Project Summary

For my STEP Experience I am planning to travel to Achiase, Ghana with the Akumanyi Foundation. The Akumanyi Foundation works internationally to improve the lives and living conditions of at-risk youth and vulnerable women. As a volunteer, I will care for the kids at the Achiase Children’s home and I will help with duties around the home.

Description of Your Project

Primary Objective

For my STEP Experience I will be traveling to a rural village in Achiase, Ghana where I will work with The Akumanyi Foundation and a group of Ohio State students to volunteer in the Achiase Children’s Home. I will be caring for, playing with, teaching, and helping the children at the home. The primary objective of this experience is to help the Akumanyi Foundation work towards their mission of bettering the lives and living conditions for the at-risk youth and vulnerable women of the village by being a change agent for them. My goal is to build lasting relationships and engage in a life-changing experience that will help me understand poverty and possible solutions to poverty that will provide me with knowledge as I continue to study Social Work and get ready to enter a field where I will work closely with those in poverty and work towards solutions for it.

Community Service/Service Learning Abroad

My STEP Experience falls under Community Service/Service Learning Abroad. I will be going to the developing country of Ghana and I will be serving the Achiase community by volunteering in the Achiase Children’s Home and helping to carry out the sustainable initiatives the Akumanyi Foundation has put in place to fight poverty in Ghana. The Akumanyi Foundation provides monetary aid, project implementation, economic development, building construction and volunteer support with the intentions of achieving self-sustainability for the at-risk youth and vulnerable women they serve. The work done in the Achiase Children’s Home consists of empowerment projects to improve the lives of the orphaned and vulnerable youth. As a volunteer, I will be working to help implement these projects and provide general care for the children. The Akumanyi Foundation also sponsors a bakery that is overseen by Mama Sarah, the mother of the home. This bakery helps to keep the home self-sufficient and is one of the many sustainable initiatives sponsored by the Akumanyi Foundation. I will work with Mama Sarah to help out in the bakery as well. This experience will be service combined with learning. I am excited to get the chance to help teach the children and I am also excited to learn about the bakery and other sustainable initiatives. It is important to know that the service I am doing will be sustainable and end up helping many people, not just one person for a short period of time.

I will be in Ghana for only two weeks, so I know that the work that I will be doing will not change the world. Many people say that service trips abroad, like the one that I plan to participate in, are pointless because the volunteers get nothing accomplished and it is only to make them feel better about themselves. This is something that I have thought long and hard about, and I can still confidently say that I disagree. Those people are right that I will not change the world, but that is not what I set out to do. I will be working with a foundation in Ghana that would not be able to carry out its initiatives and mission if they did not have volunteers. Volunteers keep this foundation alive. These service trips that different groups go on are a huge help to the organizations. We are energetic manpower that is willing to help in whatever way
possible. I may not be personally making that large of a difference, but I am helping the Akumanyi foundation carry out its mission of empowering youth and women that it would not be able to do without volunteers. This is the impact that I will be making for Ghana, but that is not the only purpose of this trip.

What some people may see as ‘me making myself feel like a good person’, I see as getting a new perspective, learning about a different culture, and learning new techniques that may be useful to my future. I believe it is important to get outside of the United States and see how other countries live. I want to move beyond the singular worldview of the United States and experience a different country with different culture and that faces different problems. Many times in the United States we get this idea that the way we do things is the only way to do things and I am excited to see some different perspectives and different ways of life. I am interested to see the poverty in Ghana and I understand that it will look much worse than what I see in the United States. I am ready to do what I can to help and to learn about the sustainable initiatives taken to fight poverty in a rural village in West Africa because I think this will be different than the initiatives against poverty that I see in urban cities in the United States.

**Preparation Courses**

There are no required courses for this experience. However, I will attend mandatory meetings with the group that I will be going on this trip with in order to ensure that I am prepared for this trip. These meetings will also give me the chance to get to know the team of people that I will be going to Ghana with. I think it is important to get to know the people that I am going with and feel comfortable with them because we will be put into some situations that may be out of our comfort level in Ghana and it is important to know that I will have a support system and that we are doing this as a team. These meetings will take place April 13\(^{th}\), 2015 from 7-8pm and April 28\(^{th}\), 2015 from 7-8pm.

