

Letter from Lynda

Mim
near Kumasi
Ghana
West Africa

Hi everyone!

My name is Lynda and I live in the small village of Mim in Ghana. I am 12 years old, and have got six older brothers and sisters – I'm the youngest, the baby of the family.

My dad is a cocoa farmer, and in fact I know quite a bit about cocoa farming because I started helping my dad when I was eight. It gets very busy, especially when it's harvest time when the cocoa pods are ripe and you have to slice them off the tree trunks – and you thought only pirates in stories have cutlasses. We've got one too -it's one of our most precious tools. Everybody helps out, there's so much to do. It's also very busy when you have to plant the cocoa trees. I like that bit, seeing all the young trees!

Cocoa farming is really hard work, especially since it is always hot (between 21 and 32 degrees) and humid or raining. We get between 1,500mm and 2,500 mm a year – the perfect humid climate for cocoa trees. Sometimes cocoa farming can be dangerous too, as there are poisonous snakes and we often have to work barefoot or in sandals. I would love a pair of Wellington boots, then I wouldn't be frightened of the snakes.

I go to Mim school. My class teacher is Mr Owusu. He's not strict and I like him a lot – he's a good teacher. He takes time to teach a subject and explains things well. When he's finished I understand what he's been teaching. Sometimes he does tell me off though. Sometimes I talk in class to my best friend. I sit next to her, her name is Doris Owusu. She's 12.

At break time we play netball. It's my favourite game. I'm second shooter. I like it because it's fast and exciting... it's good to win too! I play it with my friends. (There's a dust netball court outside school.) Sometimes I play football too – but not with the boys, they are too hard.

My favourite subject is English. In fact I'd like to be a headmistress in the end, teach English and live in Accra. I'd be kind and strict. To be a teacher I'd need to go to college

and I don't think my parents would ever be able to afford that. This makes me sad sometimes.

I have a boyfriend, called Obeng. He's 13 and plays drums. He's a good boy. I like him because he's kind and we speak English together. Sometimes I see him after school. I like him because he's good hearted. Once when I was at school and I'd left my packed lunch at home he gave me some money to buy food. That was really nice.

I really like dressing up and fashion. My favourite style is Abem nwo ha. It's a style of dress and the latest coolest music in Ghana. The dresses are long with a big skirt – the coolest colours are red, yellow and black.

I love to dance and play games with my friends. When my dad buys batteries for his cassette recorder, we dance in our yard, girls and boys together. (There is no electricity in Mim.) I also like to sing songs I learned at church. When I lie in bed in the evening I can just hear the drumming from the Methodist church. I'd like to go there to learn new songs.

Until recently I had not tasted chocolate. We often suck the cocoa beans when they come out of the pod. It's good, but very different from chocolate. When you suck the bean it's acid and slippery and the taste goes away quickly. But then my mum went to Kumasi, and when she came back she had bought chocolate for all the children. My sisters and brothers had already tasted chocolate, but I hadn't even seen it before. I didn't know what it was – when my mum gave me some, I thought it was to be mixed with water, as a drink! My mother said "no, you just suck it". At first I thought it was very light. It tasted very sweet... Sooooo good!

I would love to visit Great Britain one day. In my imagination it is very beautiful, with big, noisy, busy cities and lots going on. I'd like to learn to drive a car! People have lots of exciting things – bicycles, videos, TVs, music and fashionable clothes. Do you all have electricity in your houses? What do you see on TV?

Best wishes,

Lynda

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