted a unique combination of social, economic, and architectural factors that contributed to achieving the long-term goal of a new water infrastructure for the Zongo. While the business development workshops emphasized economic growth and collaboration occurring over the long-term, the rainwater collection system initiative foregrounded short-term tangible change in combination with education. As long as I could maintain a diverse set of underlying factors, the actual

subject matter of these goals could shift. This is exactly what happened with the fourth goal in particular – the educational workshops. Within the first week of initiating the third phase of the project, I could see that there would be little interest in an open-ended, design workshop focused on long-term community planning. Especially after initial informal interviews with residents, it was clear that community members not only desired privacy and time to respond to planning issues, but also expected immediate, tangible results. Instead of a more open-ended workshop therefore, we achieved a similar goal connected to long-term planning through the more specific lens of sanitation. By hosting a “clean-up exercise,” the residents could see immediate visible improvements and at the same time imagine how changes in policy and their physical infrastructure could improve the health of the

community and city at large. Despite the organizational and emotional challenges of needing to alter my strategy, the sanitation planning ended up becoming an opportunity. Rather than just working within the community, this planning effort required conversations and cooperation with both governmental and non-profit stakeholders across the city. In addition, this effort successfully combined short-term action (sanitation clean-up) with long-term planning (financing waste pick-up, composting + recycling opportunities, shared responsibilities between the government and communities). Perhaps the most exciting “aha moment” of the project was when the water committee members, without my prompting, began “planning” for future phases. They had demanded of the community where their office space would be, had wanted to talk with me about what our

goals would need to be in 5 and then in 10 years, and described how the Zongo would serve as a successful case study for not only Cape Coast, but all of Ghana!

Just as my planning efforts began as a challenge but ended with opportunity, I had a similar experience at the very onset of my trip concerning the overall goals of the project and the conceptualization of education. A community member had approached me shyly about wanting “one of my friends” to come to the Zongo with an educational mission – one that could give the schools white boards and exercise books. I found it extremely difficult to explain how the mission of The Zongo Water Project included education, but was more focused on learning to think and act creatively in and outside the classroom than it was on donating physical equipment. The following is an excerpt from

the journal entry I had written about this experience:

Lastly, Hammad and I talked about the third and least developed aspect of the project – a component that would involve education – working with the children to imagine alternative futures for the Zongo community. The moment I mentioned education, Hammad’s eyes brightened and he replied, “The main problem facing the community is education! Education is the way to capture the whole community.” He went on to explain that there had been another American who gave exercise books and desks to all of the schools in Cape Coast and that the Government had been so supportive that they gave her a car with which to do her rounds. While Hammad understood that my mission focused on water, he prayed next time I would bring a friend who could focus on education. This is where our conversation became the most





challenging and our cultural wires crossed. To him, the success of education depended upon having these material goods. While I recognized that one needs pencils, chalk, and blackboards to teach effectively, I also tried to explain that The Zongo Water Project could contribute a less tangible, but very important aspect to education - one more focused on teaching creativity, design, and imagining how one's quality of life could be improved using water. This was a long-term investment in cultivating leadership and agency. From this conversation though, I could tell that I would need to find other ways of explaining the connection between education and the project. Or, perhaps demonstrate the children's capacity through a tangible project to which the community could respond. . . what the project will be exactly, I'm still not sure.

Despite this initial challenge of two very different ways of conceptualizing and valuing education, understanding this difference helped me throughout the remaining weeks of the project. I used the word education often, but as a result of this one conversation, I would be very specific about how The Zongo Water Project actually did (sometimes more directly than others) contribute to education in the Zongo. For example, we installed a rainwater collection system at the Zongo Community Center that had previously been unusable due to its leaking roof. With the new system installed, not only could the educational soap-making and business development workshop be held in its space, but also the community immediately began making plans for a school to operate there a few times a week. In addition, The Zongo Water Project routinely works with the students at the Hassaniya Quranic school

on issues related to water, sanitation, and erosion. This year, the students wrote and presented a play about sanitation to the Zongo community at the closing ceremony. Finally, because education and hygiene need to come hand in hand, each of the three Zongo schools were presented with dust-bins and are expected to take the lead on both disseminating information about and practicing safe methods of sanitation.

When thinking about who/ what contributed to the success of the project initiatives, there was always a direct correlation between success and good communication, high participation rates, and community members taking ownership of the project. More than in previous years, the Water Committee, Chiefs, and elders in the community worked hard to disseminate the project information across the Zongo and saw it as their responsibility





to do so. In addition, each Zongo Water Committee member chose to “champion” (using their words) one of the project initiatives. This way, they were the ones organizing, leading, held responsible when something went wrong, and praised when something went well. Without their dedication, this project would not have been possible.

