

# 2014: GHANA

We set out in the morning for Cape Coast—about a 3 hour drive from Accra--and arrived in time to have lunch at the Castle Beach Restaurant, located right on the beach next to (guess what?) the castle.

Shawn Dillard (right), who is in charge of ProWorld—Ghana, met us for lunch.

Our plan is to establish a cocoa study center near Kakum National Park where students who are part of the ProWorld program, doing internships or classes, are assigned to certain projects. I had never met Shawn, had only corresponded with her, so this was our chance to meet.



After lunch, Bob and I visited the castle, one of 60 castles built by Europeans to house slaves before they were stowed (yes, that's the word) aboard ships. To protect the castle from marauders (e.g. the Dutch taking the castle away from the Portuguese), they had to lay in a supply of cannon balls. Each of these is hollow so it can explode and rip up sails, thereby impairing a ship's ability to maneuver.



Right: View of the fishing village from the threshold of the Door of No Return, where slaves embarked onto waiting ships.





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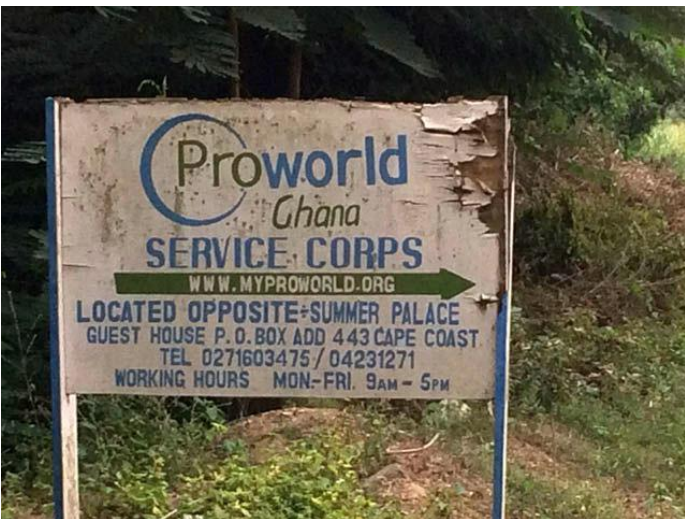


In the late afternoon, we drove 10 miles to Elmina Castle, which is even more picturesque than the Cape Coast Castle. Built by the Portuguese, it's called El Mina because there was a gold mine nearby. This was part of the Gold Coast, and most European gold came from West African trading until Cortez conquered what we now call Mexico. Right: view from the ramparts.

Left: Bob in front of the castle's moat and drawbridge.



When the Dutch got the castle from the Portuguese, they switched the church from Roman Catholic to Protestant. The governor had a special balcony from which he would inspect the female slaves and choose which one he wanted to sleep with that night. Any slaves that became pregnant were housed outside the castle until they gave birth, at which point they were sent off to the New World. Their children, mulattoes, were left behind and became street urchins in town.



In the morning, we drove by ProWorld to pick up Shawn and her two assistants, Isaac and Kofi.



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Above left: We had scheduled a meeting with the chiefs of four villages in the town Ebekawopa. Rev. Sampson, standing, put the meeting together. The chiefs of Gyaware, Frami, Mmaniaye, Adiyaw, and Ebekawopa are on the right side. Above right: Shawn, with Kofi (center) and Isaac (left).

I gave a one-hour presentation and told the chiefs that we could locate the cocoa study center in Ebekawopa, but because of the road, Ebekawopa is not practical. The chiefs all agreed the Frami which has electricity and which is located next to the road, is the most practical. After the meeting, Shawn et al joined us for lunch at the restaurant of Kakum National Park. After lunch, they took a taxi back to Abura, where ProWorld is located.



