

Newsletter

of the Embassy of Switzerland to Ghana, Togo and Benin

December 2012

English edition for Ghana

Editorial

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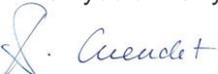
Dear readers, dear fellow Swiss citizens,

Wherever you go, ask someone in the street what characterizes Switzerland: it is very likely that chocolate will be among what people associate with our country. Ghana is the most important supplier of cocoa for Swiss chocolate makers. A coincidence? Not really. Switzerland's relations with Ghana date back to 1828 when the Basel Mission sent missionaries to the Gold Coast for evangelical work. The missionaries promoted large scale planting of cocoa and were instrumental in developing cocoa as an export commodity for Ghana. In 1859 the missionaries founded the Union Trading Company (UTC) which established very substantial trade relations between Switzerland and Ghana. Today, Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa in the world.

My name is Brigitte Cuendet, I am 45 years old and am the lucky person in the Embassy to pursue the above agenda, both in the area of trade and business development as well as in economic development cooperation. I am heading the Economic Section of the Swiss Embassy to Ghana, Togo and Benin. I am supported by a team comprising a macro-economist and specialist for the financial sector, an officer for trade and private sector development, an infrastructure officer and an assistant programme and communications person. My section has two main tasks. Firstly, it is our task to ease and promote the commercial relations between Switzerland and our host countries. We entertain close ties with the Swiss-Ghanaian Chamber of Commerce as the two institutions offer complementary services to our business community. Secondly, the section monitors on behalf of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the economic development cooperation programme.

The Economic Section supports SECO to fulfill its mandate to help Ghana integrating the global economy as a means to reduce poverty. We plan to commit roughly 90-100 million CHF for Ghana in the coming four years.

I wish you a Merry Christmas time!



Brigitte Cuendet, Head Economic Section



Brigitte Cuendet
Head of Economic Section

Please send information, contributions, and ideas for the following issues of the newsletter to acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch.

Election Clock: Elections in Ghana, Togo and Benin

The coming months will be busy for three West African countries:

In Ghana, the general election will take place on 7th December, 2012. The neck-to-neck run will be decided between two candidates, President John Dramani Mahama (National Democratic Congress) and Nana Akufo-Addo (National Patriotic Party), although other candidates will be running for the presidential seat. The result of the election is expected to be tight.

In Togo, the elections are coming closer. Initially announced for October 2012, the Parliamentary election has been shifted to spring-time 2013. The delay is due to the lacking consensus between the ruling party and the opposition on the electoral code.

Finally, in Benin, the municipal elections are planned for the first half of 2013.

The Swiss Embassy is committed to supporting relevant activities in the development and governance sector, to enhance the political and economic stability before, during and after the elections in the three countries.

Ghana – Crisis Readiness

Elections are just around the corner. Although they are expected to be peaceful, a crisis can emerge quickly, as recent examples in the region have shown.

It is one of the Embassy's prime tasks to be prepared for a crisis situation, and to be able to assist Swiss citizens. Over the last couple of month, the Embassy has been able to gradually update its crisis management equipment. As a gentle reminder, we send you once more – together with this newsletter - a leaflet on precautionary measures and behavior in crisis situations. If you haven't done so yet, please print the leaflet, read it carefully and keep it with your important documents.

As already laid out to you in the last newsletter, the Embassy has a network of contact persons ready to be activated in the event of a crisis. Please note the contact information of the person designated to keep contact with the Swiss citizens living in your area (slightly changed since the last edition):



Osu, La, Labone, Cantonments: Yasser ASCHKAR
0244 356 989

Tema, Teshie, Teshie-Nungua Estate, Teshie-Nungua, Nungua Sakumono, Prampram, Spintex Road: David KESSLER
0244 319 591

Eastern Region: Markus WICKI
0244 793 339
00882 162 115 4078*

Ashanti Region: Katharina NIKLAUS-SIPPAH
0244 213 016
00882 165 060 4548*

All other regions and areas: Embassy Emergency Line
0244 327 616
00870 772 218 041*
00870 772 504 442*

*Satellite Numbers:
(only active in time of crisis)

As long as this network of contact persons is not activated by the Embassy, it is the Embassy that serves as a point of contact in case of emergency (Embassy Phone: +233 30 222 81 25; Embassy Emergency Line/Duty Officer: +233 244 327 616).