**Timeline**

I would be traveling to Ghana with the Akumanyi Foundation for two weeks at the end of May and the beginning of June. The dates of my trip are May 25\(^{th}\) to June 11\(^{th}\). The 25\(^{th}\) and the 11\(^{th}\) are travel days; I will only be in Ghana from the 26\(^{th}\) to the 10\(^{th}\). The last day of exams for me for the spring semester is May 4\(^{th}\). After that I plan on moving out of my dorm and going back home to Maryland for a few weeks. I will fly out of Dulles International Airport and meet the rest of my group in Ghana. I am a swim coach for my summer job and that does not start until mid-June so I will be able to do this service trip and keep my job as a swim coach. A timeline of important dates for this trip includes:

- **End of January, 2015**
  - Application to the Akumanyi Foundation must be done
- **February 15, 2015**
  - Notified of application decision by the Akumanyi Foundation
- **March 27\(^{th}\), 2015**
  - $100 nonrefundable deposit for the trip is due to confirm spot on the trip
  - forms needed by the Akumanyi foundation must be completed
- **April 13\(^{th}\), 2015**
  - Mandatory meeting in Hale Hall from 7-8pm
- **April 27\(^{th}\) 2015**
  - Need vaccinations
  - Apply for Visa
Deposit costs for trip to foundation

- April 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2015
  - Mandatory meeting in Hale Hall from 7-8pm
- May 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2015
  - Drive home to Maryland
- May 24\textsuperscript{th}, 2015
  - Fly out of Dulles International Airport
- May 25\textsuperscript{th}-June 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2015
  - Volunteer at the Achiase Children’s Home in Ghana
- June 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2015
  - Arrive back home

Proposal Development

Many people have helped me to decide on a STEP experience and to develop this proposal. Coming to a conclusion on what I was going to do was the hardest part for me. One thing I have always wanted to do is go on a service trip to Africa, so this is where I started. I looked at all the may term trips that Ohio State had to Africa. However, all of these trips were out of my price range, even with $2,000 from STEP. So at this point I just found a may term study abroad that interested me and was in my price range. I applied to the Spain study abroad but I was not accepted. So at this point I started freaking out a little bit because the deadline already passed to try and apply to any other study abroad sessions through Ohio State. I decided to try and think about some internships that I might be interested in and I was getting pretty discouraged. Then I got an email from the college of Social Work that talked about an opportunity to do a service trip to Ghana with the Akumanyi Foundation and this was exactly what I had originally started out looking for. I looked at the cost of the trip and it was right around $2,000 so I decided to apply. I got accepted and I am so grateful that this opportunity came along.

My STEP advisor, Patty Cunningham, has also been extremely helpful throughout this process. She has made it easy for us to get our co-curricular activities done and she has made sure that we are always aware of what is required of us and what we need to get done. She also held an extra meeting outside of our regular meetings to give us a chance to talk to her about our proposals and make sure we know what we are doing. One of the other girls in my STEP cohort is also going on the same exact trip as me so that has been helpful as well.

Personal Statement

My STEP Experience is perfect for me because I love to do service and I want to dedicate my life to serving others. I am a Social Work major and I am interested in working with at-risk youth. I am very interested in poverty, trauma, and crisis at a societal level. I am definitely a big picture thinker and I like to try to find the long-term solutions rather than the case-by-case solutions. For this reason, I am excited to get the chance to go to Ghana and see the sustainable initiatives that they are working to implement to fight poverty. It will be an inspiring and educational opportunity to see the way poverty looks in a developing nation and the ways that people are working to eradicate it. It is so important to have different perspectives on the world and to remember that there is so much more to the world than the United States. Both of my parents are international developers so I have always loved to travel and working internationally is always something that I have thought about as a career. I am truly excited to
see how the Akumanyi Foundation works as an organization to carry out their wonderful mission.

I definitely believe that this experience will be personally challenging and push me out of my comfort zone quite a few times. I am already starting to feel some of the challenges. For one, this is the first trip that I have planned on my own. It is the first time that I have had the responsibility of booking my own flight, paying my own dues on time, getting my immunizations on my own, and making sure that I have everything that is needed to go out of the country. This has already been a maturing experience for me. I tend to get nervous when I am in unfamiliar places or doing unfamiliar things so even just the planning that I have done has made me more comfortable handling novel situations. I will also be traveling to Ghana alone. I will not meet up with the rest of my team until I am in Ghana. I have traveled alone before but never to a different country so this will be a challenging experience for me. I think I may be a little overwhelmed at first but I am confident that I will be just fine and I think it will give me a lot more confidence traveling in the future. I am excited and terrified all at the same time. I will also be challenged to respect their culture. It is my responsibility to educate myself on certain cultural norms and make sure that I do not accidentally offend or disrespect anyone. For example, I know that in Ghanaian culture it is disrespectful to eat with, greet with, or use the left hand because the left hand is seen as dirty. Unfortunately I am left handed so this is something that I am going to need to stay conscious of but I will challenge myself to respect their culture. Any new place has challenges but I am excited to be a part of them. I also think I will be challenged when I see some of the situations that these children are living in. It may be difficult for me not to feel guilty for all the privilege that I have and to want to try to give them everything of my own. I know that this will not create long term change and that I need to be aware that if I give one kid something I should give all the kids something and that may not be something I am able to do. I will try my best to stay positive and think of the most effective ways for me to help.