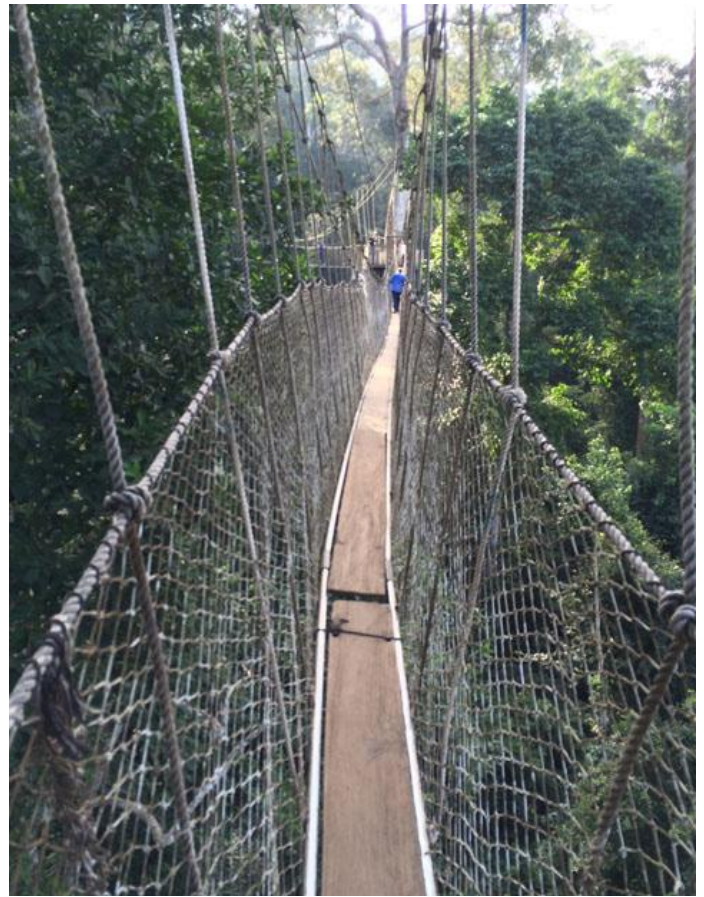
We donated what we had left of the cute toys (with built-in flashlight, removable scissors, pen, magnifying glass), the solar reading lights, and chocolate from Depa, Côte d'Ivoire.



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Bob and I joined a group taking the canopy walk, which is 0.7 miles long and is over 100 feet above the forest floor (right).

We drove back south and stopped for drinks at the Hans Botel, a hotel built over a large pond filled with crocodiles (below). Most of West Africa's crocodiles have been exterminated. They are now rarely found in the rivers.



I am reminded of the infamous poem:

How doth the little crocodile improve his shining tail.  
And pour the waters of the Nile on ever'y golden scale.  
How cheerfully he seems to grin.  
How neatly spreads his claws.  
And welcomes little fishes in ... with gently smiling jaws.

We drove back to Accra and spent most of the day purchasing equipment—including a microwave, an electricity stabilizer, and a bunch of small tools such as bowls and wooden spoons. We visited four stores to find the best refrigerator.

In the late afternoon, we visited the new house that Alex is having made. It's located near the Accra castle, which we visited but which I could not take a picture of. This is a view of the roof under construction. Alex is buying very fancy shingles from Switzerland and they are being fastened to this structure.





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Bob was to leave in the afternoon. We visited a few sights in downtown Accra in the morning. This is the Supreme Court.



Across the street is the Kwame Nkrumah mausoleum. Nkrumah was the first sub-Saharan leader to declare independence from a colonial power. He lasted a few years before being deposed by a CIA-backed military coup. Nkrumah pitted the First and Second worlds against each other, which displeased the Americans.



Nkrumah spent the rest of his life as vice-president of Guinea. His wife, who was Egyptian, is buried in the same mausoleum. The Chinese built this.

We visited the Accra castle, which now doubles as a prison and an office building. During the Rawlings era (1980s), political opponents and others not deemed worthy of a trial were thrown into the ocean, cement blocks tied to their backs. I didn't dare take a picture.

But I did dare take a picture of the President Mills mausoleum, located on a sizable piece of land. If they take up so much land to bury each president, at some point, there won't be any left. Mills was weak and his associates took advantage of this to enrich themselves.





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After we dropped Bob off at the airport, Alex and I drove down the GW Bush highway. GW borrowed \$800 million from the Chinese to hand to the Ghanaian government which then hired the Chinese to build the highway.

A far different development situation from the days when the money was ours as was the construction company (Bechtel corporation). Remember George Schultz and Caspar Weinberger in the Reagan years? They were former Bechtel executives

We loaded the chocolate machine into the back of the 4X4. All 300 lbs.



While they loaded the car, I took picture of fufu being pounded (left). A mixture of cooked cassava and plantain, it's pounded to bust the starch granules, producing a faintly sweet, gluey paste that you eat with your hands.

