



Review of the Year 2022

Dear members, friends, partners and sponsors of the association "School Forests of West Africa",

We would like to thank you very much for your support and trust in 2022! Thanks to your help, we were able to continue our work towards a holistic, sustainable environmental education.

We are very pleased that the German-Ghanaian school partnerships could be deepened and that their special commitment was recognised accordingly. Several of our partner schools joined the **network "Lower Saxony Schools WITH Africa"** founded in 2021. The first one to join was the primary school Am Sonnenbrink in Stadthagen in February 2022, followed by the Otto-Hahn-Schule in Wunstorf and the Wilhelm-Busch-Gymnasium in Stadthagen. This network, unique in Germany, was created by schools for schools to promote successful school partnerships with African countries. On 6 July 2022, the three schools were awarded the network plaque at the IdeenExpo in Hanover. On that day, Minister of Education Tonne also honoured **the student company "Pupils GMBH - Helping Ghana with Trees"** - from the Schule am Habbrügger Weg in Ganderkesee as a sustainable student company. For their stand at the IdeenExpo, they made a large tree out of plywood boards on which they presented, among other things, their already long-standing cooperation with the association "School Forests for West Africa" as well as the connection to their partner school in Bisease (Ghana).

This year, we can welcome the Hildegard-von-Bingen Gymnasium in Twistringen and the Albrecht-Dürer-Schule (cooperative comprehensive school) in Weiterstadt as **new partner schools**. In search of an African partner school, the Hildegard-von-Bingen Gymnasium approached our association in February 2022. Dr. Essiamah and Mr. Bondzie (project leader of the partner association in Ghana, the Youth and Environment Club) arranged for the Breman Asikuma Senior High School to become a partner school. In the meantime, the high school also joined the network "Lower Saxony Schools WITH Africa". In March 2022, we received an enquiry from the geography department of the Albrecht Dürer School in Hesse about a possible cooperation. After an online meeting, Dr. Essiamah and Mr. Bondzie were able to partner the German school with the Mozano Senior High School.

We were able to increase the **visibility of the association** through various lectures and conference participations and thus made further interesting contacts, e.g. with a student from Ghana who immediately organised a tree planting campaign on the campus in Accra. Another student (from Regent University College of Science and Technology) from Ghana would like to cooperate with his student environmental organisation and our association. He would like to exchange ideas on issues of environmental pollution, illegal mining and related deforestation, especially of the Atewa forest in the Eastern Region of Ghana, and water pollution.

In September, the primary school Am Sonnenbrink and the Wilhelm-Busch-Gymnasium as well as the Otto-Hahn-Schule presented the association "School Forests for West Africa" at their information stands during the award ceremony for the environmental schools in Hanover.

We participated in the **Climate Protection Days in Göttingen** again this year in June with a stand at the Climate Market. Not only did we make new contacts, but we also received generous donations.

Furthermore, Dr Essiamah took the opportunity to make new contacts at the award ceremony of the **German Commitment Prize** on 1 December in Berlin. After Dr. Essiamah won the Volunteer Award in the category "Exceptional Commitment" last year, he was nominated for the German Commitment Award in the category "Preserving Life" this year. In the end, he was not among the award winners, but was recognised for his association work by Ms Kux, Director of the German Commitment Prize.

In June, Dr. Essiamah flew to Ghana for three months to, among other things, visit the partner schools. To our great joy, SHIFT GmbH, which produces the first German fair produced smartphone, donated three SHIFT Second Life devices to us at that time. We thank them very much for this! Now, students from the partner schools in Ghana and Germany can also exchange information about their everyday life with photos taken with a **SHIFTPHONE**.

