



NISEC ALUMNI ABROAD

# 2019

ANNUAL REPORT



*Working together to improve educational facilities at NISEC*



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# President's Review

I am delighted to present the 2019 NAA Annual Report, the fourth consecutive report since the creation of Nisec Alumni Abroad in January 2016. In our fourth year of operation, we continued to focus our work on fulfilling our aim to help improve learning, teaching and boarding facilities at Nifa Senior High School:

- We kicked off a process to decide what our next project would be following the successful completion of our first project last year.
- We looked at our constitution to determine whether an amendment to introduce dues payment would better support our objectives.
- We took steps to find a new way to bolster our finances through external fundraising.
- We recorded a big boost to our membership numbers and online presence.

The highlight of the year was Nisec Alumni Abroad Reunion 2019. As our first face-to-face reunion since coming together as an alumni organization, this event was highly anticipated by our members and, in a way, crowned our efforts over the past few years to deliver tangible results in support of Nifa Senior High School. Held in Newark, New Jersey, the event was attended by more than 35 NAA members and their families, friends and other alumni of Nifa from countries across the world, including the United States, Canada and Europe.



I was glad to be able to attend, along with a contingent of fellow Canadians, and to engage with everyone in person, rather than through the usual electronic interactions.

Being able to put faces to the names that we already knew on our electronic platforms, and being able to catch up with classmates we hadn't seen since graduating from Nifa, was a priceless experience. At the pre-dinner conference, I was pleased to see members speak passionately and candidly about the state of our former school and what we could do to build on our achievements and continue to make a positive impact on the school.

Even as we rocked to the beat of high-life music on the dance floor at the Best Western Robert Treat Hotel, we could not shake off from our minds shocking images of the conditions at Nifa in which successive young Ghanaian boys and girls are receiving their education year after year. I want to say a special thank you to the Reunion Planning Committee for their excellent work in delivering a successful event.



The success of the 2019 Reunion helped place NAA further up in the diasporan spotlight and there is no doubt that the reunion has become a major drawcard for expanding our membership numbers. And the year did see our numbers grow in a way that we have never seen since the initial wave of membership growth in early 2016. At least 16 new members from Europe and North America boosted our ranks and injected new zest into our work.

But we still have a long way to go to get the regional balance right. Our membership numbers continue to be heavily skewed towards North America, so we need to work harder to attract more members from Europe and the United Kingdom, regions that we know have a high concentration of former Nifa students.


In August, we were fortunate to have one of our leaders visit Nifa to reassess the infrastructure situation at the school ahead of deciding on our next project. After a tour of the school's facilities, Assistant Treasurer Kwadjo Agyemang had a productive meeting with the headmaster Dr Phillip Akoto, helping build on our relationship with the school's administrators.

The meeting shed light on infrastructure works that Dr Akoto considered to be a high priority for the school, including renovation of classroom and girls' dormitory blocks that were in very poor shape.

The photos that Mr Agyemang shared speak volumes and provide a timely reminder of the scale of support that Nifa needs. In the end, I was pleased to see members provide their backing for renovating one of the girls' dormitory blocks.

There was one issue during the year that occupied our time and our platform for several weeks: the merits and demerits of introducing dues payment. There is no doubt that the debate on this issue was heated and both sides of the debate – for and against changing the constitution to allow dues payment – presented strong arguments to support their position. In the end, members voted to maintain the status quo. The issue and how it was discussed once again demonstrate NAA's strong democratic credentials and our excellent track record for making sure each member has a voice in our organization.

In 2019, we also built on our online presence by setting up social media accounts for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We expect these platforms to broaden our visibility online as we take steps to pursue external funding to supplement our project funds. I have volunteered to chair a committee I have set up to investigate how we can attract funding from external sources. The committee is expected to start its work in the coming year.



Stakeholder relationships remain an important part of our work. In particular, our partnership with the Nifa Old Students Association (NOSA) has continued to grow with the help of the NAA executive's presence on the NOSA executive platform. This has given us more visibility of what is happening on the ground at Nifa Senior High. A homecoming event coinciding with a speech and prize giving day, and the upcoming 50th anniversary celebration of the school were key areas of discussions in 2019.