After you pound the paste, you knead it (right), wetting your hands first, to form a smooth ball which you put in a bowl and cover with a soup containing chunks of meat (goat, fish, grasscutter, okra, snail, antelope, or monkey).

We drove to the Cape Coast area and checked into the Jangels Hotel. Not the best place I've ever stayed, but only \$15 a night. No running water and the pillows reeked. But the price was right.





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The next day, we went to Frami to meet with local officials about the building they had agreed to lend us for the chocolate factory.

Alex demonstrates the loading of a village oven. A lot of villages in Fante land bake their own bread, which they sell to other villages.



We met with the chief of Frami to explain the project, which consisted mainly of starting up a chocolate factory and building a retail store so that tourists could stop and buy local chocolate. The chief expressed his wholehearted support for the project, although later it turned out that there was really no support and that I was throwing good money at an unrealistic goal.

A local war memorial comemorating the Ashanti-Fante war in the early 1800s. The Ashanti won as their forces were much more powerful. The British, not wanting to have to fight the Ashanti, captured and handed over an old, blind Fante chief so the Ashanti could execute him.



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This is the building where we established the chocolate factory.



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We drove back to Accra to pick up the refrigerator and the cocoa butter, needed to make chocolate. We purchased the refrigerator at the Lebanese store (for 1600 cedis or \$470). Because it was kept at a separate warehouse, we asked them to deliver it to the Central Hotel, where I was staying. When it arrived, we put it behind the hotel front desk.

The next morning, Alex picked me up about 9:20 with a new car (he has 13 4X4's). We were able to lay the fridge on its side and there was still enough room for me to sit in the front seat. We drove south to Tema, which is Ghana's number 1 port (number two being Takoradi) to Golden Tree Processing Company, one of the state-run enterprises established by Kwame Nkrumah. It makes the wildly popular Golden Tree candy bar, of which milk and dark are the biggest sellers. I'm quite fond of the milk chocolate bar.



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To purchase 25 Kg of cocoa butter at Golden Tree requires considerable patience. First, you have to go to security to get your badge. Then, you visit the receiving office to record your name. Following this, you go to Central Administration to have four copies of an invoice drawn up. Then, you enter a separate building, several hundred feet away, to visit General Accounting, where all four copies are stamped. Next, one leaves this office and stands out in the wind to pull out 1058 cedis, holding on to them desperately so they don't blow into Côte d'Ivoire. They then stamp the invoices again and direct you to the warehouse which is far enough away, you have to drive.



Inside the warehouse, which is quite warm, are thousands and thousands of 25 Kg boxes of cocoa butter. It takes about 20 minutes to do the paperwork at the warehouse, which involves still another handwritten form with lots of writing by many people, including yourself as you have to record the precise time you received the cocoa butter. Finally, this “wad” is placed in your hands along with the case of cocoa butter, and you drive back to the entrance. There, you hand them the papers and your badges and they allow you to exit the premises.

Whether in the former Soviet Union or in modern day Ghana, state-run enterprises have all shared this in common: huge inefficiency caused by inattention to the bottom line. And yet, there's no doubt that a lot of Kingsbite bars are sold in Ghana!



We set out for Cape Coast, arriving around 2 PM. We had purchased doughnuts and chocolate from street vendors, but shooting your blood sugar up and done does little to allay basic hunger. We stopped in Abura, which is at the junction of the Kumasi road with N-1 (road from Accra) and purchased sugar and milk powder. Since we had already parked, Alex bought Kenke and Grilled Fish and we then sauntered over to a grill and ordered chicken gizzards and grilled guinea hen.



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We drove to the hotel and enjoyed our booty in the empty restaurant. It was all quite delicious, especially when washed down with my last bottle of Blue Sky, the best fruit juice in the world (left).



At 4 PM, we drove north to Frami. It started raining about half way there, which is typical of rainforests, where there is some sort of feedback going on between trees and clouds. Because it was raining, we didn't remove the refrigerator right away but entered our building, where the electrician was busily constructing a homemade power strip hardwired into the electrical filter (below, right).

The homemade power strip consisted of a wooden board which the electrician was busy wiring. One of the plugs matches the machine's 16A plug. The electrician's assistant held a cellphone whose flashlight had been turned on to add enough light to work by.

