

**Baseline Report on Bonkron Village
in the Sekyere Central District of Ashanti Region**



**Prepared for Softwire Technology, sponsors of Bonkron Village
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Introduction

Ashanti Development is a volunteers' charity set up at the request of Ghanaians living in London who asked their friends and neighbours for help to improve the lives of the people they left in their home villages.

We provide villages in the Ashanti Region with water and sanitation, healthcare, education and income generating activities.

In 2012, we began a project called Develop A Village, which aims to help individual Ashanti villages build long-term relationships direct with donors. Bonkron village has been sponsored by Softwire Technology, for whom this report is written.

Objective

The objective of this report is to provide background information on Bonkron, leading to a better understanding of their circumstances on the part of their sponsors and of Ashanti Development, and of the community itself.

In the short-term this information will be used in the design and implementation of systems of water supply, sanitation and hygiene improvement. In the longer-term it will inform all parties of the community's other outstanding needs and opportunities for improving their quality of life.

The report will also set indicators against which progress and the impact of any future interventions can be measured.

Methodology

Techniques used to ensure that community members participated effectively in the survey included:

- **Focus Group Discussion**

This is a form of qualitative research in which groups of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service or concept. groups are asked to respond to questions, but are left free to consult each other at all times.

- **Community Mapping**

This is the visual representation of data by geography or location. It is particularly useful for determining how many houses there are in a village and from that deriving information about the size of the population.

- **Transect Walk**

Collecting information through observations made when walking through the village.

- **One to one interviews**

History of Bonkron

The people of Bonkron originally lived in Ahwenease in the Akyim area in the present Eastern Region of Ghana. From there, they embarked on an expedition to find slaves for their own use. They were led by their queen mother who was called Nana Gyamaah. Their search for slaves finally took them to a village called Adako Gyarkye in the Ashanti Kingdom.

At Adako Gyarkye, the chief of the village saw how beautiful the queen mother was and fell in love with her and refused to let her go. Later, they got married. The newcomers were known for their bravery, and eventually they helped the chief of Adako Gyarkye to win many wars.

As the population grew the chief asked his brother, who was the king of Nsuta, to allocate them some land where they could settle. The king replied that they could choose somewhere for themselves. They chose their current location because of the fertile soil and because of the proximity of the Bonkron stream.

(Source: The Queen Mother)

Dem ography

By means including community mapping and house-to-house head-counting, it was determined that there were 190 households in Bonkron village and that the population, excluding villagers living elsewhere, numbered 1,885. Nearly half the community were under 18 years old.

The table below shows the population breakdown.

Age	Male	Female	Total
Above18 years	470	496	966
Below 18 years	468	451	919
Total	938	947	1885

This data can also be used to ascertain:

- the number of villagers who qualify to pay community levies to finance, for example, school maintenance or other general benefits.
- the number of villagers who are supposed to participate in communal labour.
- approximately what Bonkron's future requirements will be, based on the breakdown of various age groups.
- whether or not community facilities are sufficient, and the likely cost of expanding them.

Language

The people of Bonkron are predominantly Akans and speak Twi. Two other tribes are represented among them, notably settler farmers from northern Ghana. These last speak Twi as well as their native languages.

Economic Activities

Almost all the people living in Bonkron are farmers, growing crops including plantain, cassava, corn, yam, cocoyam, vegetables (eg carrots, cabbage) and groundnuts. They sell a small surplus in the market at Mampong and use the money to pay their children's school fees, community levies, for healthcare and for other family needs.

The challenges faced by the farmers include:

- lack of funds to support larger scale farming.
- the low prices they obtain for farm produce. Many of the farmers grow the same crops. Consequently supply of farm produce often exceeds demand, especially during the major crop seasons, and this drives prices down.
- the land tenure system which provides that farmers who rent land must pay one-third of their proceeds to the land owner. This amount is considered too high by many prospective renters.

Roads

Bonkron village is located on the main highway between Mampong and Nsuta. It is about two kilometres from Nsuta, the District capital.

Electricity

The village has had electricity since early 1974. The community members initiated the project by buying both the concrete and wooden poles for the cables with funding raised through a communal levy. Through the Electricity Company of Ghana, the government completed the project in 1974.

Educational Facilities

The village Primary School and Junior High School were established by the Local Authority in the late 1950s. The Middle School was converted into a Junior Secondary School in 1987 when the nationwide educational reform was launched. A Kindergarten was later added to the Primary School. There are 346 children enrolled in the Primary School and Kindergarten, while the Junior High School has 54 students.

Religion

Religions practised in Bonkron include the Grace Church, the Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Presbyterian, Methodist and the Assembly of God. There is also one witchdoctor's shrine.

Water Sources

There are three streams in the village, Sumanpa, Tadea and Bonkron. There are also four hand dug wells but these run dry or with much reduced volume during the dry season. The pipelines from Mampong to Nsuta run through the village and have some tap stands attached, but water has not flowed through the pipes for the past five years.



Bonkron Stream



A Hand-Dug Well

Sanitation and Hygiene

The village contains three Kumasi Ventilated Improved (KVIP) latrines (contemporary community latrines made of cement) and 39 household latrines.

Three KVIPs

The first of these three latrines is dilapidated, while the other two are nearly full and smell very bad. These three are insufficient for community needs, so many villagers practice open defecation, which runs the risk of contaminating the water sources. This is especially true of those who don't live close to the community latrines.



Old KVIP Latrine, front and rear



Household Latrines

The 39 household latrines were constructed by individual house owners and are mainly used by adult members of the household and important visitors. Some of these latrines were not properly designed and built, and so smell bad and are surrounded by flies.

Refuse Dump Site

There are two main communal refuse dumping sites in Bonkron but many people dump their refuse behind their houses or by the side of the footpath to their farms.