While welfare and social programs are a major objective for NOSA, several year groups are undertaking non-capital intensive projects such as the provision of water storage tanks and furniture, but a few groups have expressed their intention to undertake building refurbishment projects. Knowledge of these intentions allow NAA to narrow down our options for projects we might want to undertake at Nifa.

The coming year will be a busy one for our organization.

We will be hitting the ground running with our internal fundraising campaign to support our next project, the refurbishment of a girls' dormitory block at Nifa Senior High School. I know we can continue to count on the generosity and goodwill of our members to make the financial contributions we need to make this project a reality. And in response to the eagerness members continue to express, a second NAA reunion is on the cards for 2020. I expect the executive to announce details early next year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our members for their continuing commitment and support for the NAA cause. At the time of writing, an election is being planned to elect a new team to take the reins of the NAA leadership from the middle of January 2020. I am confident a new executive, supported by the Regional Coordinators, will provide strong leadership at the helm and take our organization forward with an expanding vision to provide even greater support for Nifa Senior High School.

Nick Opoku  
President



# Organizational Overview

Nisec Alumni Abroad Inc. (NAA) was established on January 7, 2016 as a non-political, non-religious public charity group dedicated to improving learning, teaching and boarding facilities at Nifa Senior High School (previously Nifa Secondary School), Ghana. All NAA members are former Nifa students who are resident – or used to reside – outside Ghana.

Brought together by the power of social media, members were shocked to discover that facilities at their former school had fallen into a bad state of disrepair. Moved by photographs of crumbling facilities circulated on social media, the former students now residing overseas created NAA in early 2016 to lend a hand.

It is said that the founding fathers of Nifa, the alma mater of NAA members, set out to produce scholars who would be of use to their communities and to the world at large.

This objective is represented by the school's logo, whose flaming torch symbolizes the well-trained Nisec graduates inspired to go out into the world to serve.

NAA embodies everything the founding fathers envisaged for Nifa's graduates. More than that, NAA's organizational objective is helping ensure the achievement of those aspirations by successive generations of the school's graduates.

NAA is led by an elected executive, a ten-member management committee chaired by a president. Supporting the work of the management committee, especially in the important task of fundraising, is a team of three Regional Coordinators (RCs) representing the key regions from which the group's membership is drawn: Europe (including the UK), Canada and the United States.



At December 31, 2019, NAA had a total of 78 members. The organization's principal mode of communication is electronic, based on Whatsapp group platforms, where most discussions, announcements and voting take place, with meetings held via videoconferencing, using in particular the Zoom platform, where possible. NAA is guided by a constitution adopted by members on April 1, 2016. A single-issue group focused on assisting Nifa Senior High in improving its educational facilities, NAA is registered in the U.S. State of Virginia as a public charity organization.





# Governance and Regulatory Arrangements

## Summary

The composition and membership of the NAA executive and regional coordinators remained unchanged during the year. A proposal by some members to amend the constitution to allow dues payment was not adopted after it was put to a vote.

## The executive

The year represented the last year in office for the ten-member management committee (NAA's incumbent executive) ahead of a general election that would usher in a new executive on January 15 2020.

In 2019, the executive held four meetings focusing on project matters, but also on a range of other issues such as the celebration of NAA's 3rd anniversary, the organization's plans for a formal reunion in July 2019, soliciting external funding and whether or not to introduce dues payment. The challenge of attracting new members was also discussed and a decision was made to target key alumni influencers in the UK and Europe who could then attract other alumni to the organization.

The executive used the 3rd anniversary celebration of the organization to highlight and remind members of our core business and the need to build on our achievements to help improve conditions at Nifa.