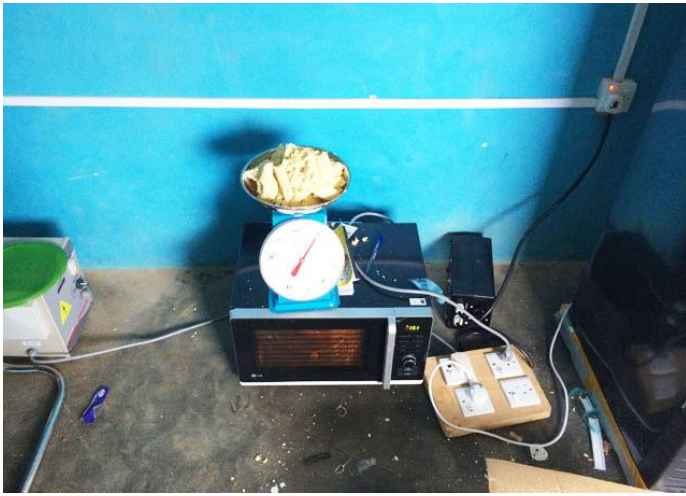


Above left: While I was standing around, I took a picture of our neighbor cooking in the rain. We will be sharing her two stoves, which consist of mounded mud fired into crockery to hold large pots.

Left: The rain finally abated a bit, so we offloaded the fridge and the cocoa butter.







Today was devoted to making chocolate. Alex and I drove to Frami and we entered the chocolate making room thinking some progress would have been made. Much to my disappointment, the carpenter hadn't delivered the furniture. Above left, weighing out the cocoa butter. Above right: The electrician was busy wiring the overhead lights, one over the wrapping table and the other in the production corner. Despite the setback, I set out to make the first batch of chocolate. Four young men were in the room, each representing the four villages. I started by weighing out the cocoa butter and then melting it in the microwave. I put 2 Kg of cocoa butter, melted, into the machine and I added 4 Kg of sugar. I started the machine and let it run for about a half hour.



While the cocoa butter and sugar were being ground, we roasted 5 Kg of cocoa beans (left) and poured them out onto sheetpans to cool (right). About 25 people stood around, pinching the beans and removing the hulls. We then pounded the decorticated beans into nibs and re-roasted them to make them easy to grind in the machine (below, left and right).





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At that point, the power went off, and it stayed off. Not wanting to sit around, I asked whether we could find a generator. Four young men brought one and I paid them to purchase some gasoline. They ran the generator for half an hour before it literally blew up because the gasoline they bought was full of water.

Another couple of hours went by before a better generator was located. This time, they let the gasoline settle and poured off the top, leaving the water in the jug. They ran about 100 feet of wire—way more than needed. Generators are rented for funerals; it's a prosperous business.



I spent the remaining hours of the afternoon gradually adding the remaining cocoa. As we sat there, waiting, I shared some of Alex's jackfruit, which people eat in the belief that it reduces the chance of prostate cancer. Whatever. It tasted great—a really nice afternoon treat.

We left the village a little after 6 PM, trusting that the generator would run all night so tomorrow morning, the chocolate would be very smooth. The one worry: should they turn off the generator once the power came back on and then the power cuts, the chocolate sets, I don't know what would happen to the 2 HP motor!

We started the day at 10 AM. My first concern was a water supply for the chocolate factory. Much to my chagrin, the nearest well is  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile away—down the road, then through the schoolyard and down a hill. We passed this woman spreading out her cocoa beans to dry.





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Left, cocoa beans are dried on a bamboo framework and spread out over the mat using a wooden rake. Right: near the well, I took this picture of a nearby “barn”, complete with sheep loitering along the outside wall and a rooster up in the attic.



Near the well, I took this picture of a nearby “barn”, complete with sheep loitering along the outside wall and a rooster up in the attic. The well was locked. The chief explained that the well is shared by several communities and is unlocked only in the morning in order to control well use. Apparently, the Ghana Water Board tests the water regularly and treats it with chlorine to make sure it is safe. In order to pay the water board, the communities pool their funds to pay for the service. This is, I submit, that government and leadership can make it possible to share a resource and ensure safety.



Because we were with the chief, we were able to draw water without unlocking the pump and without incurring a fine.

The two boys fill two containers with water, which we used all day to clean our hands and various pieces of equipment. Thanks to their good work, water was brought one-quarter mile to ensure proper cleanliness.



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I started filling molds at about 11 AM.



