SALORMEY VOLUNTEERS GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT

2013-2014



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**FOREWORD**

SVG has concluded its work for the biannual period 2013-2014. During this time, it has sustained its work in target areas that have been its priority from our foundation; these are education, health and community development.

Secondly, after realising the high demand for short term specialized interventions to address more pressing challenges, SVG has initiated activities that tackle this, especially in the health sector; this has been undertaken alongside SVG’s mainstream activities with medium and long term goals. This was done by learning from previously analysed successes and failures on similar areas of work, given by experienced in the field, and also by request from similar minded institutions and bodies instead of by a mere replication of comparable activities.

Thirdly, for the past two years SVG has maintained and reinforced partnerships already established, increased its staff, conducted staff upgrading and training sessions, updated its website design and content, and began social media engagement.

To add to these, during the two year period, SVG has again expanded the geography of partner local institutions. This was done to increase the reach of our activities and informed by outcomes achieved in other beneficiary communities and institutions.

SVG partnered in the refurbishment and construction of adequate facilities for some of these institutions, with the purpose to further explore SVG’s core aims i.e. the ‘provision of tools to achieve self sufficiency and self development’.

The outcome of these inputs have been not only the strengthening of local partner institutions, improving the standards of the services they provide, and the empowerment of those being an element of the partnerships; but also a challenge to traditional ways of understanding individuals role as part of a developing society, and finally as a learning mechanism for all those involved. In addition, the project activities undertaken have also addressed short term pressing needs arising in our communities. We are confident that those who took part in these projects and activities, those benefiting from them and those implementing them, built up knowledge and an awareness that was previously not taken into consideration in similar areas of work.

This report assesses the successes, challenges and lessons learnt whilst projects where being designed, implemented and delivered.

At SVG we will continue to work towards our goal of ‘improving existing services and initiating innovative ones, to meet those needs regarding community services (health and education) and community development’; this is a labour that SVG has been engaged on from its creation, and it is our conviction that by abiding by our beliefs, continued work, and support of all of those involved we will be able to reach these goals in the future.

The achievements that are shown in this report are attributable to all of those who make SVG; individuals and groups alike, local and foreign partner institutions and members of our staff who saw us through two successful years and to whom we owe our profoundest gratitude.

## INTRODUCTION

SVG is a non for profit organisation initially founded by Ghanaians and supported by Ghanaian and foreign philanthropists, individuals and organisations, which geographically bases its work in communities of the Kwahu Districts in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

A key objective of SVG is to initiate and support good volunteering practices in development in the communities where it works. Its main concepts are those of Partnership, Solidarity and Respect.

SVG’s work is done by supporting local educational, health and community institutions and stakeholders in various ways. Firstly, by placing volunteers in relevant areas, in order to strengthen skill building; secondly, by engaging in projects that have mainly an educational aspect embedded in them; thirdly, by collaborating with local health authorities and institutions, providing them with material resources and hosting medical teams for unique assignments and others. All activities have a strong local component and aim at obtaining a medium term sustainable outcome.

During the period 2013-2014, SVG engaged in new practices, strengthened its successes, created new partnerships and ultimately also faced challenges and setbacks. All of these are worth sharing with all our stakeholders and all other individuals and institutions interested in enhancing a vibrant civil society in Ghana.

This reports aims at documenting the work that SVG undertook in our ***OBJECTIVE AREAS***

*‘....we are particularly grateful to you, SVG for the renovation of our primary school....which remained unpainted since it was built in 1979...we appreciate as well the water filtration systems, school and sports materials etc. ..’*

Oboyan D/A Primary & JHS Headteacher

* 1. ***Sustainable development***
* Providing tools that allow for self development –education and others
* Focus on education and community development; relevance of gender policies, making women central actors due to their productive and reproductive roles in our communities
* Education: a comprehensive/holistic approach that allows for long term sustainable outcomes
* Inclusiveness as the approach towards tackling negative effects of development in vulnerable groups
  1. ***Living Standards***
* Affecting quality of life through direct intervention in the health sector -private and public health.
* Awareness and knowledge flows within local populations, gender relevant
* Improving current living conditions addressing basic services; from water and sanitation to livelihoods, that is, individuals´ coping mechanisms on the face of life challenges

In addition to documenting and sharing SVG’s work in the areas enumerated above, the report seeks to capture some of the results obtained from the implementation of its projects, and finally to critically examine SVG’s finances.

