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## Director's note

**Kwame W. Adzakpa the Director**

### ***YOU ARE ALWAYS ON MY MIND - TOGO VOLUNTEERS!!!***

*"Dear Kwame*

*I wanted to thank you for what has been the most amazing experience in Togo with Projects Abroad. Upon returning home to Canada, I almost feel like I am missing a part of myself. Without your hard work and that of all the staff at Projects Abroad I know my experience would not have been so meaningful. Although, coming to volunteer, I feel as if there is no way that I have given as much as I have received from the kind and welcoming people I have met and from my numerous experiences and travels. Togo et les togolais me manquent tellement. I hope to one day return when time permits.*  
*Merci* *mille* *fois!*

XXX

**Yes, one of the letters I had last week from one of my volunteers who left.**

When I was reading the letter, tears rolled down my cheeks. I usually receive heart-touching letters from volunteers and wished I had the power to make all my volunteers stay forever with me in Togo.

I am happy to be lucky enough to usually receive volunteers who are well brought up, kind, attaching and very helpful. I think they consider me as their own father or brother, and the rest of the staff as their own sisters and brothers.

We usually receive different kinds of volunteers from different parents and countries. Some volunteers are very soft or well brought up while some seemed to be different. But whatever the case, our staff receives everybody without partiality and very soon, the difficult ones also get in line with us and we become the same *family*.

We know that volunteers arriving at the airport have got different expectations: going through immigration quickly and meeting their staff member, arriving at their host mother's to have something to eat or rest, to see the town etc. But most of the time, some are frustrated by the immigration officers because they are either held back to get visas or are charged more than necessary because Projects Abroad staff members are not allowed to meet them in the immigration room to help.

I would like to apologize to our former volunteers who got through these problems. For those who are coming, take everything easy. I hope that you will have one of your most unforgettable, best days in Togo.

Mes meilleurs voeux à vous tous pour cette année 2013

A nos futurs volontaires, Projects Abroad Togo vous invite à rejoindre le plus tôt possible notre bateau de changement.

Si vous avez un commentaire ou une suggestion à faire, vous pouvez contacter Rodrigue au +228 90021408 ou lui écrire sur [rodrigueklou@projects-abroad.org](mailto:rodrigueklou@projects-abroad.org).

Bonne lecture à tous.

**Rodrigue**

## Cador, forcément on adore

Si vous passez le seuil de la porte rouge de l'orphelinat Cador, vous vous rendrez compte que c'est un orphelinat pas comme les autres. Bien sûr vous me direz, tout orphelinat est unique. Et c'est bien vrai. Laissez-moi vous présenter Cador tel que j'ai pu le voir durant ma mission.

Lorsque vous passez cette petite porte, une tata vient vous ouvrir et vous accueille avec le sourire, souvent avec un ruban de couture autour du cou, c'est Tata Reine. Ensuite, si l'on continue on apercevra Pasteur, qui vous observera plus loin du coin de l'œil et qui, vous le verrez, veille sur les enfants telle une lionne sur ses petits. Et puis, bien évidemment vous verrez des enfants courir, jouer, rire et danser à travers leur banc de bois dans un espace malheureusement très petit. Par moment, vous y trouverez également Dorcas la responsable, mais tout le monde l'appelle Mummy. Elle est tellement adorable qu'elle prend tous les volontaires pour ses gros bébés. Sa fille Excellence a fait ses premiers pas à Cador. Justement, lorsque je suis arrivée il y a deux mois elle marchait à peine, alors que maintenant elle pourrait faire un marathon. Le temps passe si vite.



Ce qui est magique c'est de noter que ces enfants sont si différents des uns des autres. Chacun avec son caractère amène quelque chose de fort dans cette atmosphère. Dans ces murs, vous pourrez notamment trouver Daniel l'introverti, Esta la malicieuse, Myriam la boule d'énergie, Yvance le rieur, Rachel la toute douce, Wisdom l'élève appliqué, Naomi la bienveillante, Timothée le petit cerveau, Israël le curieux qui a toujours la tête dans un objet décortiqué, Gloria la plus calme, Caleb le nerveux, Michel le petit dur, Samuel le souriant, Emmanuel le gentil et enfin vous trouverez Béatrice et Gabriel la grande sœur et le grand frère qui veillent sur ces petits monstres. A Cador, ils sont très croyants, c'est certainement ce qui fait une de leur plus grande force. En effet, les enfants prient beaucoup, c'est peut-être ça qui les rend si forts. Car aux yeux d'une Européenne qui en est à sa première expérience dans un orphelinat je trouve ces enfants tellement forts, moi qui pensait venir là bas pour les aider, je me rends compte qu'ils m'apporteront bien plus que je ne pourrai le faire. A Cador, ces enfants n'ont pas beaucoup et se contentent de très peu, un rien peut les rendre heureux



et les amuser pendant des heures.