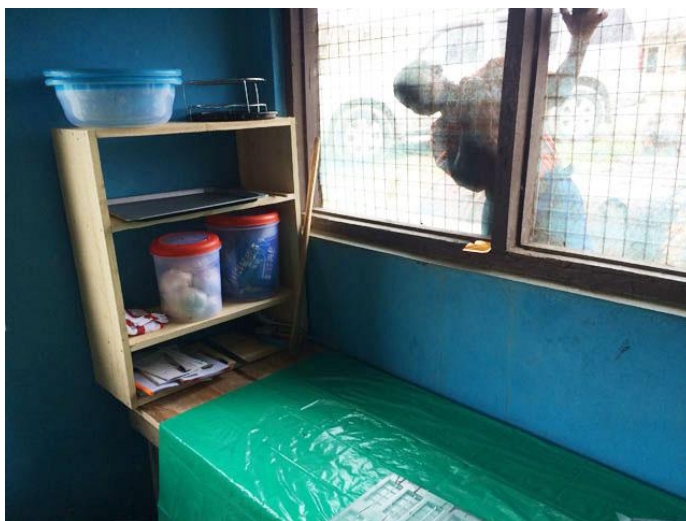
I set them in the fridge.



While I was working, the carpenter was assembling the furniture that we had commissioned.



This is our washing station. As the business makes money, it will spend its profits on tiling, running hot and cold water. But for now, this will have to do.



This is the new wrapping table with shelves.



While we filled and unmolded molds, our crew outside was busy roasting and hulling 5.5 Kg of beans, which yield 4 Kg of roasted nibs (pieces of beans).



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By 5:30 PM, we had started up still another batch of chocolate. We paid our child labor (which de-hulled 5,500 beans) with pieces of chocolate.



During the afternoon, I did a financial analysis of the operation...

## PRODUCTS

Disks weighing 7 g each  
Bars weighing 35 g each

## PRICES

The disks will be sold for 50 pesetas was and  
the sales person keeps 20 pesewas per disk.

The bars (35 g) will be sold for 350 pesetas and  
the sales person keeps 150 pesewas per bar.

## TOTAL SALES PER 12 KG BATCH

1700 disks:  $1700 \times 30$  pesewas = 510 cedis  
340 bars:  $340 \times 200$  pesewas = 680 cedis

## COSTS OF INGREDIENTS

Cocoa butter: 42.32 cedis per Kg  
Cocoa powder: 3.2 cedis per Kg  
Sugar: 5 cedis per Kg  
Milk: 30 cedis per Kg

## COST OF FORMULA

2 Kg cocoa butter ... 84.64 cedis  
4 Kg cocoa powder ...  $5.5 \times 3.3 = 17.6$  cedis  
4 Kg sugar ...  $5 \times 4 = 20$  cedis  
2 Kg milk ...  $2 \times 30 = 60$  cedis

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Total formula cost: 182.24

Total energy cost: 30 cedis per 24 hours

Total labor cost: 4 people  $\times$  8 cedis per day = 32 cedis

Total profit:  $680 - 182 - 30 - 32 = 536$  cedis

This shows the phenomenal profit potential in this business! In the U.S., profits of 15-30% are considered to be quite acceptable. Look at these profits... Well over 50%!



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We started at 11 AM today. The crew began a half batch all by themselves while I sat on a bench under a micro grove of plantains, writing. While sitting there, munching on cocoa bread, chocolate, and water, I took this picture of Alex (right) and Frami's Chief of the Young people, Nana (chief) Otafregia, which means "He who can quench fire with his tongue."



We had a two hour meeting with the chiefs (left) during which I gave a presentation about the phenomenal profit-making potential of this business, assuming that everyone works together and that the sales staff do a good job. I explained that a single woman (men don't do sales) selling 30 disks (20 pesetas profit each) can make the Ghanaian minimum income of 6 cedes per day. So that should be a pretty good incentive! (Right) During the afternoon, I took this picture of the sales staff that will be taking the products to market.

To end the day, I took this picture of the production staff, which include from the left: Reverend Sampson (whom I've known for 10 years), Nana Otafregia, Na (in red), and Ramsford (second from right--main production person).

Well, that ends the trip. I have accomplished all that I set out to do. All that remains is the voyage home, which begins tomorrow, Sunday.

In the end, this project was a total failure and taught me a lesson I already knew: money is not enough. If the villagers neglect their obligations as partners, the project will fail.