Communal refuse dump

Sanitation and Hygiene Practices

The following risk hygiene practices were identified:

- Poor management of refuse

Many households dump their refuse behind their houses and these mini-dumps are poorly managed. The two communal dumping sites are also covered in weeds and badly managed.

- Open defecation

Open defecation is common. The community members explained that this was because of dissatisfaction with the KVIP.

- Weeds

Weeds are often allowed to flourish on building plots owned by individuals, and on communal areas which do not belong to anyone. This is bad practice, as rubbish caught in the weeds may collect water and become a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

- Hand-washing without soap

Awareness of the need to wash hands with soap is quite high in the community especially among school children. Many villagers claimed they usually used soap after eating. However it is more likely that the people are too busy to do this and do not understand the likely consequences.

Health Issues

Malaria, fever, diarrhoea and dysentery were said to be the most frequent diseases. Villagers attributed them partly to their own poor hygiene. When they fall ill, villagers visit Nsuta Clinic or Mampong Hospital.

Community Institutions

The community institutions at Bonkron include:

- the Committee of Chief and Elders
- the Unit Committee ¹
- the School Management Committee
- the Parent-Teacher Association
- the Water and Sanitation Committee (Watsan) which was formed recently.

The Unit Committee has only five members but they hold regular meetings. The Committee has recently:

- planned and organised annual harvests festivals to raise funds.
- referred problems associated with their electricity transformer to the Electricity Company of Ghana. This resulted in replacement of the transformer with a larger one and extension of low tension cables to every corner of the village.
- organised communal labour to construct two new hand dug wells.

We judge from this that the Unit Committee is about average in effectiveness, or possibly slightly above average if their lack of training is taken into account.

Current problems faced by the Committee include lack of commitment on the part of some members. The reason for this is probably rooted in national politics. The present government has cut the number of Unit Committee members in every electoral area and, whereas previously representatives were elected, they are now nominated by government representatives.

¹ Elected village council. This is a statutory body which exists side by side with the Committee of Chief and Elders.

At many villages, including Bonkron, this change has wrought havoc. Former, possibly hard-working and responsible Unit Committee members are furious at having been displaced and many people refuse point blank to work with the new committee, who are in any case too few to manage all the work involved. Many community members refuse to play their part in communal labour or attend village meetings.

There was no WATSAN committee before the start of this survey but during the second community meeting on water and sanitation, the community agreed to set one up.

The School Management Committee and the Parent Teacher Association were said to be very effective and to meet regularly. If a problem proved too much for them, they normally sought support from the district authorities.

Working Relationships Between Institutions

The Chief and Elders' Committee, Unit Committee and the School Management Committee have worked together on community projects, including the construction of the hand dug wells.

Relationship between Community Institutions and Third Parties

The relationship between community institutions at Bonkron and third parties is very good. The Assemblyman for the area meets the Unit Committee regularly and also presents their problems during District Assembly meetings. He lives in the village and works in Nsuta, the District capital, and so he and the Unit Committee visit the District Assembly office regularly.

Availability of Local Resources

Natural resources available to the community include water, clay and wood.

Human resource include unskilled labour and skilled work from teachers, masons, seamstresses, weavers, hairdressers, painters and carpenters.

Financial resources are generated by community fund-raising, usually based on a levy which is payable at the start of any development project, and on the Harvest Festival, when farm produce is auctioned to raise money.

Challenges

The large numbers of children under the age of 18 are likely to strain future village resources to the utmost. However, regardless of the availability of birth control, it is unlikely that the birthrate will fall until the child mortality rate falls and the community becomes more prosperous. This is because parents look on children as their insurance for their old age.

In the meantime, Community leaders are largely unable to enforce by-laws. This is because they have failed to sanction previous offenders and so others think that there

will be no retribution if they too break laws. This is likely to affect future participation in communal work including the implementation of water and sanitation programmes.

Recommendations

1. The community said that its principal need was for more clean water. Bonkron already has four hand-dug wells, and the simplest solution may be to dig another, or even two more. The community would provide all unskilled labour so the cost would be low – at a very rough guess, possibly around £2,500 per well with hand pump.

If, after digging the well, the village still needed extra water in the dry season, we could provide them with either communal or household Aquafilters. These are the only filters we have yet found in which we have confidence. They are working well in Dadease and Mpenya, two nearby villages where borehole drilling is unlikely to be successful. Household Aquafilters cost under £30, but are expensive in terms of time needed to educate the households on how to use them.

2. Bonkron also needs 168 household latrines, and design faults in existing latrines should be corrected. However in practice many of the houses are too close together for latrines to be constructed between them, and it follows that some households will be forced to share. We recommend that we start by providing 100, and then consider the remaining need. Ashanti Development is ready to take responsibility for funding the remainder.

Rainwater harvesting should be installed on school roofs to encourage hand-washing among children. When the children go home, they will then reinforce their parents' hygiene practices.

3. Bonkron institutions should be trained in community mobilisation and governance. This will enable them to mobilise the community for communal labour and also enforce the by-laws.

4. The community also asked for consideration to be given to providing them with a new kindergarten, and suggested that the old Primary school building could be renovated for this purpose.

5. Finally, they asked that a microcredit project, only recently introduced, should be speeded up and extended so as to include farm support for both men and women.

Microcredit is an Ashanti Development project, and currently stretches across eleven villages, providing for business training and small loans for poor women. We do not agree with speeding it up, since it is important that each woman spends time learning how to produce her own business plan before being given a loan. However it could certainly be extended to farm support at anything from £3,000 upwards.

6. Other priorities for the village, including mosquito nets and National Health Insurance, are discussed in the Background Notes inside the Develop A Village folder.