

Dutch NGO Rising Stars is actively supporting a care farm in Ghana

Officially started in 2007, Rising Stars Nuenen is supporting the Ghanaian NGO Kings and Queens in Offinso, Ashanti region. As partners they develop and build up step by step a CAREFARM for 12-20 children and young adults with an intellectual or multiple disability. A self supporting care farm can offer these children the necessary safety and opportunity to have a good and meaningful life in a new neighbourhood.

Jaap and Henny Matser, the founders of Rising Stars, worked these last months for the 10th time as volunteers and advisors on the care farm. They feel that Ghana, and especially the care farm, have become their second home.

With the small, ANBI- and CBF-certified NGO Rising Stars they would like to expand their supporting network in order to fully complete this small, exemplary project within some years from now.

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What were the first impressions this year?

'We were happy to see growth and progress again on the care farm, but we also encountered challenges.

At the moment the number of children and young adults in the care farm has been extended to 12. Some children need intensive care and support. Most of the children grow physically every year and become stronger, but some children stay a bit behind. Two boys are assisting the farmers every morning in the piggery. They like this 'job' very much and are proud to perform their work.

With financial help of the Dutch organisation Wild Geese ("Wilde Ganzen") we completed a building with 5 rooms this year, for the caretakers and volunteers.

Rising Stars also supports 5 children and young adults who can live at home or and go to a normal school with support of their parents. Some of them are multiple disabled, and there is not a lot of understanding and natural support in their neighbourhoods!

The farm is growing every year. We call it: mixed farming because we have: vegetables, citrus fruits, maize and beans, a piggery and one barn with 150 Dutch chickens for the children and as try-out for the future chicken farm. The third barn for 160 pigs was just completed when we arrived at the end of March 2016. The total capacity is now 400 pigs. At the end of this year we hope to complete the fourth and last barn for another 160 pigs.

In 2015, with help from a Dutch foundation we could buy another 8.000 m² land for the farm. The total compound is now almost 9 acres (= 36.000 m²). But in 2015 the climate changed unexpectedly and we lost two harvests of maize, which caused challenges on the care farm. Therefore Rising Stars has now the urgent request for help also this year with the financing of a second borehole with electric pump, to be used especially for the farm and the land.

Another challenge is the yearly inflation of the Ghanaian Cedi with more than 15%. A big problem is also the supply of electricity in Ghana, the ongoing ration and the higher monthly cost.

Thus, as a partner NGO Rising Stars has to support more to realize the goal of becoming a self sustaining farm in the coming years.

What is the meaning challenges?

'Well, after supporting quite a number of years we do notice and experience big differences between the actual level of support of disabled children in Ghana and in the Netherlands. In Ghana, disabled children have a very hard life at home, in school and in society. Sometimes even with hardly any chance to survive.

We are happy with the care farm as a safe and challenging haven for those children. In our eyes they get good, basic care in the Ghanaian situation. But it is not easy to realize a more professional, individual and developmental support. There is no governmental support in Ghana for these children, nor professional education. In the survival oriented culture of Ghana is not much space for needy, disabled people. We have to accept these challenges as Dutch NGOs and learn how to cope with this situation. But: we can also work together to create more opportunities and a growing quality of care', step by step.

Plans for this year and what about the fundraising?

'This year we will continue with enthusiasm with the development of the income generating farm: we will build the fourth and last barn for 160 pigs and financing of the second borehole with an electric pump. In this context we are looking for new, co-financing donators and funds.

Next year we will start to build a chicken farm with capacity for 6.000 Dutch birds/layers.

A big wish of NGO Kings and Queens is their own pick-up truck for all the transport of the children and for the farm. In the future they would also like also to cut the high cost of electricity by realizing to operate on solar energy. The reason is: the sun is shining every day without any challenge!'

For further information and support you can contact us through: www.rising-stars.nl and e-mail info@rising-stars.nl or T: +31 (0)40-2833811.

Nuenen, 23 juni, Jaap en Henny Matser info@rising-stars.nl

