



**Web Site Guide**  
**Ghana**

**“Ghana@50: Official Web Site for the 50<sup>th</sup> Independence  
Anniversary Celebration of Ghana,” 2007  
Produced by the Ghana@50 Secretariat**



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“Ghana@50: Official Web Site for the 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Celebration of Ghana”

[www.ghana50.gov.gh](http://www.ghana50.gov.gh)

Produced by: the Ghana@50 Secretariat

Designed by: BusinessGhana

Created: 2007

## Instructions

Spend some time exploring this Web site, either alone or with other participants. Before beginning the activity, read through this guide and the material AJWS has provided about Ghana for crucial background information.

The goals of this session are: (1) to introduce and promote critical engagement with the political, historical and social dimensions of Ghana's current (2007) year of national self-reflection; (2) to engage with these broad narratives and the on-the-ground events before you actually arrive in Ghana; (3) to begin to consider the meanings and implications of various interventions into social and political issues; and, in the context of a Group Service Program, (4) to stimulate group cohesion around a shared experience.

Using a Web site as a primary source for analysis might be a new experience. Web sites can be thought of as texts and cultural artifacts to be read for their textual content, like books, ads, songs, poems or films. But they can also be interrogated as political and social creations: real people with a broad range of background knowledge, differing ages, politics, ideologies, etc., visit and interact with Web sites. When analyzing a Web site, one ought to think about who created it and why, how the site can be used by different audiences and the actual places and styles in which the site is visited (e.g. homes, classrooms, cafes, etc.; alone, in groups, with families, etc.). Web sites are hubs for information seekers and providers. Since they organize and articulate ideas in specific ways, they can be consulted, critiqued and subverted – or all of these at once.

This guide will help you be a thinking respondent to the site instead of a passive consumer of it. This Web site, like most, has been carefully designed – in terms of architecture, graphics, aesthetics, information, etc. – to produce certain hoped-for responses. Part of the task of the active Web site learner is to think critically about what kinds of messages and manipulations the Web site's designers intend, and not to simply be taken by these designs.

## Background Information

- Ghana gained its independence from Britain on March 6, 1957. Ghana was the first African country to gain independence from colonial rule and was seen as a trailblazer for the rest of the continent.
- Ghana marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a year of nationwide celebrations and festivities. While the anniversary was a source of pride and national unity for Ghanaians, some critiqued the celebrations, arguing that occasion should be marked by sober reflection on the country's post-independence history rather than excessive celebration, and that the money spent on the festivities could have been better spent on poverty relief or infrastructure improvements.
- Jerry John Rawlings, the Ghanaian head of state from 1979-1999, first as an unelected military ruler and then, after restoring multiparty democracy, as an elected president, boycotted the anniversary celebrations. He accused John Agyekum Kufuor, the current president, of "pervasive corruption at all levels, missed opportunities for genuine progress, nepotism, tribalism and known cases of political tortures and killings."
- AJWS grantmaking in Ghana supports initiatives that address marginalization, access to basic services, housing, infrastructure and economic opportunity for marginalized populations. Geographical focus is in rural areas, particularly in the north, and in urban settlements where migrants live in precarious and unhealthy conditions.



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### While Reviewing the Site

Please keep a pen and paper with you during your navigation of the site. Mark down interesting, questionable, curious or otherwise remarkable details as you go.

The questions below are intended to guide your thinking about the Web site and the issues it raises. If you are reviewing the site alone, note responses to each question. You might want to save your answers and review them when you return from your trip. If you are reviewing the site with a group, discuss the questions with fellow participants.

1. Go to [www.ghana50.gov.gh](http://www.ghana50.gov.gh) and spend 10 minutes getting a sense of the site’s organizing layout, structure and overall feeling.
  - a. Who created the site?
  - b. Who appears to be the audience for the site? How can you tell?
  - c. What is your first impression of the purpose or “point” of the site?
2. Explore the “What’s On, Where” pages, which detail hundreds of events and activities: [www.ghana50.gov.gh/events/index.php](http://www.ghana50.gov.gh/events/index.php). What logic, flow or narrative is implied in the order of the months’ themes?
3. The site clearly addresses a range of audiences, referring directly to “friends of Ghana, Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora, tourists, investors, Ghanaians abroad, Heads of State and governments, and indeed, the world.” What would attract each of these audiences to the site (or to Ghana)? How do you think each audience would respond to the site as a whole? Notice that humanitarian groups and international organizations are not on the list. Why not? What kinds of questions might social activists bring to the site that the site’s intended audiences might not?
4. Pick one of the following themes: “national memory,” “the politics of development,” “private sector involvement,” “tourism” or “arts and culture.” Select 5-10 events that a Ghanaian citizen or visitor could go to from the part of the “Events” page ([www.ghana50.gov.gh/events](http://www.ghana50.gov.gh/events)) that fits under the theme you have selected. What messages about, or vision of, the theme you’ve chosen do these specific events articulate? Are these events consonant with or dissonant with the site’s explicit overarching narratives? How?
5. The overarching theme for the year’s celebrations (and the slogan/tag-line of the site) is “championing African excellence.” How, specifically, do the scheduled events address or fail to address this mission? How does the Web site present Ghana’s place in this vision of African and global politics? What do you think Africans from neighboring countries are meant to think and do when visiting the site? How do you think they actually respond to it (feel free to look up a few responses from African newspapers, blogs, etc.)?
6. The site’s “Feedback” function lets visitors give feedback, but the feedback is not visible to other site-goers. That is, there is no “communal” or “interactive” aspect to the site. Find three reviews or discussions about the “Ghana@50” site, program or any of its particulars. You can use newspapers, blogs, magazines, other non-official Web sites, etc. (You might want to try Lexis-Nexis as well as Google searches of various sorts – be creative in your search criteria.) What kinds of reviews did the site, the project as a whole and/or specific events get?
7. The anniversary year aims to implement seven “Legacy Projects,” modeled after U.K. civic programs (Britain was Ghana’s colonial ruler until 1957). Look at the details of these seven projects ([www.ghana50.gov.gh/events/index.php?op=legacyProjects](http://www.ghana50.gov.gh/events/index.php?op=legacyProjects)). What is the overall mission here?