The week-long celebration saw each executive stream put out a message or conduct an activity to support their governance responsibilities. These included:

- a 3rd Anniversary Quiz to promote an understanding of the NAA constitution
- a 'pep talk' session to encourage members to fulfill their financial obligations
- a 'heads-up' about the work needed to assess Nifa's priority needs to inform our next project
- a 'pep talk' session to encourage member responsiveness to the issues of NAA
- a roll call to confirm each member's

## The Executive

President	Nick Opoku
Vice-President	Mary Quao
Secretary	Kofi Ansah
Assistant Secretary	Helena Adu
Treasurer	Samuel Gyadu-Appiah
Assistant Treasurer	Kwadjo Agyemang
Project Leader	Michael Adu
Assistant Project Leader	Hayford Asare Tabiri
Registrar	Yaw Obiri
Assistant Registrar	Doris Gehrig

## Regional Coordinators

The Regional Coordinators (RCs) elected in July 2018 continued in their role as RCs for Europe (including the UK), the United States and Canada. The RCs report to the Vice-President.

The RC positions were created under the constitution in 2016 to support the executive in their work in the regions. Like the management committee, RCs have a two-year tenure and the next election for a new group of RCs is scheduled for January 2020.

There was minimal activity across the regions and RC platforms during 2019. At the 2019 NAA Reunion conference, members agreed that the best place to socialize was in the regions. They called for life in the regions to be revitalized through social activities beyond NAA's goals. Suggestions included supporting each other by attending other member's weddings, graduations, bereavements and birthday parties, as well as organizing get-togethers such as BBQ events.

It was also suggested that the regional platforms could be used to talk about and share information on such activities.

### Regional Coordinators

United States	Vera Larbi
Canada	Winifred Codjoe
Europe	Kingsley Akowuah-Addo

If funds were raised during such events, they would remain in the regional coffers. The Regional Coordinators were to ensure that discussions and information shared on the RC platforms did not conflict with NAA's objectives and platform rules (the NAA Dos and Don'ts).

## The NAA Constitution

The NAA constitution adopted in 2016 remained unchanged and continued to govern NAA's operations during the year. The RC Guidelines developed under the constitution also remained unchanged.

During the year, a suggestion by some members to introduce the payment of membership dues became a major topic of debate. Dues payment would require an amendment of NAA's constitution.

At the very outset of the organization's creation, the idea of dues payment was discussed but discounted for several reasons, including:

- the need for NAA to be a project-oriented organization, rather than a welfare-based one
- the logistical difficulties in making and collecting regular payments
- the risk of 'donor fatigue', given NAA members have several financial obligations, including dues payment, as members of their year groups under the NOSA umbrella, churches and other affiliations.

The inaugural members and executive had agreed on a one-off membership payment of \$50 (registration fee) upon becoming a member of NAA. Members would then be required to contribute towards projects.

Every two years or so, members would contribute to a chosen project, as a lump sum or in installments over a period of say six months or more. NAA's very minimal overhead expenses could be taken care of by registration fee payment and residual funds from project contributions.

Despite this explanation, some members maintained that dues payment would be good for the organization. The executive made it clear that it was not, in principle, against dues payment.

The concern was mainly about the challenges of money transfer and collection, along with the frequency of transfers and the associated charges that a dues approach would entail, among other concerns.

Argument for dues payment	Argument against dues payment
Every other organization pays dues, so why not NAA?	NAA has a one-off membership fee paid upon becoming a member.
Dues will go towards NAA projects	Money paid as dues almost invariably benefits members through welfare payments
Dues will benefit only Nifa Senior High School, not members of NAA	Dues payment is what makes one a member. If you don't pay it, you can't be considered a member.
Dues allows payment in installments, making payment less burdensome.	Project contributions can be paid as a lump sum or in installments so what the dues proponents are suggesting looks like the system we already have with the name 'dues' attached to it.
Dues might help attract external funding	Dues payment attracts excessive costs through recurrent transfer fees, especially for members outside North America.
Members who don't pay dues will not be expelled	Collection sometimes greatly inconveniences the Treasurers. In a perfect world, everyone pays directly into the NAA account, but this is not always the case. Cheques are collected and deposited, treasurers need to go to money transfer agents to collect some payments, etc.

