



**TAMALE CHILDREN'S HOME
TAMALE, NORTHERN REGION
GHANA**

While Ghana is one of the more successful of the African nations, the northern part of the country still has a poverty level above 80%, with all the associated health problems poverty brings with it. Tamale Children's Home is located in the Northern Region of Ghana.

After about nine hours on the road from Accra (the capital) and a brief stop in Kumasi, you will arrive in Tamale, capital of the Northern Region to make a difference in the lives of the orphans at the Tamale Children's Home.

There are about 30 children from one week old living in the Tamale orphanage and two permanent Ghanaian employees.

The Tamale Children's Home is really a long way from being called a Children's Home. You are bound to have sleepless nights just thinking about its numerous problems. This is an orphanage established in 1969, by the Department of Social Welfare to cater to abandoned children and orphans, but, unlike other orphanages set up in the big cities (e.g. OSU, S.O.S. in Accra and Tema) which more frequently enjoy philanthropic services, the Tamale children's home is rarely heard of and does not enjoy such support. Perhaps because the Tamale community is predominantly poor, and has a disadvantageous location (13hrs drive from Accra) there is a lack of media interest; as such the home which serves the entire Northern region and a significant part of the Brong Ahafo region, has remained largely anonymous since its establishment. Can you picture a foster home with no donor support? Apart from one Catholic Rev. Father by the name of Martin who lends a hand from time to time, the children remain abandoned even in the foster home.

Volunteers and donations are needed to make a difference in the lives of the children. Normally volunteers work during the morning or the afternoon. The work responsibilities of volunteers include picking the children up from bed, feeding, bathing and dressing. Volunteers also help the staff with cleaning, entertaining and taking the sick children to the hospital.

TAMALE

Tamale is the capital city of the Northern region of Ghana mostly inhabited by the Mole-Dagomba linguistic group. The city is home to about 350,000 people. It is a nodal city that serves as convergence zone as well as the commercial capital of the three northern regions.

It is one city in Ghana where one can find an architectural blend of traditional slum and modern buildings with a hospitable people with a great respect for their traditional political system. The settlers brought this political system over four hundred years ago when they first crystallized in the mid land of the north. In Tamale, one can be treated to both local and exotic cuisines in any of its 2 or 3 star hotels like Gariba Lodge, Mariam Hotel etc. The city happens to be the cereal, Yam and Meat breadbasket of the country so these sell cheaply in the local markets.



Tamale is reputed to be one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa. Even though limited in natural resources, seasonal farming is the major occupation of the natives who receive strangers with open arms. With its mostly flat terrain, one secures a good look of the city on any three or four-storey building. In the heart of the city are the traditional palaces of the Gulkpe Naa and the Dapkema where one can catch a glimpse of pure traditional architecture. All the intra city roads in Tamale are tarred with the central dual-lane double road lit in the night.

Being close to the Sahara Desert (in comparison with other major cities in Ghana), one has the opportunity to enjoy a true tropical sunbath in Tamale. The hamattan season presents two extreme weather conditions each day. There is the extreme cold temperature of the early dawns and morning and the very warm afternoon. There is a suburb called Education Ridge in the northwestern part of the city covering an area of about 3km sq where one can find over 20 schools crammed together ranging from Kindergartens through junior secondary and senior secondary schools, teachers training colleges, a polytechnic to the Central administration of the only university in the northern part of Ghana. Tamale secondary school and Bagabaga Training colleges that have produced the current Vice president (Alhaji Aliu Mahama) and a past head of state (Dr. Hilla Limann) respectively are located within this area. The numerous trees especially Mahogany lining up the streets in this part of the city gives it a tropical rainforest outlook.

There are also a considerable number of international Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CARE International, ActionAid, World Vision etc. having their offices in Tamale but mostly work in the rural areas of the north. Communication with the outside world is as good as that in Accra, the capital city of Ghana.

We cannot deny that Philip Briggs, the author of the Bradt travel guide, was right when he wrote that "the main route focus in northern Ghana, not to say the largest urban conglomeration, Tamale is hot, flat and quite incredibly dusty: first impressions arriving in the harsh light of day are less than flattering, unless perhaps you're a homesick construction worker, though the sunset, filtered through a misty suspension of fine red dust, can fleetingly make it look like one of the most beautiful construction sites in the world!" Especially during the Harmattan season, dominated by a hard wind for 2 months, the dust might sometimes be hard to stand. But the most important feature of Tamale is not the dust, which is even less in the city center as a result of a substantial number of new roads where recently even streetlights are added to. The most important feature is fortunately also described in the Bradt travel guide, which is the pleasant provincial atmosphere, so inherent to the whole northern part of Ghana (Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions).

Since most city quarters are resembling to small villages (with scattered food stalls and small shops) and the city does not know any buildings with more than three floors, most people do not realize that Tamale houses more than 300,000 people. Especially when the swimming pools are open and contain water, one could even think of Tamale as heaven on earth

