Banda in Ghana

SBIG's Inaugural Mission to Ghana

by Jessica Fiddes

Abdel Banda '04 was born in Ghana and immigrated to America when he was 10 years old. In 2008 he returned to his birthplace and brought the 21st Century with him through Students Bridging the Information Gap, (SBIG), a non-profit that provides computer labs and libraries to under-funded Ghanaian schools and orphanages.

Abbot Giles Hayes, OSB connected Banda with ***Tom Killian P'10, '13*** a senior partner at Sandler O'Neill & Partners, and his son ***Thomas Killian '10,*** who wanted to help orphanages in Ghana. Tom's brother, ***Richard Killian,*** works in Ghana for Quality Health Partners and told them of the needs. Killian and Banda soon realized they had another connection— Banda had summer interned at Sandler O'Neill and subsequently received a full time position there.

Banda and the Killians set out to assemble a team to meet the needs set before them. Banda invited ***Maurice Crum,*** his former Notre Dame football teammate, to lend his support, and enlisted the help of his father in Ghana, ***Bismark Diawo,*** to provide on-site assistance with Richard Killian. Killian identified the needs at the orphanage and managed all the lab construction and equipment purchases in Ghana. Tom Killian '10 teamed up with classmate ***Brendan Barry '10*** to organize a book drive at Delbarton. They also constructed the charity's web site -

The port of Accra, Ghana.



Photos by Tom Hanley '10



Elmina Castle — from 1600 to 1800 one of the largest slave trade embarkation sites.



Brothers Tom and Rick Killian. Together they complete SBIG's American /Ghanaian connection.



A young speaker talks about the importance of SBIG's contributions.

sbigonline.org. Brendan's father, ***George Barry P'10,*** recruited Hess Corporation as a corporate donor while Delbarton Juniors ***Micky Moran '10*** and ***Tom Hanley '10*** got involved and Micky's dad ***Mike Moran P'10*** helped source equipment and provide technical advice. ***Tripp Smith P'11*** spearheaded a fundraising event with Notre Dame alumni, while fundraising with Delbarton families took place in Summit, New Jersey. More help from ***Jim Hislop P'11*** who sourced software from Microsoft and ***Jack Olivo P'13*** who provided legal advice.

This collaborative effort culminated in the group of Abdel Banda, Maurice Crum, Tom and Thomas Killian, Brendan and George Barry, Mike and Micky Moran and Tom Hanley traveling to Accra, Ghana in June, 2008 for SBIG's inaugural project. There they opened a computer lab and library at the Baptist School Complex and Orphanage (BASCO), where 105 of the 292 students are orphans who live on the campus.

Thanks to donations of cash and equipment, in a single week the group established one of the largest primary school computer labs in Ghana. Knowing that a lab



Notre Dame football captain Maurice Crum helps one boy take a new computer for a test drive.



Three young BASCO students sporting SBIG T-shirts.



The sign that welcomes guests to BASCO.



The new BASCO library will soon be open for business.

The team left behind an air-conditioned computer lab with 14 computers, 2 printers and an LCD projector, as well as a 2,000-volume library.



Abdel Banda, second from left, and Maurice Crum, on right, meet some Accra locals on the beach.



Delbarton students *Brendan Barry '20,* on left, and *Micky Moran '10* bond with young students at BASCO.



SBIG group member display kente cloth at the dedication ceremony. According to Wikipedia,"Kente cloth is a royal and sacred cloth worn only in times of extreme importance. Kente was the cloth of kings. Over time, the use of kente became more widespread, however its importance has remained and it is held in high esteem."

with no instruction or electricity was useless, SBIG also paid to hire a skilled computer teacher, found donors to buy a new diesel generator, and convinced the Ghanaian government to extend the power grid 3 kilometers to provide electricity to BASCO. When completed, 7 communities and 5,000 people will have access to electricity. The team left behind an air-conditioned computer lab with 14 computers, 2 printers and an LCD projector, as well as a 2,000-volume library. The dedication ceremony included government and local leaders and was covered by three local TV stations, a sign of the event's significance to the area. This summer the group will return to Ghana to provide the same service to another orphanage in need.

To learn more about SBIG go to www.sbigonline.org.



Good friends Maurice Crum and Abdel Banda discover that their soccer skills are a bit rusty or, perhaps, non-existent. "Didn't they say this sport was called 'football?'"