1. **TOWARDS ACHIEVING SVG’s OBJECTIVES**

**CORE AIMS:**

* 1. **Sustainable Development: working towards a sustainable future**
  2. **Living Standards: addressing current needs**

**Sustainable Development**

Sustainable Development as defined by UN and other international agencies is development now that bears in mind generations in the future; it means socio economic development done in a respectful way - towards the environment and including all members of society- and in doing so establishing strong basis for future generations. The foundation of this type of sustainable development is being built today, and our projects have incorporated visions of future progress as a core part of their design and implementation. The post 2015 Development agenda currently under discussion will inform our work in the next period 2015-2016.

During the years under review there has been a focus firstly towards achieving sustainability in projects initiated in previous periods and secondly in laying the foundation to achieve

similar outcomes in activities undertaken in 2013-2014.

SVG’s key driver in this period has been to address several aspects of Sustainable Development within each activity area it embarked upon. The tools of choice for

this were multiple in nature and were developed simultaneous in time.

To this end, SVG engaged in activities such as educational work *following a comprehensive approach* as the tool of choice to achieve the desired outcomes. This was reflected in the following: continuation of projects initiated in the least developed communities around the Lake Volta; expanding the reach of projects to other geographical areas; an aim at an inclusive approach that was not incorporated in previous years by addressing issues of education, health and well being in a all-inclusive manner; and finally by incorporation of new technologies to teaching materials and others.

The core aim of sustainability has also been incorporated into activities in the public health sector, again following aiming at outcomes following a multifaceted approach.

***Education: a comprehensive approach***

The villages of Hwee Hwee, Abene, Adawso, Oboyan and Aduamoah saw their communities school structures upgraded and rebuilt; this included the building of a new classroom block and library at Hwee Hwee, refurbishment of school facilities at Abene and Oboyan both at Primary and JHS levels, and building of toilet blocks at the Sunrise school in Adawso and Aduamoah Presbyterian school in Aduamoah, Kwahu. A Fulani community living near Lake Volta also had a borehole and a classroom facility built in order to initiate literacy sessions in the community.

Communities were involved actively in these activities, providing labour and in some occasions materials such as sand –available locally- ; these activities aims to improve educational outputs in the long run but also address health issues within the school environment; this holistic approach has been incorporated in the period under scrutiny, and it aims to improve *school performance* and also to encourage *school enrolment*.

A desired effect of these projects will be the encouragement of communities towards engagement in the provision of basic services such as education, and understanding that educational facilities are fertilizers for their communities; an added aspect or challenge is the engagement of local government in the projects and the realization of these communities as to their rights in the demand for these and other community facilities.

Other educational activities that fit in our objectives included classroom teaching assistance, donation of school supplies –books and educational materials such as stationery, activity books-; sports equipment –football kits, footballs, various sports kits and sets, training kits etc.; and furnishing classrooms and libraries with necessary educational resources. Finally, new technologies have been incorporated to teaching: a ‘Mobile IT Lab’ was part of teaching methods used in some partner schools.

An example of the success of this approach is the continued usage and outcomes of centres such as the Obo Community Library; reading and writing skills of children attending the premises have been encouraged and improved, and the library has become a popular centre for the children in the community to learn in the constructive environment provided by the premises.

The library boasts several hundred children books from KG to JHS levels, donated and catalogued by our organisation’s volunteers.

***A holistic approach to education***

Inclusiveness and vulnerability

Health

Health Outreach programmes took place in various district communities; these are usually

* lacking basic services such as access to adequate sources of drinking water, thus vulnerable to the prevalence of water borne diseases
* usually located far from district hospitals, thus reliant on villages’ health centres covering wide populations with basic human and material resources
* reliant on health traditional practices and practitioners
* Might feel disengaged and on occasions mistrustful of modern medicine practices

A key aim was to support the difficult task of the public health institutions that operate in these districts.

SVG initiated in 2013 its work with communities in a situation of exclusion; a project took place in a Fulani community settled in the hills surrounding the Volta Lake; interventions included on a first phase the construction of a facility to be used for literacy – children in this community are not usually schooled-; a second phase included setting up a water harvesting set up making use of the classroom building, in order to reduce time used by women and children’s to fetch water; the last phase of the project included the donation of various water filters to address potential health problems in the community linked to water usage and storage.

Pictures at the Fulani community facility built for water harvesting and literacy training; the goal was to tackle both health and education, aiming towards easing the group member’s integration within surrounding communities/populations, and also to improve livelihoods for its inhabitants.