My STEP experience will also be socially expanding because I will be working with a group of Ohio State students and I will build relationships with the people at the Akumanyi Foundation. Having a group of Ohio State students that I will get to know very well and on a more emotional level than I would just seeing them on campus will be very rewarding. I will meet people involved in all different things on campus and hopefully make lasting friendships and get different perspectives. It will be comforting to extend my network here at Ohio State. I will also build relationships with the people who work with the Akumanyi Foundation, which could be helpful, if I ever decide that I want to go back to Ghana and serve again. Additionally, one of the Co-Founders of the foundation, Hanna Bonacci, is a graduate student here at Ohio State and she is the one taking the group of students. Hannah is working towards a master’s degree in Social Work so it will be interesting to see what she has done with her Social Work degree and I will be able to have her as a mentor.

My STEP experience will also be intellectually developing because I will gain knowledge and experience in working with at-risk youth, I will learn about the Ghanaian culture, and I will learn about poverty and sustainable initiatives that will help me in my career as a Social Worker. I love working with children and working with at-risk youth has always been something that has interested me. I think children are so amazing because they have their whole lives ahead of them. I want to be able to help those children that may not be on the fast track to a good life and who may need some work and better opportunities before they can get there. I want to try to help give people opportunities that they are so often never given a chance to receive. In Ghana, working to help empower these kids and teach them ways in which they can provide for themselves would
be an amazing experience. It would give me a first hand idea of the difficulties that I may face when working with at-risk youth and it will give me a better understanding of the impact that their living conditions may have on all aspects of their present and future life. I think the best way to learn how to be a good Social Worker is to get as much experience as possible. We can learn about how to help people in a classroom, but the way to get the best education is to actually experience it. I am also excited to learn about the Ghanaian culture. I love learning about different cultures and trying foods from different cultures but the best way to fully grasp a culture is to be immersed in it so I am so excited for this opportunity. I also think it is awesome that the Akumanyi Foundation really focuses on sustainable initiatives because this is such an important part of making long-term change. I am excited to see real-world examples of this and hopefully gain some knowledge and insight on how to make more sustainable initiatives when I am a Social Worker. I am also minoring in non-profit business so I learn a lot in my classes about the importance of both direct services and long-term change, I am excited to see this first hand with a foundation. I believe that this experience will be a life-changing one for me.

Budget
Many of my payments have already been due to the Akumanyi Foundation or will be due before I get my STEP money. Therefore, I plan to use my $2,000 that I receive from STEP to reimburse myself for the following costs:

- Flight: I will be traveling with KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. The total cost for a round trip ticket from Dulles International Airport in Virginia to Accra, Ghana was **$998**
- Trip Cost: The total cost of the trip, including the $100 deposit is **$610**.
- Traveler’s Insurance: OIA requires that I have insurance which will cost $1.61 per day and I am gone for 18 days so that equals a total of **$28.98**.
- Immunizations/Vaccines: In order to ensure my safety in Ghana I was required to get the yellow fever and typhoid vaccines. I also need malaria pills and an antibiotic in case I get traveler’s diarrhea. The cost of this is **$330**.
- Mosquito net: I need to buy a treated mosquito net to decrease my risk of getting a disease from a mosquito. **$25.00**
- Extra: it is advised to have about **$200** in cash to pay for any extra expenses while in Ghana. This will allow me to participate in the experience of the market, or to buy extra food, or put towards transportation when I travel on the weekends. It is also important to have extra cash with me in case of emergencies.