The issue was put to a vote in September, with the following question:

“Under the NAA Constitution, members contribute money towards projects when required. The constitution does not make provision for the payment of dues. Vote Yes if you want us to change the constitution so that we can pay dues, in addition to contributing money towards projects. Vote No if you want us to continue the current system of contributing money only when there is a project, without changing the constitution.”

At the end of the ballot, the overwhelming majority of members did not agree to the introduction of dues payment.

### The NAA Annual Report

The 2017 NAA Annual Report was released on 5 July, well behind schedule.

Annual reports are a constitutional requirement for the organization, and contribute to our accountability and transparency.

They are expected to be delivered in the year following the reporting year.

The challenges of combining full-time work with NAA’s voluntary work mean it is not always possible to deliver these reports on schedule.

However, the executive recognizes the importance of these reports and does its best to deliver them as soon as practicable.



# Membership, registration and communication

## Summary

NAA's membership increased significantly in 2019. By the end of the year, NAA had a total of 78 members spread across 7 countries.

## Membership

The year 2019 was a bumper year for NAA membership. Over the course of the year, NAA gained a total of 16 members, but also lost three members. At December 31, the total number of members in the organization was 78, up more than 23 per cent on 2018.

The executive continues to find the best way to increase membership from the UK and Europe. These two regions are known to be home to a large number of Nisec alumni. At least one former student resident in the UK and considered a key link to other alumni was persuaded to join NAA with the expectation that he would attract other alumni. Unfortunately this strategic move failed after the person exited the organization shortly afterwards without any explanation.

## NAA membership by country

Country	No. of members
Australia	2
Belgium	1
Canada	9
Germany	1
Switzerland	1
United Kingdom	12
United States	52

## New Members

Evelyn Amofo	1987	USA
Isaac Addo Bekoe	1982	Canada
Ruth Mintah-Ashun	1992	USA
Grace Okine	1982	USA
Sekyiwa Gyeke-Dako	1984	USA
Douglas Abbey	1987	USA
Monica Konadu-Agyei	1992	USA
Diana Acheampong	1979	USA
Henry Asare Adjei	1976	USA
Michelle Miller	1984	USA
George Osei Wiafe	1993	USA
Alex Wilson	1982	UK
Janice Koranteng	1992	USA
Ben Nyadu	1981	UK
Gladys Nyadu	1984	UK
Oduro-Kwarteng	1983	UK

### Communication platforms

The Global Platform, NAA's main communication platform, continued to be the organization's official registry. It was one of five official Whatsapp-based communication platforms maintained by NAA during 2019. The other platforms are:

- The NAA Executive platform
- RC Europe platform
- RC Canada platform
- RC USA platform

Joining NAA entitles members to a place on its communication platforms. One becomes a member of NAA only after being placed on the main platform, which then entitles their presence on their respective RC platforms.

At 31 December, there were 15 registered members in Europe (UK and mainland Europe); 2 in Australia; 9 in Canada and 52 in the United States.

### Our online presence

To take advantage of the enormous potential of social media platforms, the NAA executive set up social media accounts for the following platforms:

Facebook: @nisekansabroad  
Twitter: @nisekansabroad  
Instagram: @nisekansabroad

These build on our existing online presence through the NAA website ([www.nisekansabroad.org](http://www.nisekansabroad.org)), which was launched on July 1, 2018.

Members were encouraged to visit the website regularly to help elevate our online presence even further in Google search engines. They were also encouraged to 'like' and share our Facebook page, and follow NAA on Twitter and Instagram.

The NAA website remains a work-in-progress. There is much to be done to improve the quality and usability of the site. Ben Nyadu, one of our new members, has offered to modernize the site so it can better cater for the needs of Nisek Alumni Abroad and be more attractive and inviting to visitors.

New features being considered include animations and call to action to help increase traffic and visitor retention, and bring other benefits to the organization. There are also plans to add user membership registration logins to enable members to have private discussions on relevant topics and make comments on the website.

