

Gregory M. Cruess  
United Planet  
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I interned for the summer in a small rural village called Putubiw, which translates as “the place where the yams are kept”. Although the village was by all means poor, it still had running water, electricity, and a school. Shannon (my fellow intern) and I lived with the Annobil family just a small walk down the road from the center of Putubiw, and we had an amazing experience bonding with and becoming a part of our host family. We each had our separate private rooms, but most time was spent in the living room or on the verandah, and the family provided meals three times a day. We walked to school everyday past the center of town and down to the Junior High School on the other side. There were about 90 students attending classes in the three-room schoolhouse, and Shannon and I supplemented the current curriculum by sharing our knowledge of English, Technology, and Science.

I nominally taught Integrated Science classes, but, because of various teacher meetings, rain, and sometimes just having the class before mine run long, I did not teach much more than three or four classes a week. Even though this was frustrating at first, I eventually realized that if I wanted to achieve something else with my time there at the school, I needed to think more proactively about how my skills could best be utilized for the needs of the school. Eventually, with the help of the students and other teachers, I set to work building a bookshelf out of locally grown bamboo since the school was lacking a bookshelf on which to place many of the new books that had been received from the government. The school also had very little money (only about US\$16) and, therefore, buying a real carpentered bookshelf was out of the question. After getting the students to bring in bamboo from each of their farms, we set about cutting and measuring the pieces and then notching them together to create a frame that would be strong

enough to hold all of the necessary books. We ended up finishing construction on the shelf just before the school term ended, but it was actually sturdy enough to fulfill its purpose and should be able to be used by the school for a long while to come. Shannon and I also spent much of the time at school between classes reading and talking with the other teachers about Ghanaian culture, religion, politics, and life in America.

United Planet, the international organization with whom I was working, did a great job of helping me better understand Ghanaian culture, even within such an unstructured framework. We were often left to our own devices to determine what we would do and teach, and, while this provided for some confusion, it also allowed us to really work at our strengths and realize that many things in Ghana are not fixed (either meeting times or job duties). The in-country coordinators Raj and Ian were invaluable sources of support and information, and they also made a concerted effort to help us grapple with the question of development and how it should be achieved. Although some of these conversations put a cold damper on the idealism that we had originally brought to our internship, they truly helped us realize how development organizations can both hurt and help the people amongst whom they work. Since the goal of development should be to help the people whose living standards are being developed, it made me consider much more carefully the implications of top-down development. Truly sustainable development must be about what the community wants and needs and not so much about what a large NGO decides that the community needs. I believe very strongly now that development must really come from the people themselves and outside donor agencies should be there to help when extra funding or know-how is needed.

Beyond my experience in the village, we also had many opportunities to travel within Ghana and experience the diverse cultures and peoples that comprise the country. United Planet

funded two of these weekend excursions and then another was a visit to the other UP site in the Volta Region of Ghana. Throughout all of these travels Ian, Raj, and Ben were constantly available to help us make plans or decide on when and where we might need to catch some specific form of transportation. Traveling in Ghana is an experience, but one that is well worth it by the way you can really begin to experience Ghana as Ghanaians do. Things are rarely on time, and roads are often very bumpy and dusty even between major cities. All of this, though, is part of experiencing Ghana as it is now. People get by with what they have and are trying to work hard to make their lives and the lives of their families better.

My summer spent in Putubiw was the most educational summer that I have spent while at Notre Dame, and even in those times of silence sitting on the verandah of the house looking up at the smoke rising from the village distillery, I was engaged with questions and ideas that challenged me to take a more critical look at the Third World, development, and how I could best live in solidarity with the residents of Putubiw. I feel that my internship was a success, especially because of the many amazing friendships that I made while living with my host family as well as the teaching and traveling I did. Even though I probably achieved few tangible results in the classroom teaching science, it was in the small and subtle ways of just being there that hopefully opened the eyes of my students to a world beyond the village. I know that living in Putubiw definitely expanded my conception of the world and challenged me to go beyond my comfort zone in trying to understand this utterly foreign but hauntingly similar human existence.