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### Additional Questions

1. Look back at your list of remarkable details. What are some highlights? Is there a pattern among the things you noticed? If you are discussing the site as a group: Is there a pattern or a theme that emerges from things the group as a whole noticed?
2. For groups: In pairs, share and discuss the most interesting of the three reviews you found. Who was the reviewer/commentator and how was the site/event evaluated?
3. Look back at question #7 above. What is the intent of the “Legacy Projects,” and what kinds of impacts do you think these civic programs will make? What sector of Ghanaian society does each project target?
4. What is the central ambition of “Ghana@50?” (To increase national pride among citizens? To mobilize the forces of the international development world to further intervene in and improve Ghana? To solicit private enterprise? Something else?) What did you see on the Web site that supports your conclusion?
5. Each month has a theme with a message. For example, September 2007 includes the message that “It is incumbent on all Ghanaians, irrespective of their status, to contribute positively toward the building of our dear nation.” The site and the Jubilee as a whole seem designed to be a national identity and nationalism-inspiring project. Nationalism, however, seems to be in tension with another aim of the site, namely, to champion pan-Africanism and post-colonial successes over the past several decades. Is what’s good for Ghana (nationalism) opposed to or complementary to what’s good for Africa (pan-Africanism)?

### For Further Thought

If you are viewing the film alone: Choose one of the following themes to explore in more depth as you prepare for your volunteer experience. During your time abroad, you may find more opportunities to reflect upon this issue and discuss it with a variety of people you meet.

If you are viewing the film with a group: In groups of 3-4, choose one question to discuss.

1. The site’s FAQ section includes the comment (echoed in several places) that Ghana has had “teething problems as a nation.” What, specifically, has the site acknowledged as Ghana’s major problems, “wrong starts” and difficulties? From your reading and using the Ghana materials that AJWS has provided, what problems would you say the site ignored? If you were to design a Web site entitled “Social Justice in/for Ghana,” what would the site include?
2. The broadest vision of the Jubilee is the continental perspective: the celebrations are meant to mobilize and inspire pan-African celebration, development, change and cooperation. Using the AJWS Ghana Country Guide, look over AJWS’ program areas and partner organizations. At what register or scope does AJWS seek to intervene: the local, the national, the regional and/or the global? Compare AJWS’ interventions with “Ghana@50”’s; where does the balance of the programming lie? What do you think is the most important level at which intervention would be most helpful? What are the advantages and drawbacks of each?
3. According to the site itself, funds for the anniversary celebrations come from the State (the current government), or from sponsors. It is not clear how the proportion of the funding is divided. In the FAQ, the site asks, “Why is the Ghana Government going to spend such a colossal amount of money when Ghanaians seemingly live in poverty? Wouldn’t the money be better spent to, e.g., alleviate poverty, improve the health care delivery system, education, roads, etc.?” Do you find the government’s answer compelling? What other reasons do you think might have gone into the decision to do a “Jubilee” but did



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not make it onto the official public list of reasons? Look at the list of sponsors (there are seven categories of funders). Why do you think these organizations and companies supported the project?

### Suggested Additional Activities

- Read National Public Radio's reporting on the opening day celebrations and listen to its “All Things Considered” radio spot/podcast: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7722412>.
- Make sure to thoroughly read AJWS' Ghana Country Profile. Familiarizing yourself with this material before the trip will dramatically enhance your experience in Ghana.

### For Groups:

- Invite a speaker to discuss politics, religion and/or economics in Ghana, West Africa or the entire continent. This could be a local immigrant from your host country, a professor, a returned AJWS Volunteer Corps participant, a returned Peace Corps volunteer or another local expert.
- Select one of the recommended readings about your country and have a “book club” night (see the AJWS Ghana Country Guide).



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**American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** is an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice. AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through grants to grassroots organizations, volunteer service, advocacy and education, AJWS fosters civil society, sustainable development and human rights for all people, while promoting the values and responsibilities of global citizenship within the Jewish community.

For more information, please visit [www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org).

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