

## **Fairtrade Fortnight in Devon. Brief Report on the Fortnight and Visitors.**

We were delighted to welcome Sarah Ahemah and Ernest Boateng, both Kuapa Kokoo Co-op members, to Devon for Fairtrade Fortnight 2020, 23rd February till 8th March)

We are organised into a Fairtrade Devon Steering Group, composed of representatives from all the Fairtrade Towns in Devon, plus Brixham (Torbay), Exeter University and Exeter Diocese.

Towns decide their activities for the Fortnight and then book our Fairtrade visitors usually for a half-day primary schools conference and a community event eg a tea party, pan cake party or evening celebration, attended by the community including elected civic officials, such as councillors and mayors.

Sarah and Ernest gave their presentations, using their power points, then answered questions and had informal discussions with people afterwards.

So we had a very full programme for our visitors, including 7 primary schools conferences, plus 2 other school visits (one was sadly cancelled due to the corona virus), and 19 community events.

Unfortunately, we did not know until just a few days before travel that Sarah and Ernest had their visas to come to UK. This meant that plans for other activities, including a farm visit, were not made. We did go to walk round the farm at Riverford Organics but the ground was so wet and muddy that we mainly stayed in their poly-tunnel! The fortnight proved to be very cold, wet and overcast, so Devon did not look its best - and we even found ourselves in a snow storm on Dartmoor!

It proved difficult to find out if the visitors had relations or friends in the UK whom they might wish to meet. Sarah did have an uncle, but we did not know this until the final weekend, so a meeting was not possible. However, Ernest was able to visit the grounds of his favourite football team, Chelsea FC in London, which was a great success! We all enjoyed the Sunday afternoon having a Thames river trip, going to Greenwich (for the Meridian line) and using all the different types of transport in London (over-ground trains, underground trains, Docklands Light Railway, buses, river taxis, cars).

Everyone was very pleased to meet Sarah and Ernest and appreciated their willingness to come to Devon and leave their families and farms for 2 weeks.

Councillor Barry Parsons, who represents Devon County Council on our group said:  
*It was a huge privilege to meet our guests at County Hall last week; even more so for me to have been able to play a part in their welcome. I was hugely impressed by our speakers who gave a very full account of their 'operations'. There was a real feeling of everyone understanding and appreciating the challenges they face. It was, indeed, a privilege to part of the audience – thank you.*

Mary Elphinstone, Plymouth: *Thank you for coming to Plymouth. It was such an enjoyable evening and I really enjoyed meeting the producers of my favourite chocolate.*

Councillor Amal Ghusain, Exeter City Council, said, *'It is very important that people support Fairtrade wherever possible, because it ensures a fair deal for producers and growers. The Fairtrade coffee morning in Exeter's Guild Hall was an excellent opportunity for people to find out more directly from the Fairtrade cocoa farmers.'*

**Devon Primary Schools Fairtrade Conferences.** Pupils from 23 schools met our visitors in 7 conferences. Ernest and Sarah introduced children to their families and explained how cocoa beans grow and become chocolate. The conferences were very successful. One teacher said: *'Superb conference, really enlightening and informative. My only disappointment: I wish we had had longer!'*

### Highlights for adults:

- Meeting Sarah and Ernest, hearing about their families and their farms. It was good to see how they joined in the activities with the children
- Learning about how we can support Fairtrade
- The good questions which the children asked Ernest and Sarah

### Highlights for children:

- It was fun because I had to taste chocolate, make a bookmark and learn all about cocoa growing and Ghana
- Learning about how farmers grow the cocoa beans, how they transport the beans from their farms and how hard they work.
- Mixing with other schools
- I loved eating the chocolate
- I learnt loads. We have to be grateful because they are growing the cocoa beans for us.

### What did children and adults learn?

- 'Good morning' is 'Maa-che' in Twi, pronounced 'Marky'. I liked learning the language
- How cocoa beans are grown and produced. I didn't know that chocolate comes from a bean. It's amazing how many beans grow in a pod
- All about Fairtrade, the importance of Fairtrade, its benefits for growers, and the Premium.
- That, despite all the awareness and good intentions, only 1% of cocoa beans sold globally are Fairtrade. Eye-opening!
- How climate change is affecting cocoa production and what farmers are doing about it, including planting trees to shelter the cocoa trees
- The impact of climate change on the lives of people so far away. The realisation that our actions have an impact on the world as a whole.
- It was interesting to listen to Ernest and Sarah. I really enjoyed learning about their families.
- Lots of fun learning about different people's lives somewhere else in the world.
- We liked learning about Ghana and the Adinkra symbols. And choosing symbols to make our bookmarks.
- We learnt that what we receive in the UK is related to other countries and their work
- I can eat chocolate and help the people of Ghana!

**Conclusion.** Many thanks to Sarah and Ernest for giving up their time and normal lives to visit us in Devon. As one child said, *'It is great to meet the people who actually do Fairtrade, not just have information about this.'* Many thanks to Kuapa Kokoo for their active support.

Please note: all the resources and power points used during Fairtrade Fortnight 2020 can be found on the website: [www.globalcentred Devon.org.uk](http://www.globalcentred Devon.org.uk), then look for Fairtrade.

*Sue Errington, Fairtrade Devon. March 2020.*



The Schools Conference in Sidmouth



Meeting Pauline Tiffin in Sidmouth



Meeting the Mayor in Newton Abbot



Pupils at the Dawlish Schools Conference



The Mayor and Minister in church in Okehampton



The Cooperative Group Evening in Exeter



Meeting the MP in Sidmouth



With the Mayor and County Councillor in Totnes



The Banner for Fairtrade Devon, in Dawlish