Avant Nouvel an, Pasteur priait avec les enfants pour que l'année 2013 soit leur année. Que 2013 leur apporte beaucoup de bonheur et qui sait, peut-être un nouvel endroit avec davantage de place pour qu'ils puissent courir encore plus loin. C'est tout ce

que je leur souhaite car ces enfants sont si merveilleux qu'on voudrait juste décrocher la lune pour eux.

Donc s'il vous passait l'envie d'aller les visiter, dites leur à quel point il sera difficile pour moi de les quitter, tant je m'y suis attachée à ces petits monstres.

Balli Mélanie

Anne Greve  
Denmark



It is exciting to see the first reaction, when a child notices you. One reaction, which I luckily often meet, is that they run to you and give you a huge hug. This is very surprising the first time it happens, but it still feels amazing to get such a welcome. Immediately you know that it is going to be great to get to work every day. There are also the more unfortunate situations; where they just start crying when they see you. This has also happened to me. Imagine seeing a white face for the first time. Just to see a stranger in your crèche is terrifying for a lot of children, but then a white one!

I'm working in "Crèche Sikavi" in Lomé with the youngest children, babies to 3 years old. Most of the kids are quick to accept you, and it became obvious to me already after just one week how they can be taught so much. Their eyes are wide open and they observe every small detail you do. It is a bit frightening when you suddenly notice some of your own silly actions being repeated by all the children. It is always rewarding working with children. Here, it is especially rewarding because they are so interested in you and your suggestions. The normal education of the kids is very strict and it is an amazing opportunity to be a part of such a place. Luckily it is also possible to make your own way of handling things, and maybe even suggest new ways to the others. You have to set some clear rules around the kids, because that is what they are used to, but despite that, I can be the one who is active with the kids and play and have fun. That doesn't mean that I don't change a lot of napkins every day and help cleaning etc., but it is still the smiles on the children's faces which is printed in my brain. Just to see how some new crayons can create some creativity and joy makes you want to try as hard as you can to invent games and activities for them.

The language barriers can be a bit difficult. It is not always easy to understand the French, but working in a crèche with the youngest children makes it a bit more complicated. The small children are just learning French, but mostly speak the local language "Ewe". I really do appreciate the adults' way of trying to teach them French via singing and playing. It is, though, a bit annoying when the same French lines are

repeated in your brain every day: "Papillon volez volez volez. Papillon volez volez bien."

The kids have a funny way of handling the conflicts. They have probably learnt everything from the adults, which makes it so difficult to try to change it. They argue about the toys all day long and their only way of handling the conflicts is to hit each other. It happens a lot, both between the children and unfortunately it is also the adults who hit the small children.

The general hygiene and the way of handling the food, the change of napkins etc., is a lot different from what I know in Denmark. It is interesting to see, but when I get off from work, I really need a shower. What is waiting for me in my Togolese home is a cold bucket shower. But it really doesn't matter. After a warm day at work, it feels fantastic pouring cold water over yourself and getting rid of all the sweat, dust and slobber.

A nice thing about this kind of trip is that you become a part of a family and have your normal weekdays at work, but furthermore it is also amazing to have some spare time in the weekends where it is possible to travel and experience the nature, the culture etc., or maybe just go to the beach along with your Togolese mama and sit under the palms and relax.

The climate is, to put it mildly, different to Denmark. When I am here in Togo and I am sweating when I just climb stairs or take a walk, it is inconceivable to talk to the family in Denmark who are right now living in 10 minus degrees and snow. It is like living in a completely different world. Mostly it is a positive thing. You are able to relax completely, and enjoy exactly what you are doing. Living your Togolese life! I have only been in Togo for three weeks and I'm staying for three months. I can't imagine how much I can experience in this period and I'm really looking forward to all of it.





## CEG Attikpa

Sofie Hoeeg Hansen Teaching project  
Denmark



"Good morning class." "Good morning teacher!" "how are you?" "We are fine thank you, and you?" "I'm fine thank you. Sit down." "Thank you teacher." It is like you have been travelling in time, but this is just the beginning of a normal school day in Togo 2013. It is strange to enter a classroom and 70 students stand up just for you. I have never experienced that before I came to Togo. In Denmark the students barely notice when the teacher enters the classroom, even though the maximum number of students is 30.