During his stay in Ghana, Dr. Essiamah and Mr. Klaus from the ECOLOG Institute in Lüneburg were able to inform themselves about the progress of the construction measures for the **environmental education centre in Nyakrom** and to significantly advance the construction. The environmental education centre is intended to be a place of knowledge transfer. Students, teachers and scientists will exchange interdisciplinary ideas on sustainable agriculture and rural development and openly communicate their results. The focus will be on environmentally friendly cultivation methods, the transfer of centuries-old knowledge about medicinal herbs and efforts to preserve native tree species. A shell of the caretaker's flat on the grounds of the environmental education centre has already been built thanks to numerous donations (www.betterplace.org/p100915). In the second phase of construction, the water pipe will be laid, the solar power supply will be installed, a solar-powered well will be built and the grounds will be fenced off, the latter both largely financed by the **Lower Saxony Bingo Environmental Foundation**. We thank them for their generous support!

As Nyakrom Senior High School was in urgent need of water and the water pipes were no longer functional, the headmaster turned to Dr. Essiamah. The students had to get up early so that they could fill their buckets with the necessary water for the school day at an old hand-operated water source before classes. In this situation, the **Otto Hahn School** in Wunstorf, as a partner school, was able to help with a donation from the school festival that took place before the summer holidays. With the money, the partner school in Nyakrom was able to finance a borehole for the well. Many thanks for this helpful donation!

In November, Dr Essiamah received a commitment from **STIHL** to support his new project with four brush cutters and the corresponding service. With his project, he wants to bring older cocoa farmers together with young people who will use the brush cutters to make their work on the cocoa plantations easier. The aim is to avoid the use of dangerous pesticides and herbicides and to increase the quality of the soil and the tree fruits. We are very happy about this support!

After online discussions in April, we decided to support the Wilhelm-Busch-Gymnasium in participating in the new exchange programme "**Tandem - Take each other's perspectives**" together with the Spießingshol District Forestry Office of the Schaumburg District. From December 2022 to February 2023, a young woman from Germany and a young man from Ghana will work with students on a variety of environmental education projects, explore different perspectives on the history of colonialism and engage with our post-colonial present. The Tandem Programme is run by the international cultural voluntary service "kulturweit", which is part of the German UNESCO Commission and is funded by the Federal Foreign Office to bring people from African countries and Germany together for international project work.

On 13 December 2022, Dr. Essiamah visited the **Wilhelm-Busch-Gymnasium** for the first time since the pandemic. He informed the pupils about his North-South project "Planting trees in schoolyards" in Ghana. He also got to know the Tandem participants personally. The pupils of the environmental group of the Wilhelm-Busch-Gymnasium collected donations for our association during the course of the year - we thank them very much!

On 21 December 2022, a workshop on the topic of "**Africa Today**" took place at the Otto Hahn School in Wunstorf with students from grades 7-10. This free event was offered by "Together for Africa" for secondary school students. The main topics were Africa today, sustainability, innovations and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsor, **ERPA Systeme GmbH** (Göttingen). Without their long-standing support, especially for their partner school, Agona Asafo Rom. Cath. Basic School, we would not have been able to realise many projects. At the end of November 2022, ERPA enabled the purchase of recreational as well as television equipment, thus contributing to the further development of the school as a model school in the area.

It was with great regret that we had to say goodbye to the long-time supporter of our association and the Agona Abodom Anglican Basic School in Ghana, Dr Jörg Rengel, in November. The "Jörg Rengel Forest" at the Ghanaian partner school will always be a reminder of his great commitment.

Looking back, 2022 was an eventful year with ups and downs. But the positive things outweigh the negative and the knowledge of having a strong team of supporters and partners behind us makes us optimistic for the future. We are confident that the environmental education centre in Nyakrom will continue to take shape next year and that we will be able to further intensify the partnerships between Ghana and Germany. In a joint project we are working on an environmental education colouring book that will be printed in German, English and Twi. We have already initiated further cooperations in Germany, e.g. with the foundation "Forests for Tomorrow", which carries out school forest projects in German schools, and we hope to be able to fill these with life next year.

We are looking forward to 2023 with vigour and energy. We hope that this also applies to you and wish you a happy new year! May all your wishes come true and may you achieve your goals!

Your School Forests-Team