Based off of this budget the estimated total cost of the trip will be $2,191.98. I am aware that STEP will only provide me with up to $2,000 and I am prepared to cover the extra $191.98 on my own. I have a job on campus currently as an Office Assistant so I will be able to pay for any extra costs that I encounter. I am so thankful to have the opportunity to be a part of STEP, because although I will have $191.98 to put towards my trip I would not be able to afford the full $2,191.98. I am honored to have this opportunity and I truly believe this trip will change my life and shape the rest of my college years.

Reporting Back
I plan to keep a journal while I am in Ghana so that I can most accurately capture my emotions and remember all the minor details. I think this trip will be something that I will remember forever and I want to be able to remember it as best as I can. I believe this will be a very intellectual experience but also a very emotional experience. For this reason, I think the best way for me to most-effectively share the outcome of my STEP experience would be through a scrapbook. This scrapbook could contain a combination of pictures from the trip and quotes from
my journal. This would be more personal than just a poster presentation and would portray the experience in a more meaningful way. I will also submit the essay that is expected of me when I return and the journal that I keep will help me to complete this as well.

STEP Service-Learning and Community Service Supplemental Document

Before you begin your STEP project, please answer these questions with the help of your community partner and your faculty mentor. If you need additional help with any of the questions below, please contact Vicki Pitstick (Pitstick.10@osu.edu) or Harmony Cox (cox.529@osu.edu).

Please answer the following questions regarding your intended project:

1. Please describe the planned service activities to be performed in this project.
   For my STEP Experience I will be doing a service trip to Ghana with the Akumanyi Foundation. My main service activities will be performed in the Achiase Children’s home where I will help to care for, tutor and teach the children in the home. The children of this home include at-risk youth and orphans. The Akumanyi Foundation has an empowerment project that they teach to these children. The hope is to care for these children and provide them with the knowledge to be self-sufficient. I will also help out with the sustainable initiative of the bakery that helps to fund the home and keep it self-sufficient.

Community Service/Service-Learning activities are based on an arrangement with specific goals, expectations and responsibilities for students and community partners. Service-learning and community service should be mutually beneficial; in other words, while you are helping a community partner fulfill their mission, you should also be gaining skills, knowledge and experience that will be beneficial for you. Before the project begins, you should take some time to outline what you hope to gain from the experience as well as what your community partner hopes to gain, and make sure those goals can align and support each other.

2. Please describe at least 2 - 3 goals or expectations that you have for your experience:
   1. I expect to gain a different perspective of how poverty looks in a country other than the United States. I believe this may benefit me as I plan to be a Social Worker and work with at-risk populations.
   2. I expect to get a better understanding of the culture of Ghana and to immerse myself into their culture as much as I can. I want to push my self out of my comfort zone and try new things.
   3. I expect to build meaningful relationships with the people that I am serving and the people that I am serving with.

Please describe 2 -3 goals/expectations that your community partner has for your experience:
   1. My community partner expects me to help teach, play with, and tutor the children.
   2.V. My community partner expects me to stay healthy throughout this trip and make sure that I am caring for myself and not only the children.
   3. My community partner expects me to feel comfortable enough to view them as a support system for me throughout this trip.

3. How do you plan to complete the academic component of your project? Will you attend the STEP Reflection Series, take a service-learning course, or create an independent study component with the guidance of your faculty mentor? Detail your plans below:
   I plan to attend the STEP Reflection Series. I also plan to keep a journal to record the things that I learn and the emotions I feel throughout the trip in order to make my reflection experience more meaningful.

4. How will you ensure that you are sufficiently prepared for the service and to learn about the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which you will be working? Will you receive training and orientation from your community partner, support from your faculty mentor, or will you look to other sources?
   I will read the resources that are provided to me by the Akumanyi Foundation about Ghanian culture, safety, responsibilities, and more. I will also attend the mandatory meetings before the trip that are held by the community partner, Hannah Bonacci, here at Ohio State on April 13th, 2015 and April 28th, 2015.
5. As a part of your proposal, you will need to plan to reflect on your experience and report back to the university on what you have accomplished. Your plan needs to include the tasks included in the Project Reflection and Reporting Back section in the STEP CS/S-L guidelines. How do you plan to evaluate your project and report back to the campus community?
I plan to keep a journal in Ghana so that I can record my experiences, the things that I have learned, and all the emotions that I feel each day while I am on my trip. This will help me to complete the essay that is required of me when I return. I would like to report back to the campus community and at the STEP Expo by means of a scrapbook. I could use pictures from my trip and quotes from my journal to show my trip to others. This will also be a little more personal and meaningful than just a poster board.

Elizabeth Fries
Signature of STEP Student

March 31, 2015
Date