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Where I Live : Denu, a town in eastern Ghana

This five lesson Topic looks at life for children growing up in the town of Denu, in eastern **Ghana**. The lessons are structured around audio recordings of Ghanaian children, and some adults, talking about aspects of daily life ranging from the physical environment to occupations, schools, language and local culture. Children's audio is supported by optional supplementary audio tracks of geographer *Prosper Asima*, originally from town Beki near Denu.

Lesson 1 : Life in Denu

Lesson 2 : Food, markets and work

Lesson 3 : Language and culture

Lesson 4 : School

Lesson 5 : History

Ghana



Ghana: Human beings have inhabited the land which is now present day Ghana from about 1500 BC. The territory includes what was once the Empire of Ashanti, one of the most influential states in sub-Saharan Africa before colonial rule. Later, modern day Ghana was the first place in sub-Saharan Africa where Europeans came to trade, first in gold, later in slaves. In 1854 Britain proclaimed the territory as a crown colony, the Gold Coast. It remained so until 1957, when Ghana became the first black African nation in the region to achieve independence. The country is now a democracy, and often seen as a model for economic and political reform in Africa. Ghana is just a few degrees north of the equator and the climate is warm and tropical with average temperatures between 24 and 30 degrees Celsius. There

are two major seasons; the rainy Season lasts from March to July; the dry season is between October to January.

The Slave Trade In 1442 a group of Portuguese explorers brought the first slaves to Portugal from the west coast of Africa; thus begun a terrible trade in human beings, which was to continue for more than four centuries. By the 18th century, England was the leading country in this trade, with special slave ships sailing from London, Bristol and Liverpool. African chiefs often captured their own people and sold them to the English. Slaves were packed into the ships, so crowded together, that many of them died on the voyage, and then taken – mainly to America - to be sold. Several slave castles and forts, where slaves were kept before being shipped overseas, can still be seen in Ghana; the most famous include Cape Coast Castle, Elmina Castle and Fort Christianborg. It was not until 1807 that a law forbidding slave trading was passed in England; in 1833 slavery was abolished in all British Colonies. The impact of this trade is far from forgotten today; in Lesson 5 Track 2, geographer Prosper Asima talks about how some Ghanaians are even calling for “reparation”, or compensation, to be paid to Ghana in recognition of all the people who were sent to the Americas to give free labour.

Denu is a medium-sized town in the country’s Volta region, situated near the coast, three miles from the border with Togo and around 116 miles east of the capital Accra; the estimated population is 117,000. The main employment in the area is fishing; there are also farmers, and some traders. The people of Denu are *Ewes*, and originally migrated to the area from what is now the town of Notsie, in central Togo. Still today the *Ewe* in eastern Ghana and the *Ewe* in Togo share a common language and heritage and there is much cross-border movement.

More than 250 languages and dialects are spoken in Ghana; *Ewe* is one of nine which have the status of government sponsored languages. However the country's official language is English, and this is used for most government and business affairs, as well as being the main medium of instruction in schools. Compared with some African countries Ghanaians have relatively easy access to primary education. In theory the six year primary system starts at age six; however, in practice many pupils start their education far later.

Ghana Fact File

- **President** John Atta Mills (elected 2008)
- **Population:** 23.8 million (UN, 2009)
- **Capital:** Accra
- **Area:** 238,533 sq km (92,098 sq miles)
- **Major languages:** English, African languages including Akan, Ewe
- **Major religions:** Christianity, indigenous beliefs, Islam
- **Life expectancy:** 56 years (men), 57 years (women) (UN)
- **Monetary unit:** Cedi
- **Main exports:** Gold, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminium, manganese ore, diamonds
- **GNI per capita:** US \$670 (World Bank, 2008)

Further Information

www.ghana.co.uk

<http://www.ghana50.gov.gh/tourism/index.php?op=getVolasiteInfo&id=2>

accessed 22/02/09

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/slave-trade.php> accessed 22/02/09

http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=7&_=122&rlv=climate accessed 24/02/09

<http://www.africaguide.com/country/ghana/culture.htm> accessed 25/02/09

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Ghana accessed 23/02/09

<http://www.ceanaonline.org/sections/ewehistory.html> accessed 23/02/09

Links

Oxfam: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/>

Cafod : <http://www.cafod.org.uk/>

ActionAid <http://www.actionaid.org.uk/>

You might like to consider using this Topic as work towards the **International School Award**. See : <http://globalgateway.org.uk/default.aspx?page=4174>

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