## Reunion 2019

The NAA Reunion Committee delivered NAA's long-anticipated reunion in the United States during July 19–20. Over those two days in summer, NAA members were able to shift their interactions from a virtual platform to a face-to-face setting in Newark, New Jersey.

The event, which took place at the Best Western Robert Treat Hotel, consisted of three main sessions: a meet and greet on the evening of July 19, and a conference and a gala dinner on July 20.

The reunion was attended by more than 35 members and their families, the majority from the USA and Canada, but at least one member from as far as Switzerland. It was a happy and lively occasion for the former students of Nisec. Many of them had not seen each other since graduating from the school – some up to four decades.

Amid the festive atmosphere, members reminisced about life at Nisec, enjoyed drinks and meals together at a Latino restaurant, strategized about how to move the organization forward and even received free financial advice at a special session delivered by Eric Amegashie, one of our inaugural members and a financial expert.





Kudos for the educative section on Finance

Doris Anaman

There will never be another Reunion like 2019

Nick Opoku

An experience to hold on for a lifetime

Lady Queen

It's all about Nisec, love, friendship and fun

Vera Larbi

Our value has increased.

Yaw Obiri

I danced so much my knees hurt.

Kwadjo Agyemang

My classmates are now requesting to be part of NAA.

Lady Queen

Nisecans, let's start planning for next year

Harriet Tagoe

### Other social activities

Birthday celebrations remained the main social activity among members on the main platform. More than 55 birthday celebrations were held across the year, each attracting widespread responses from members. Other social activities included celebration of Mother's Day, Father's Day, Canada Day, Independence Day (USA) and International Women's Day, as well as expressions of condolences to bereaved members.

### The NAA Calendar

Release of the first NAA Calendar for 2019 has proved a big hit among members. The calendar features the birthdays and photographs of all members who provided these details to the NAA executive on request. In addition to serving as a visible representation of our organization, the calendar reminds us to celebrate the birthdays of our members on our electronic platforms. In response to popular requests, plans are underway to release a 2020 calendar. Members have been asked to provide their preferred portraits to the executive for the calendar. New and existing members who were not featured on the 2019 calendar were also encouraged to furnish their birthday details and photographs.





# Projects

## Summary

Steps were taken to begin the process of selecting and fundraising for NAA's next project in consultation with the headmaster of Nifa Senior High School. Members voted to refurbish a girls' dormitory block in dire need of repairs.

With NAA's maiden project completed and handed over to Nifa Senior High School in 2018, the executive decided that 2019 was a good time to start the process for the next project.

In August, Assistant Treasurer Kwadjo Agyemang visited the school and held a meeting with the headmaster to determine the school's priority needs. The headmaster identified 5 priorities:

- Dinning hall refurbishment – the headmaster said the District Assembly was undertaking this project and that painting was under way.
- Poly tanks – the 1999 Year Group had taken up this project, but the headmaster would not discourage additional poly tanks.
- Classroom Refurbishment – the work that was required included painting, carpentry work, and the replacement of louvres and doors.

## Project Choice: Members' Views

- Let's consider projects that will last so NAA's contribution will leave a lasting stamp.
- We should buy poly tanks because Nifa has a perennial water problem.
- Let's provide clotheslines because students hang out their laundry to dry on grass.
- We can provide computers to boost the school's academic performance.
- Let's paint one building as a showpiece ahead of Nifa's 50th anniversary to prompt others to follow our example.
- Let's buy lawn mowers for the sports field because they are the headmaster's priority.
- Let's buy commercial-grade, ride-on mowers so they can last longer.
- Mowers are not a good idea because the school cannot maintain them.
- Let's provide more bathroom facilities to ease congestion.
- Let's fix the dining hall's broken windows and paint it because its condition is deplorable.
- Let's replace the doors and windows of one or two classrooms and paint the classrooms.
- Windows are of paramount importance due to the cold weather.
- Let's renovate the classrooms or girls' dormitories.

- Girls dormitory refurbishment (2 blocks) – both needed painting and carpentry work.
- Lawn mowers – The headmaster placed emphasis on the need for lawn movers. He said the sports field was very large and the two residential-grade lawn mowers used by the school were not adequate for the large field.