When I started working at the secondary school C.E.G. Attikpa the first thing I noticed was the teachers' status. For example, the teachers can demand a student to buy some food for them if they don't want to do it themselves, the students often clean the blackboard for the teachers and when a teacher walks from one classroom to another some students even carry their bag. A student would never do that in Denmark, not even if they really wanted to fawn on the teacher. These examples show that the students respect the teachers a lot. Therefore I thought it meant the students would be quiet during the lessons, but I was wrong. I was very surprised, when I found out how much the students were talking. 30 students can be really noisy, but then try to imagine 70 students. I was glad that I wasn't alone.

In the beginning I was watching the teacher. It didn't take a long time to recognize a certain structure of the lessons. They were very similar and not exactly inspiring. I had a lot of



ideas on how to make it more interesting and varied. After a few days of teaching, I realized that it

wasn't that easy. First of all I had to struggle with something I hadn't even thought would be a problem. My first problem was that the students didn't understand my accent very well. Again I was glad that I wasn't alone. Then the teacher could translate some of it. It was also a problem the other way around. Sometimes I nearly couldn't understand what the students were saying. They speak African English. All the noise from the students or the classrooms next door didn't really make it easier! The next challenge was writing on the blackboard. The chalk broke, it made a very unpleasant sound when I was writing and finally I was so bad at writing in a straight line that the students laughed at me. I don't blame them, because it was really funny. Now I really admire the teachers, who are good at writing on the blackboard, and even more the teachers who teach geography and draw perfect maps on the blackboard. I don't know how that is even possible. Fortunately, I'm already much better at writing on the blackboard.

The first thing I did differently, from what they usually do, was reading. They were going to read a dialogue, so I wanted them to read in pairs. I didn't think that would be difficult to understand, but it obviously was. I had to explain it a lot of times and when they finally understood, I had to help the students to choose their roles. The boys didn't want to be the girl and the girls didn't want to be the "grandfather." You really have to be patient, but luckily it repays. It is such a great feeling, when the students understand something you spent a lot of time explaining. The reading in pairs actually worked out very well, in the first class! Two classes are nothing like each other, but that is just a part of the challenge. No one told me it was going to be easy, and it definitely isn't. I actually like it, because then it is nicer when you succeed. I hope to experience that much more during the next months. I am glad that it is going to be a while before I, for the last time, walk out the classroom saying: "goodbye class" and all the students answer in chorus "goodbye teacher!"

## Noel au Togo

Sophie (Ablavi) Greiner

Noël au Togo... comment le décrire ? Déjà en choisissant mes dates de séjours au Togo, j'ai fait exprès de rester durant Noël et Nouvel an ; ça m'intéressait tellement de voir comment ça se passe !

Et c'était vraiment intéressant. Déjà, j'ai appris que le Noël qui se passe en famille, ne se déroule que le 25 décembre. Mais le 24 il n'y a pas grand-chose.

Mais un des orphelinats (Mercy Children's Home) a fait une grande fête et 2 autres orphelinats étaient aussi invités (Cador et Djidjopé). Vers 17h j'ai pris deux taxis avec les enfants de l'orphelinat et nous sommes partis. Et là, c'était un évènement juste inoubliable. Les enfants ont mis leurs plus beaux vêtements, on a joué du djembé, il y avait de la musique, tout le monde dansait, il y avait à boire et à manger... Un Noël tellement différent mais certainement un de mes plus beaux Noëls ! C'était juste impressionnant comme les enfants ici peuvent être heureux alors qu'ils ont tellement peu.

Donc ça, c'était le 24. Et le 25 s'est passé en famille. Le matin, nous sommes partis chez un parent de ma famille d'accueil. Ma colocataire Melanie et moi étions vraiment surprises ! Nous nous attendions à un repas tranquille en famille, mais ce n'était pas du tout ça ! Environ 40 enfants étaient là, avec leurs parents et des amis ! Tout le monde a commencé à manger (il y avait tellement de bonnes choses !!) et à boire, les enfants ont fait des sketches, et tout le monde - les grands et les petits - dansait ! Tout ça a duré très longtemps et comme Melanie et moi étions très fatiguées, Papa nous a ramené à la maison en voiture.

Je peux vraiment dire que c'était un Noël très différent des Noëls en Europe, mais tout aussi bien et pleins d'émotions !

## **Mots de fin**

Nous tenons à remercier infiniment tous les volontaires qui viennent soutenir le Togo à travers leurs différentes actions dans leurs lieux de travail respectifs.

Sachez que votre présence est toujours pour nos placements une occasion d'échange mutuel enrichissant.

Nous voulons également dire merci à tous les volontaires qui ont envoyé leurs articles et photos pour le bulletin de ce mois de Février.

Bien de choses à nos lecteurs pour leur soutien moral. Nous n'oublions pas les bonnes volontés qui de près ou de loin ont apporté leur soutien à la réussite du bulletin de ce mois.