



# **A letter to Geldof**

**A documentary by WORLDwrite & Chew on it Productions**



## Press Release: Rock stars and their promises

Chew on it Productions in partnership with WORLDwrite are delighted to announce the completion of their widely-anticipated documentary *A letter to Geldof*.

Shot in Ghana, this documentary forms a letter to Sir Bob Geldof, who was crowned Chief of Development in a town called Ajumako-Bisease. People there believed he would help the town develop, but we learn of their disappointment and are subsequently led to reflect on the meaning of promises and the treatment of Africa as a cause for celebrities.

This timely documentary follows Geldof's footsteps to Ajumako-Bisease, a town of 27,000 in Ghana's Central Region. Geldof travelled there for the TV series *Geldof in Africa* and wrote about his crowning in the accompanying book. In the series Geldof suggests he stumbled upon Ajumako-Bisease when his car broke down. Yet the visit, it seems, was pre-planned; local school children had been given the day off and a special festival (Durbar) had been arranged to mark Geldof's visit and crowning. The council of chiefs and townspeople believed Geldof would make a big difference as their Chief of Development. Nana Okofo Kwakora Gyan III, Chief of Ajumako-Bisease, explains: "Bob Geldof has done a lot for Africa, he will help us".

In *A letter to Geldof* we meet the town's chiefs and people, discover what they want and what Geldof has done. The townspeople are clear: they want a covered market, a hospital, decent roads, good drainage and to extend the local cola nut plantation. They discussed these needs with Sir Bob and crowned him on the understanding he would help develop the town.

As we travel through Ajumako-Bisease the extent of their belief in the rock star becomes clear, and the disappointment palpable. A plot of land was cleared to build a new marketplace anticipating Geldof's help. Bulldozers and tractors were hired but the weeds have now grown back, the hospital is bare and the town is as poor as ever. Yet still they believe he will come.

While Geldof, the self-proclaimed spokesperson for the poor in Africa sits on a panel to monitor G8 promises, the people of Ajumako-Bisease are waiting for him to fulfil his own promises. Three years after crowning Geldof as Chief of Development the town is still waiting to hear from him. The Chief of Ajumako-Bisease wants to ask him: "Do you want to be the Development Chief, yes or no?"

*Producer Viv Regan says: "The film raises many questions about aspirations for development, the role of celebrity and the meaning of promises, but ultimately this is a letter to Geldof. It should reach him in 2007, the 50th anniversary of Ghana's independence from colonial rule. The missionaries of the colonial era treated Africa as a continent of childlike savages to be saved: today's celebrity visitors, who consider themselves spokesmen of the poor, are in danger of treating their "cause" with similar contempt."*

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## Synopsis

### Short Synopsis (35 words)

In Ajumako-Bisease, Ghana, Sir Bob Geldof was made Chief of Development in front of the whole town. What have people in Ajumako-Bisease got out of it? What did they expect? Will the rock star deliver?

### Medium Synopsis (84 words)

Bob Geldof visited Ghana for the TV series *Geldof in Africa* and wrote about it in the accompanying book, describing his crowning as the Chief of Development in a town called Ajumako-Bisease. This documentary follows in Geldof's footsteps one year on, and finds a town still waiting to hear from him. A timely reflection on the meaning of promises, the role of celebrity, and the true impact of "awareness campaigns" that leave those we are meant to better understand with nothing but shattered dreams.

### Longer Synopsis (214 words)

Bob Geldof visited Ghana for the TV series *Geldof in Africa* and wrote about it in the accompanying book, describing his crowning as the Chief of Development in a town called Ajumako-Bisease. This documentary follows in Geldof's footsteps one year on, and finds a town still waiting to hear from him. When Geldof agreed to be their Chief of Development the town thought they'd struck gold and had big plans and high hopes that Bob would help develop the town. He stayed in the Chief's house, accepted their crown and discussed their needs. The town even cleared a plot of land anticipating Bob's help to fund a new marketplace. The weeds have now grown back and the disappointment is palpable. The Chief of Ajumako-Bisease, Nana Okofo Kwakora Gyan III, wants to talk to Sir Bob Geldof but cannot reach him. He wants to ask Geldof: "Do you want to be Development Chief, yes or no?" This documentary forms a letter to Geldof. It should reach him in 2007, the 50th anniversary of Ghana's independence from colonial rule. The missionaries of the colonial era treated Africa as a continent of childlike savages to be saved: today's celebrity visitors, who consider themselves spokesmen of the poor, are in danger of treating their "cause" with similar contempt.



