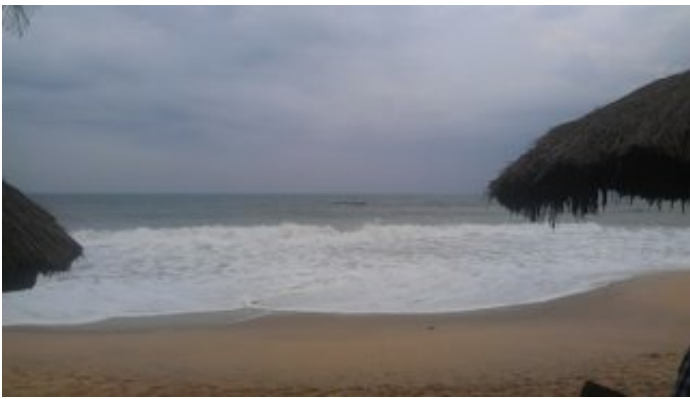


The past several weeks have been very nice. The classes are over, the weather is cool, the neighborhood is quiet (I think the roosters sleep longer in Summer and the dogs are getting along with each other), and we haven't had any major case of power or water outage. By now, most people know we *oversleep* in the morning and get up at 6:30-7:00 am. So, lately, no one has been calling us at 5:30 or 6:00 am to check on us!

These days we tend to take longer walks around the town and have been able to visit stores and places we never had a chance to visit. One of those places is Philip Quaque Boy School (see their Facebook page ¹).



This is the oldest school in West Africa, located right next to the coast. They just celebrated the school's 200th birthday. The students can see the ocean from their classrooms; the scenery is beautiful. Yet, this school happens to be one of the poorest schools in Cape Coast. The irony is that the school is located only 200 meter from several restaurants where you can easily spend \$25 for a *bad* dinner, and typically they are full of tourists.

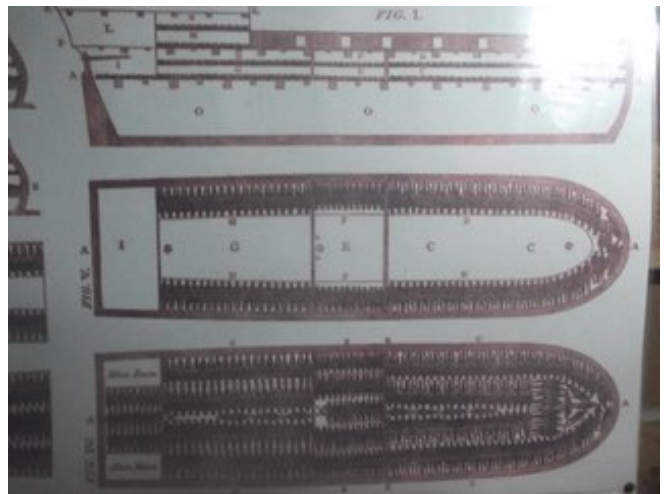


When we visited their computer center, it had two very old laptops on two separate long benches. Each laptop is used by over 30 students! The library is full of very dusty old books. There are over 600 students attending the school. No one has any textbooks to take home. Each textbook for a particular subject is about GHc 15, and most students cannot afford buying them. So, teachers come to class distribute 10-15 textbooks among 50-60 students. During this time, the students will have a chance to copy the materials in their notebooks. Each student needs

about 15 40-page notebooks (about 5 per term) for the entire year. Most students cannot afford paying GHc 12-15 for notebooks. The government only provides about 6-8 free notebooks per year for needy students.

Each student is supposed to pay GHc 3.00 (\$1.5 – price of a bottle of beer) per school year for PTA (Parent Teacher Association). The money is used for school maintenance. Many students cannot afford paying this money. Consequently, according to the headmaster, many of them will be expelled from the school until they pay. We have visited the school several times. The teachers tell us there are days that some parents come to school, crying that they don't have money to buy food for their kids.

Up until last year, the school did not have a decent bathroom. Currently, there is a single pipe providing water to the entire school.



¹ Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100004438093651>

The school is only half-kilometer away from the old Cape Coast Castle (Slave Dungeon), built by the Dutch, later captured by the British in 1664, and occupied by them for two centuries. Aside from serving as the administrative building, the so-called castle was used to auction slaves and keep them until the slave ships (Brookes), built in Liverpool, arrived. Upon their arrival, lines of slaves, shackled together, were pushed through the *Door Of No Return* and sent to the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Cuba), and Brazil. Sometimes over 600 enslaved people from West Africa were loaded into the ship (see picture above), placed under terrible conditions. The figure above is a blueprint of such a ship designed for transferring the slaves, shackled horizontally to the ship, at different levels of the ship.



By the way, the school was named after Philip Quaake. He was a Ghanaian who was sent to U.K when he was very young and ended up becoming a priest. Later he returned to Ghana to promote Christianity. In this neighborhood, Quaake is known as the man who promoted education in Ghana. Interestingly, while staying in Cape Coast, Quaake was closely working with the colonial masters until he died. He was buried in the castle two feet apart from the governor and his wife.

Anyway, back to the school.....over the past few weeks we have been trying to figure out a way to help the school. We are trying to make sure no student will be expelled, at least in the next school year, for not paying the PTA fee. We also like to buy some books for the library. The school headmaster has sent us a relatively long list of things they need, including footwear and raincoats; many of the students don't have shoes to wear. When it rains, one of the teachers told us, half of the kids don't show up to school because they completely get wet.

The only problem is that we are not sure how to make a project like this sustainable. This is clearly a place that can use some help. We just wish we had learned about this place sooner. There are so many students here that need help.

One way to ensure the sustainability of such a project is to hook them up with a *sister* school in Europe or the United States. In effect we should start an exchange program between the two schools and their teachers. This way, one foreign teacher visits Quaake school and teaches here for a week and in return they agree to host one of the teachers from Quaake for a week. Through such exchange program Quaake can benefit tremendously; at the same this could be a great learning experience for the participating Western teachers.



We now have to see if we can find a school willing to establish such an exchange program with Philip Quaake Boy School