Please also consider the travel advice of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (link below).

www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/rebs/afri/vgha/rhgha.html

and the new registration platform **itineris** for Swiss citizens travelling abroad (link on the same website).

New Series: Swiss Expat Portraits

Daniela Rüdüsüli Sodjah

Daniela Rüdüsüli Sodjah comes from Gommiswald in the Canton of St. Gallen. After completing school in Wattwil, she worked in facilities for disabled persons. Later she was trained as primary school teacher. In 1997 she came to Ghana and worked as an intern at the Swiss School in Accra. From 1997 to 1998 she worked also in northern Ghana for the Red Cross and in refugee camp in Takoradi. She then had to return to Switzerland for health reasons. After her recovery, she worked at Auzelg School in Zurich until August 1999 and started studying at the "College for Theology", in Lucerne. However, her earlier experiences and her call to work with the children on the streets persuaded her to return to Ghana. In October 1999, she founded the organization *Chance for Children*, together with Amon Kotey. Since then she has been engaging with the kids on the street.

Chance for Children gives the street children in Accra the opportunity to control their lives through experiencing love and safety, and by receiving an education and professional training. Today, *Chance for Children* takes care of 125 children and employs 35 workers. Over the years, 31 *Chance for Children* youths have completed their education and now live independent and self-reliant lives.

The international non-profit organisation *Chance for Children* has is registered in Switzerland and its field work is based in Accra. *Chance for Children* is financed by 2000 private donors, church congregations, associations, schools and companies.

Daniela Rüdüsüli Sodjah and her team welcome you to visit their centres and to get involved with the kids on the street. More details about *Chance for Children* can be found on the website:

www.chance-for-children.org



Daniela Rüdüsüli Sodjah, founder of *Chance for Children*



Peter age 5: "I dont know anyone here. It is a big place!"

Kwesi age 7:" My home is on the market table."

Charity age 13: "I am free on the streets. I look after myself and my family."

Embassy staff excursion to the Port of Tema

On November 7th, 2012, the Embassy closed its doors for one day and went on its yearly staff excursion - this time to the port of Tema. The whole team was allowed on board a container ship of MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company, based in Geneva) and shown around the commando bridge as well as the engine room. The tour was followed by a delicious cocktail which was offered by the ship's crew. Apart from being amazed by the specifics of such a ship (size, load, routines etc.), everybody really enjoyed to interact with the crew and even with the captain. A big "thank you" to the Managing Director of MSC Ghana Ltd. and to the Country Manager of the Swiss company Panalpina Ghana Ltd who made this exciting visit possible.

To round up the excursion, the team had a late lunch at a beach restaurant on the way back to Accra.



Swiss Embassy Staff enjoyed the visit at MSC Ghana Ltd, at the Port in Tema

My first step in Africa - A report by Oliver Cuzin

While pursuing my master degree in Switzerland at the University of St. Gallen, I developed a keen interest for development and trade economics. Seeking for a professional experience in Africa, I had the chance to join the Swiss Embassy in Accra for a two-month internship from July to September 2012. This experience has been particularly enriching both personally and professionally. Everyone at the Embassy has been extremely welcoming and facilitated my integration. While sharing a house with other European interns, I experienced the unique Ghanaian food and singular local cultures. My diverse travels through the country and bordering neighbour Togo led me to discover a more rural and tradition-oriented side of Western Africa. In particular, I remember the following story:

During the month of August, I participated in a field trip to Tamale, a medium-sized town located in the Northern region of Ghana, to follow an annual meeting on the country's electrical infrastructure. As the conference ended, we decided to take a tour around the city, apparently famous for its handcraft and leather products. In our search for the tannery district, we entered a very modest neighbourhood belonging to the "Zongo" community, an ethnic group descending from immigrants of diverse African countries. Streets were narrow, goats and chickens were running with agility between trash, drying animal skins and unpredictable waves of motorcycles; we were almost there. Above us the cloudy grey sky was on the edge of draining the red earth and refreshing the heated atmosphere with some highly desired rainfalls. To avoid the drops, a man invited us to sit with him under his rooftop made of wood and shabby metal pieces. His name was Slim, he was a tanner. His hands were handling leather with the precision of Swiss watchmaker, surrounded by piles of skins, shoes, belts, nails, tools and other indefinable things. We stayed there on ram shackled plastic chairs more than one hour, listening to his captivating stories. We discovered Slim was actually the chief of the community. Despite his very modest lifestyle, he offered us tea and bread and taught us about people's lives in the slum or his role as a leading figure. While enjoying the tea, a woman and her injured child came to us; Slim, as a careful and devoted chief, took all his time and expertise to murmur some customary prayers and provided her with a bottle filled with traditionally made medicine. At this instant, I felt more than a million miles away from home and I will always remember this moment as the day I drank tea with a Zongo chief somewhere in Northern Ghana.



Oliver Cuzin, Intern at SECO

Benin – Switzerland and Benin sign three agreements in health, rural development and local governance

On 12 November 2012, Switzerland and Benin signed three agreements in the framework of the cooperation strategy 2012-2016, in the areas of health, decentralisation, local governance and rural development.

At the signing ceremony Benin was represented by Foreign Minister Nassirou Arifari Bako, Switzerland by Ambassador Andrea Semadeni and the Director of Swiss Cooperation (SDC), Jean-Luc Virchaux.

The signing is directly related to ongoing projects of the SDC in the above-mentioned three areas of activities and guarantees a continuation of the programme until 2016.

Benin and Switzerland look back on a 30 year old tradition of successful cooperation in development.



Ambassador Andrea Semadeni and Foreign Minister Nassirou Arifari Bako at the signing ceremony in Benin

Refurbishment of the chancery's reception area

Due to the steadily increasing volume of visa applications and the upcoming introduction of the biometric visa, the reception area at the Embassy's chancery is currently being refurbished. A second waiting area and a third counter are being built. The Embassy hopes to inaugurate its new reception area at the end of this month and is confident that the new facilities will contribute to improving its customer service. According to current planning, biometric visas will be issued as from mid March 2013.



419 scams – False Scholarship Offers

In our last newsletter, we raised awareness against internet-scams (419-scams). Over the last months, we observed an increase of attempted scams against people residing in Benin, Togo, and Ghana, Togo under the pretext of false scholarship offers. Perpetrators fake letterheads of Swiss authorities offering scholarships or assistance with visa applications. Based on these documents, targeted victims are asked to spend money for application fees, thus being defrauded.

There are many variations of 419 scams. Please be vigilant, and read the information on our website.

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep/afri/vgha/repgha/bizgh/chinv.html>

SCAMS
TARGET YOU
PROTECT YOURSELF

Swiss Events in Ghana, Togo and Benin

Togo – the Swiss Community celebrates its National Day

The Swiss Community got together on 21 September to celebrate the Swiss National Day at the Palm Beach Hotel in Lomé. The lunch was served around the pool – the venue was offered by the Honorary Consul General of Switzerland to Togo, Ms. Myrna Tabchoury. The Deputy Head of Mission, Claudia Fontana Tobiassen, addressed a welcome speech to the Swiss Community. The event was accompanied by traditional dance and music from Togo which was well received by many guests.



OSA – Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

The Organization of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) represents Swiss expatriates' interests in Switzerland. It informs Swiss living abroad about what is happening in Switzerland and provides them with a wide selection of services. The OSA is supported by some 750 Swiss expatriates' associations and Swiss institutions all over the world. It was founded in 1916 and is recognized by the authorities as the representative organ of the Fifth Switzerland. Information and advice on all types of legal, social security insurance and training matters are also provided by the OSA as well as the magazine "Swiss Review" and a wide variety of activities for young Swiss abroad.



Auslandschweizer-Organisation
Organisation des Suisses de l'étranger
Organizzazione degli Svizzeri all'estero
Organisaziun dals Svizzers a l'ester

www.aso.ch

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