

Urban Planner Makes Connections at Home, Heals Homeland



AN URBAN PLANNER for Venable LLP in Virginia, Kwasi Bosompem's work centers on land use for commercial and residential development and telecommunications sites in the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore areas. But his nonprofit work touches lives a world away from our nation's capital, and it centers as much on people as on zoning issues and cell phone towers.

Having extensive urban planning experience in Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa, Bosompem M.C.P. '92 brought with him to Maryland expert practical skills. But the Ghana native says his Maryland education provided a "study in human behavior." In 2001, he combined practice with humanity and founded the Let's Go Africa Foundation with a mission to improve the lives of disadvantaged populations in Africa by promoting social and economic development and cultural exchange, and by educating American youth about Africa.

Because dialogue is difficult without modern communications infrastructure, Bosompem aims to use his telecommunications expertise to "connect the last mile of the information superhighway and treat it as a people issue, not a telecommunications issue." Through the

Internet and other communications channels, underserved Africans are exposed to educational and health programs. Says Bosompem, "My role has been to assess needs and establish planning parameters to collect data for African health programs."

The Maryland alumnus makes it his mission to save the youth of Africa. With help from Bosompem's Let's Go Africa and other colleagues, fellow Ghanaian Kobina Atobrah has developed equipment run by solar and wind power to provide medical clinics with potable water, refrigeration and telecommunications and Internet access. Perhaps the most important side effect of this decentralized energy project is the power it gives local people. Solar panels are mounted on any roof that can support them and supply clinics with energy where it's needed—for basic necessities and for communication and medical records maintenance.

In this way, Bosompem's telecommunications background and his compassion help in treating and preventing HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases affecting his native continent. —RR

Above, left: Kwasi Bosompem M.C.P. '92 conducts an educational workshop on Africa's resources for 600 area students at the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Center: Let's Go Africa's "Better Life Options" program at the Aurora Girls School in Soweto, South Africa, promotes gender equity and empowers young women with career and HIV/AIDS education.

Above: Bosompem is an urban planner, author of three books and founder and executive director of Let's Go Africa.