## Production Notes

### **The Background Story: Beyond the Year of Africa**

In 2005 Britain took on presidency of the EU and hosted the G8. The British government declared that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Africa were its EU and G8 priorities, which led to the publication of the Commission for Africa report the same year. The report reviewed progress towards achieving the MDGs, which included the most popularly known aim to halve world poverty by 2015. The report made recommendations on what was required to reach these goals. In line with the government's Year of Africa a consortium of Western NGOs organised the Make Poverty History campaign for more aid, trade justice and debt relief for Africa. In concert with the campaign, Bob Geldof, one of the Commission for Africa commissioners, organised Live8, a series of music events across the globe in the run up to the G8 summit at Gleneagles. Live8's slogan was "we don't want your money, we want your voice", the point being to increase public pressure on G8 leaders to commit to the Make Poverty History's mandate of more aid, debt relief and trade justice for Africa.

As we are already part of a development education charity and film production company with a keen interest in international development, we wanted to investigate what the Year of Africa really meant for the supposed beneficiaries. Africans had after all hardly featured in the whole campaign. We decided to visit Ghana in September 2005 where we have had partners and friends for many years to find out what Ghanaians made of the G8/Live8 events and outcomes, as well as what impact it might have had on their lives.

### **The Production**

Co-produced by Chew on it and WORLDwrite's close partners the Academy of Screen Arts (Ghana's first independent film school) and Afrika World Syndications, we travelled across Ghana, met many eloquent Ghanaians and compelling characters, shot numerous illuminating stories and decided to produce a series of documentaries entitled *Pricking the Missionary Position*.

### **The Shoot**

The shoot in Ghana was an eye opener. Across the country from urban shanty towns to newly built estates to rural subsistence life, our partners and co-producers ensured we filmed Ghanaians from all walks of life, including subsistence farmers, university students, manual workers, market traders, professors, journalists and TV presenters. Thanks to our Ghanaian contacts and contributors we were able to respond immediately to stories and events that unfolded during our shoot and our visit to Ajumako-Bisease in Ghana's central region was one such detour. The shoot took shape after our Ghanaian friends picked up the *Geldof in Africa* book we had bought with us for a light read. They soon spotted his Ghana "stop over" and read, through gritted teeth, that he had been crowned the Chief of Development in a town called Bisease. From then on they urged us to visit this town, but with so much to cover we didn't know how we would fit it in. Finally, on our last day, we agreed and decided to try and find Bisease.

### **Finding Bisease**

We discovered there were rather a lot of Biseases in Ghana, but plumped for one we thought sounded most likely following a route North from Cape Coast. The bet paid off, and eventually we arrived at the right Bisease, actually called Ajumako-Bisease, but still had no idea what we'd find, or what to expect. Call it luck or good judgement, but at the first house we came to we met the Chief's father in law, Mr Edufull, who



told us that Sir Bob Geldof had stayed in his house (also the chief's house) and confirmed that Geldof was crowned Chief of Development. He was keen for us to meet and talk to the council of chiefs and introduced us to Frank De-Graft Quansah and other members of the council. Frank talked about Ajumako-Bisease, its needs and aspirations for development, and told us of Geldof's visit. He took us to meet people in the town, the market traders and residents who showed the kind of hospitality we had grown used to in Ghana, and spoke of their wishes for their town.