Community Impact

Building upon last year’s powder and bar soap-making workshop, this summer over 50 residents learned not only how to make liquid soap, but also the entrepreneurial strategies for starting and sustaining their own businesses. Though the long-term impact is still yet to be seen, residents were thrilled to learn a new set of skills that would improve the hygiene in their homes and raise their earning potential. Second, 10 new rainwater collection systems were installed (now

a total of 35) that benefit over 350 residents. These systems provide shelter from the rain, water for drinking, cooking, and washing, and require its owners to learn about cleaning, sharing, and conserving water. Though most of these systems have been installed at private homes, in response to a community plea at the opening ceremony, this year we added the Zongo Community Center to the list of beneficiaries. Not only did this new rainwater collection system enable the Center to once again be used for weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies, and other religious events, but also for educational purposes such as the soap-making and business development workshop. Third, the sanitation planning initiative encouraged residents to play a proactive role in keeping their community healthy in both the short-term (sanitation exercise) and long-term (policy changes). Over 200 residents participated in the sanitation exercise and

were asking about when and how this effort would continue in the future. Rather than working within the Zongo as solely a bottom-up strategy, this part of the project also required top-down communication with the Metropolitan Assembly among other stakeholders. More than any other aspect of the project, I believe this initiative empowered the Zongo Water Committee to believe in their community and make change. Finally, educational workshops such as those with the children in the Hassaniya Quranic School not only taught about water, sanitation, and hygiene issues in the community, but more importantly encouraged students to take charge and design their own solutions. Overall, I believe the project has reconstituted feelings of community communication, cooperation and pride. Most importantly, it is giving the Zongo residents a voice in when, where, and how development (social and spatial) occurs. With

over 300 attendees at the closing ceremony, a persistent, dedicated Water Committee, and new connections to stakeholders at the Metropolitan level, I am hopeful that these efforts will continue to benefit the community long-term.

Personal impact

Despite the project's emphasis on the water, sanitation, and erosion, I have come to realize that my primary interest lies in the process of community building and the complex relationship between social forces and spatial configurations at different scales. When and how does architecture have the capacity to shape human attitudes, encourage collaboration and change policy? What are the social, economic, and political mechanisms that need to be put in place in order for communities to invest in, and design their buildings? How do

uneven geographies of power play a role in social and spatial development? Are there ways to even out the distribution of power in a community-building process? What is the designer's role in these processes, especially when working outside one's own cultural geography?

This last question brings me to the issue of ethics that I found myself continuously battling throughout the project. How, when, and where does one intervene, if at all in another culture? When is it "our" responsibility as designers to intervene and when should we let people just live their lives? And, once intervene, when (if ever) does the project come to an end? The following is a short excerpt from one of my journal entries that exhibits the large impact one can have on a community (whether conscious and intended – or not at all):

Gingerly, I took a seat on a rickety wood bench in front of the brightly painted blue and yellow madrasa in the Zongo and eagerly awaited Baba. He had called me yesterday with the exciting news that he had discovered a map of the Zongo community – according to him, it had "bounced" from the Zongo to the Municipal Assembly and then "bounced back" to the Zongo. Pulling up a chair next to me now, Baba explained that the Municipal Assembly must have used the map when they tried to sell the Zongo to the Japanese in 2012. He pulled out a weathered piece of paper protecting the map within. As he opened it, and my eyes focused on its contents and I couldn't help but gasp. My throat felt clogged with a mixture of feelings – dismay and guilt– but at the same time I shouldn't have expected anything else. The map was ironically my own. Working with the Zongo residents in 2007, we had developed it together as a way

for them to feel ownership of their settlement and to aid me in the production of my thesis. Unfortunately, once wielded by the Municipal assembly, the powers of the map were used against the very community I was trying to help. This is just one example of many throughout the years where I have stopped in my tracks and asked myself to what extent my presence is truly benefiting the community. In what ways are their livelihoods threatened and/or enriched by the initiatives I have developed in the Zongo? So far, I don't have a good answer and just try to listen as carefully as I can to the needs of the community. Though I bring my own skill sets to the table and provide a framework for orchestration, that at the ends of the day, The Zongo Water Project has to satisfy resident needs and inspire their imagination for the future of their community. The less focused the project could be on me, the better.







Perhaps because of the way the day began - with the re-emergence of a map I had created years ago and its ripple effects on the community – that today I became acutely aware of how my long-term engagement combined with a product (whether it be a children’s book, rainwater collection system, or documentary) affects the way the community operates and the way they see themselves. For example, I’ve communicated with residents that I’m keeping an online journal and they are aware that every phase of the project has resulted in a booklet documenting the process complete with photographs and text. More so than the previous phases, I’ve noticed a change in how a select few of the residents respond to my taking their photograph and even to some extent how they answer questions. It is almost as if they see themselves as part of the product and see the project more as a collection of images of a

also collective representations of those actions and diverse voices.

Though I don’t have an answer for these ethical questions I’ve posed, I would venture to say that transparency of one’s process and intent is one of the most important aspects of community design and planning. This requires clear communication, personal reflection, a consciousness about the structure of knowledge and culture from which one draws, and an openness and desire to learn from other systems of knowledge and people.

Mutual Impact

The balance of benefit for me and the community I serve is a very challenging, if not impossible one to measure. First, how does one compare an individual’s benefit against an entire community’s? Second, how does one compare how I benefit (more academically focused) against how the community benefits (more livelihood focused)? Thus, rather

changing physical environment rather than the physical environment itself. This is certainly very concerning and tells me that perhaps the residents need to be more involved in the project's photography and contributing to the online journal – perhaps with added voices and perspectives this could fragment and complicate what is now becoming too homogeneous of a representation. A "community-based initiative" therefore, needs to include not only collective actions and diverse voices, but

than weigh one against the other by creating a dichotomy between the two, I'm more interested in how we mutually benefit one another. From my experience so far, the higher the participation rate of the community and the more they take ownership of the project, the more all of us benefit. As the project expands and more connections (social and spatial) we create, the more all of us can learn from the process.

Thank you

Thank you again to the MIT Public Service Center, Zongo Water Project donors, and the residents of the Zongo Community for your on-going support of, and dedication to, this initiative. As a member of the Zongo Community adamantly stated at the end of the closing ceremony, "We have come so far. This project must continue!"







ruwa zongo

