

Lifeline Development in West Africa
:
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Accra, Ghana
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(CONTACT USA)

Background:

LifeLine International is an association of member countries that have LifeLine telephone crisis counseling services. The LifeLine program was started in Sydney, Australia in 1963, as a response to suicide. Today there are LifeLine programs in over twenty countries. CONTACT USA is the LifeLine member representing the United States.

In 2005 LifeLine International contracted with Komlavi Ataty to assess the developmental status of LifeLine programs in the West Africa region. His task was to visit the programs and report back to the LifeLine International Board of Directors on the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the programs. As he found that the needs are significant for training in telephone counseling skills, board development, management and fund raising, in 2006 the International Board asked Virginia Bainbridge to oversee the project and provide support for Komlavi in his program development efforts. CONTACT USA agreed to sponsor the project so that fund raising could benefit from CONTACT's nonprofit status.

Presentation:

Virginia will present some background about LifeLine International, CONTACT USA and the West Africa Project. Komlavi will describe the people, culture, languages and history of West Africa as context for the development of crisis counseling in the region.

The major focus of the presentation will be on program development in Ghana, Togo, Benin and Liberia. Komlavi will describe each program with an emphasis on the services provided, the modalities of service delivery, the strengths and the needs in each service area. He will focus on the adaptations that must be made to a model that works well in western, urban areas if it is to be an accessible, viable service in poor countries with very different cultural expectations.

Together, Virginia and Komlavi will talk about the experience of "long distance" collaboration and their plans for the coming year, which include a Train-the-Trainers class for representatives from each of the programs. The training will take place in Accra, Ghana within the next six months and will be Virginia's first opportunity to travel to West Africa and visit the programs.

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