### **No sign of Sir Bob**

The town had put their hopes in Geldof and were adamant that he had promised to help, but a year on no one had heard anything from him. They had cleared land in anticipation of his help to procure funds for a covered market only for the weeds to grow back. We promised to take their story back to the UK, to contact Sir Bob Geldof and ask him his intentions.

When we returned to the UK we contacted Nana Okofo Kwakora Gyan III, the "King John" Geldof had written about in *Geldof in Africa*. Nana, like many in Ajumako-Bisease we met, sincerely hoped and believed Geldof would help out and at the very least keep in touch. We learned from Nana that when he had contacted Geldof during his visit to London, and waited for him as arranged, he got stood up. Given Nana's surprise at this treatment, and his disappointment, it felt right that Nana should tell his side of the story. Kwame Agyapong, our co-producer, travelled back to Ajumako-Bisease to film the August 2006 durbar attended by all the chiefs except Bob, who's "stool" remained empty. Kwame's interview with Nana suggests that he is torn between feeling responsible for accepting this man as their Chief of Development - believing he will deliver, and on the other hand, gradually realising that Geldof may not fulfil his promises after all.

### **Finding Geldof**

Back in the UK, getting hold of Bob Geldof proved to be as difficult as finding Ajumako-Bisease, but we wanted (and still do) to hear Geldof's side of the story. After numerous phone calls and emails we finally managed to speak to one of Geldof's PAs, who claimed Bob's only promise was to attend a future festival. We then sent his agents the early film rushes for a four-minute version of the film, inviting him to reply, only to receive no comment. Perhaps he assumed a volunteer film crew like ours would just go away, or that it was an unimportant matter, who knows? But we have not gone away and have made this documentary as a letter to Geldof. Hopefully we will be hearing from him.

### **There are no "I-Me's" in this crew**

Unusually for the filmmaking world our crew do not want individual fame, to have their name in lights or to gain personal credit. This film was a truly collaborative effort driven by our passion that only North-South equality will do for our peers. Our volunteer crew raised their own money to go to Ghana and received no sponsorship, and many volunteers helped with its production back in the UK. What really requires recognition are people's aspirations and development needs in Ajumako-Bisease.



## Production Information

### Production Company

A Pricking the Missionary Position Film  
A Chew on it Production in partnership with WORLDwrite, Academy of Screen Arts & Afrika World Syndications

WORLDwrite Centre  
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### Production notes

Original format: DV CAM  
Online edit: Avid Express Pro  
Digital cut format: Mini DV, DV CAM, Digibeta & DVD (all regions) & DVD NTSC  
Aspect Ratio: 4:3  
Length: 26:49  
Completion: January 2007

### Contributors (in order of appearance)

Ceri Dingle	Director, WORLDwrite UK
Students	University of Ghana, Legon Accra
De Roy Kwesi Andrew	Researcher Teacher, Ghana
Mr Peter Edufull	Resident, Ajumako-Bisease, Ghana
Frank De-Graft Quansah	Council of Chiefs, Ajumako-Bisease
Sofia	Market trader, Ajumako-Bisease
Nana Okofo Kwakora Gyan III	Chief, Ajumako-Bisease
Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr	Secretary General, Association of African Universities

### Crew

Ceri Dingle	Director
Viv Regan	Producer
Kwame Agyapong	Co-Producer Ghana
De Roy Kwesi Andrew	Researcher and Translator
Ian Foster & Andy Hirst	Cinematographer & Camera
Danny Adortey	Camera
Terri Badham & Sadhavi Sharma	Sound
Steve Daley & Helen Sewell	Production Assistants & Research
Balint Tusor	Editor
Lizzie Watson	Illustrator
Kaveh Shirdel	Web and Graphic Design
Nkasei & Crazy 2 Records	Soundtrack
Natalie Theobald & Jack Sengupta	Post-production Assistants
Deniz Unal & Gayle Kirkwood	Post-production Assistants

# Press Kit

Athanasia Pappas  
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Keresha Thomas & Holly Stead  
Kyle Duncan

# A letter to Geldof



Post-production Assistant  
Translator  
Film Logging  
Film Logging  
Technical Advisor

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