Water and Sanitation

**Gender policies**

This is summarised conceptually in our goals in this regard:

To provide equitable access to resources and opportunities to men and women, both individually and in groups.

To take measures to ensure women and men's equitable access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making in our programmes.

To contribute to the goal of gender equality in staffing, particularly in higher management positions.

To include gender assessment as part of the analysis for each project

**Living Standards**

A concept growing in the development field since the 1980s, that of livelihoods or attaining livelihoods, endeavours to understand the coping mechanisms and strategies that people engage in their daily lives, order to deal with socio economic challenges.

SVG has incorporated this concept into its work, and this is reflected in this report by describing firstly the activities that aim to improve living standards and secondly by describing how we give support to people attempting to attain livelihoods.

Private and Public Health Interventions

Knowledge Flows

Improving basic living standards

Private and Public Health interventions

Social and Economic Interventions

1. **CHALLENGES**

Here we distinguish internal and externally originated challenges.

Within the organisation, and from its inception, SVG has faced challenges pertaining its funding, due to its sole reliability on nongovernmental sources of financial support. Our willingness to exert independence from external organization policies and guidelines has made our expansion into new areas of work slower than it could have been.

This is something that might need to be reassessed in the light of positive outcomes of productive cooperation; SVG has already initiated changes in this respect by creating new alliances with similar organisations in our fields of work, especially like minded charities.

On the day to day development of operations, we have faced challenges at the implementation phase mainly. This might happen due to prior miscommunication issues and/or unforeseen circumstances that do not allow for all objectives laid out to be achieved.

This can be dealt with by reinforcing the initial research and planning phase, by clear identification of objectives and understanding of such objectives by all parties involved and/or affected by project development and by accepting overall decision capacity by those that are affected by projects.

Another major challenge has been the current external financial climate, which has hindered progress and thwarted plans laid out in the past for the period under review. We hope that improvement in the economic situation where some of our partner organisations are based will gradually do away with disruption created by these circumstances.

1. **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

In the medium run, SVG aims at establishing itself as one of the reference NGOs in the Kwahu Districts and once that is achieved to expand operations into neighbouring districts.

This would be achieved by:

1. Strengthening ties and engagement with District Assemblies relevant departments
2. Ensuring successful –i.e. sustainable- projects initiated in past and present periods under study
3. Increased participation and inclusiveness of targeted population groups, from the inception of the projects to their monitoring and evaluation phases
4. Increased efficiency; improving outcomes cutting down unnecessary costs and streamlining objectives and streamlining courses of action
5. **CONCLUSION and MAIN AREAS OF LEARNING**

During the period under review, some of the approaches and conceptual work we involved in changed, that is, we attempted to take a fresh outlook at solutions to long-lasting challenges.

This has allowed in our opinion a deeper understanding of the activities undertaken, and therefore an opportunity to affect changes in a more meaningful way than on previous work. It has also presented some risks and added complications, mainly logistical. As usual, our aim is to take into account and learn from what works but also from what doesn’t, in order to set the objectives that will inform the next period of work.

In measuring the ‘results’ especially in the education sector; the outcomes and impact are not immediately obvious or quantifiable. There are other areas where measurable outcomes are more obvious, such as interventions in the health sector –number of patients seen/operated on; people reached on HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness events, and others. These baseline measurements will serve from now on as a comparable dimension.

In view of this, it is important to set realistic targets and timelines within which Project goals and objectives can be achieved. Changes or impact on the lives of a target group can take time to register and even when it does happen, attributing the change to a specific intervention can be problematic.

Another area of work where SVG needs to be engaged in is the full participation of communities in project development and monitoring; a lack of a fluid communication and engagement of all stakeholders might result in wrong assumptions, frustration on the part of the implementing groups, project aims not fully achieved etc.; thus beneficiaries might feel excluded on decision making processes which in turn affect the sustainability of projects.

SVG aims at continuing with its work in the education area, which has produced in some cases very satisfactory outcomes; part of the effort in this area will include the establishment of links between foreign and local schools for the provision of adequate teacher training/exposure, and funding.

Finally, SVG will need to engage more deeply with both domestic and foreign partners in order to allow it to overcome current challenges at various levels and expand operations in the near future.

1. **Appendix**

**6.1.Contact details**

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**6.2. Partners**

Original Volunteers, UK, Education Projects

Anidaso Health, US Charity, Health Projects

Children of Abraham, US Charity, Health Projects

Save the Mothers Trust, UK Charity, Education/Building Projects

Aqualfilter Trust, UK Charity, Water and Sanitation Projects