Mr Agyemang shared photos he took of the school's crumbling facilities on NAA's main platform, which ignited further outpouring of emotions about the dire straits in which the school continued to find itself. After Mr Agyemang's visit, the headmaster provided some initial cost estimates for the refurbishment of facilities, which needed further clarification before a decision could be made.

Members offered a wide variety of views on project options over the last two weeks of August 2019 to help inform decision-making.



### New cost estimates

In November, the headmaster provided fresh cost estimates for a classroom block and a girls' dormitory block found to be seriously in need of refurbishment. In addition, the headmaster provided estimates for lawn mowers, which he considered to be a high priority given the magnitude of the work of maintaining the sports field.

The estimates included the costs of replacing louver blades and frames. Given the high rates of louvre breakage and loss, the executive obtained estimates for more durable window options, including sliding windows.

To decide on which project to undertake, members were asked to vote for one of three options:

- Girls' dormitory block refurbishment
- Classroom block refurbishment
- Purchase of commercial grade ride-on mowers.

More than 88 per cent of members voted for the refurbishment of the girls' dormitory.

The girls' dormitory option had several parts and it was important to decide whether to take on the entire refurbishment or parts of it.

Also, the executive was keen to hear the views of members about one component in particular – glass louvre windows – and to decide whether to rule it out or in.

The original estimates provided by the headmaster included louvres as the only window option.

The executive subsequently requested cost estimates for sliding glass windows because we believed they could not be easily broken or removed in the same way louvres were (the school had rejected the idea of wooden windows completely).

A lively debate among members ensued about the merits and demerits of one window option or the other.

This debate lasted to the end of the year. A decision is expected to be made in early 2020.

# Financial Statement

## Summary

In 2019, a total of \$810 in registration fee was received. NAA's income totaled \$810 and expenses totaled \$250. A decision was made by the executive to establish a committee to look into ways to seek external funding to supplement internal fundraising efforts.

## Registration fee

At December 31, all NAA members had paid their one-off \$50 registration fee. A total of \$810 in registration fee was received from 16 members.

## External fundraising

The executive revisited the idea of looking for external funding after agreeing that external funding was the best way for NAA to supplement internal fundraising resources, make a significant positive impact on Nifa, and remain relevant in the affairs of the school. External funding would help us undertake projects that would outlast any of the current members of NAA and establish our group as an important stakeholder in the affairs of Nifa Senior High.

Some members suggested that we use outside help to raise funds externally. They believed that while that could cost money, it would have greater financial outcomes.

The President called for volunteers to join an External Fundraising Committee to look into these matters and volunteered himself to chair the committee.

## Summary of accounts receivables and expenses

Beginning Balance January 1st 2019	\$3,113.46
<b>Receivables</b>	\$810
<b>Total Deposits</b>	<b>\$3,923.46</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Printing of Calendar	\$200
PayPal Payments	\$50
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$250</b>
Ending Balance December 31st 2019	<b>\$3,824.26</b>

The deposits or income stream was from member registration fees which came in during various times of the year.

Our expense was a withdrawal of \$200 for the printing of our inaugural calendar distributed at the reunion.



# Conclusion

Nisec Alumni Abroad continues to grow, in numbers and in strength. On the whole, our fourth year of operation has been a success, building on our record of achievements with a one-pointed mission to help improve education facilities at Nifa Senior High School.

The year 2019 will be remembered in particular as the year that brought our members together physically for the first time since the creation of NAA. It is clear that being able to meet and interact in person has made us stronger as an organization. It is important we seek further opportunities to hold physical reunions as often as possible, while appreciating the opportunities that electronic

communication affords our organization to pursue its core business.

We have continued to build and strengthen relationships with our stakeholders, including the headmaster of Nifa Senior High School and the Nifa Old Students Association.

In the coming year, we will maintain our focus on projects. We will be stepping up our internal fundraising efforts to support the refurbishment of a girls' dormitory block at Nifa Senior High School, while also taking steps to secure external funding over the long term.

