

Ghana: 10 – 16 July 2006

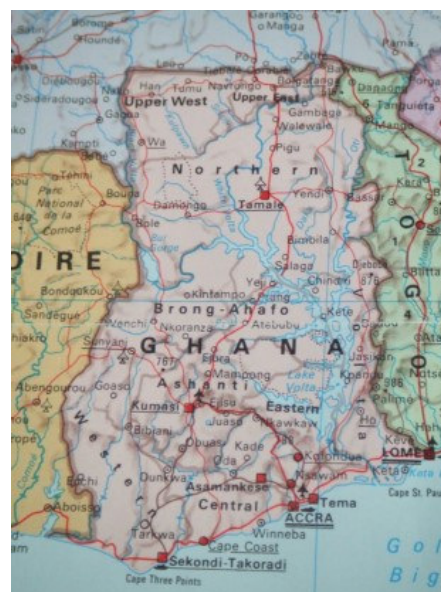
By Keith Lindsey

Introduction to Ghana

Ghana is a country in west Africa that is about the size of Germany, but with a third of the population (about 23 million). The country has three climatic and vegetational zones, ranging from the humid south, the drier savannah in the centre of the country and the hot and dry region in the north. Agriculture, industry and the population is more concentrated in the south.

The country became independent from Britain in 1957 under the visionary leader Kwame Nkrumah. Since then there has been political turmoil, but Ghana has remained predominantly peaceful. Today the country is open and free, under the leadership of the democratically elected John Kufour. The General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, is Ghanaian. Many Ghanaians live in Europe and North America.

In the north, perhaps through poverty, many people eat healthy fruits and vegetables from the wild, and many have moringa growing in their gardens. In the south life is a little more sophisticated, in some aspects better, in some aspects not so good. Partly through the work of the local branch of PROMETRA, research and development is already taking place into the scientific use of herbal remedies. For example, research has been conducted into a locally growing anti-malarial plant, *Cryptolepis sanguinolenta*, which is available in the shops as a herbal tea under the name “Phyto-laria”.



Introduction to my visit

Although *anamed* has never been given a clear invitation to run a seminar in Ghana, we have many friends there, and several people are already growing artemisia.

I wrote to all our contacts and asked a) whether they would have interest in a one day seminar and b) if they would be willing to help organise it. I received immediate responses from the Catholic Diocese in



Participants in the Kumasi seminar

Kumasi and from George Owusu-Afriyie, Director of Parks and Gardens in Accra, formally Head of the Aburi Botanic Gardens. I also accepted help gratefully from Abraham Osei, who provided artemisia seedlings free of charge for the seminar in Kumasi, and Edith de Vos of the Baobab Children’s Foundation in Cape Coast who brought seedlings to the Accra seminar.

Both seminars included a description of *anamed* and Natural Medicine, discussion of several medicinal plants and a detailed description of the cultivation and use of *Artemisia annua*, in particular for the treatment of malaria. In both seminars I sowed seeds of artemisia, which were to be cared for by the seminar organisers.

The Kumasi seminar

This was held on 12 July in the Catholic Christian Village. It was organised locally by John Owusu-Ayirebi, the Agricultural Coordinator of the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi. Twenty one people attended, including five healers who travelled from Nandom and Wa in the extreme north, from the Upper West Region of Ghana, well over 400km distant.

The opening address was given by Rev Fr Emmanuel Tabi Mensah, who was completing a Masters in Herbal Medicine. The relatively low number enabled a lively conversation, and most participants were able to share something of their own knowledge and experience.

Following the seminar I visited the Department of Pharmacy at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi (KNUST) where they are already conducting research into *Artemisia annua*.

The Accra seminar

This was held on 14 July at the HQ of the Department of Parks and Gardens in Accra, a very suitable location with its nurseries and medicinal plants. It was organised by George Owusu-Afriyie, and attended by 55 people. The Ghana Federation of Traditional Medicine Practitioners was well represented, as were the healers organisations that are members of this umbrella group. We were honoured in that the opening address was given by Dr Dabra, a medically qualified pharmacist, a consultant in



The crowded seminar room in Accra



Dr Dabra VI Togbega opens the seminar in Accra

traditional medicine and President of PROMETRA, Ghana. Once again, neem, moringa and artemisia aroused great interest.

The media were well represented at the seminar. It was reported on one of the television stations (Metro TV). Then three well read newspapers carried the story, the Daily Graphic, the Ghanaian Times and the Daily Guide.

On the day following George Owusu-Afriyie took me to Aburi Botanical Gardens, which from 1999 to 2001 had run a widely acclaimed medicinal garden project.

Regrettably, once the funding ceased, this project was discontinued.

Acknowledgements

I thank very warmly all the people mentioned above for their very great contribution to the success of the seminars. I thank also the supporters of anamed in Germany who made this visit financially possible.

Recommendations for the future

As already stated, the scientific use of herbal medicine is already established in Ghana. The first steps towards cooperation between traditional and conventional medicine have already been taken, and herbal medicines are being marketed successfully. *Artemisia annua anamed* (A-3) is being cultivated in several locations, and is the subject of research at KNUST.

George Owusu-Afriyie says, “anamed can play a critical role in Natural Medicine Ghana but it all boils down to funding. We need funds to organise Seminars, create awareness and for conservation (technical advice in raising seedlings and setting up medicinal farms)”.

I recommend that anamed keep in touch with the organisers and participants of these seminars and with the projects cultivating A-3. We should be ready to respond to any invitation to run week-long seminars there. People in Nandom, Kumasi, Central Region and Volta Region have already said that they would welcome seminars. We should respond particularly to invitations from organisations that seem able to establish medicinal gardens and to continue to promote Natural Medicine in their regions themselves.

The budget for a further visit to conduct two week-long seminars would be in the order of 12,000 Euro.



Participants in the Accra seminar examine a moringa tree.