

# ghana rural integrated development GRID newsletter

March 31, 2009

Greetings from Ghana

Our faithful public relations officer, Ella Porter, who is the usual author of the newsletter, is currently in Milwaukee, helping her son Andy and his family. Andy's wife Nancy is seriously ill and we would greatly appreciate your prayers on her behalf and on behalf of the entire Porter family. We had news today that she has been discharged from hospital for which we give thanks.

Ella has asked that we bring you up to date with all that has been going on here in Ghana since her last report to you.

First of all, we personally want to send our sincere thanks to each of you for the interest you continue to show in this special program which is reaching more and more people and lifting them out of abject poverty. We can hardly believe that it was twenty-five years ago this year that GRID was formed to be a support arm for NEA and we marvel at all that has been accomplished since. Many of you have been behind this work from day one; many have caught its vision for sustainable development more recently. Whoever and wherever you are, we thank you for being part of this life hanging project in Ghana.

Now for a glimpse at the last few months...

## *Education*

We are pleased to inform you that the Carpenter Junior High School is now complete and in use by the students. This was a special project. One of David Mensah's schoolmates (from Tyndale University) and her husband, Mamey and Gary Curran, decided they would like to use the celebration of their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary to improve the quality of education for some children in Ghana. They assembled a team that included their two children and a number of friends which raised funds to buy half the materials needed to build a six-classroom school with a

library, teacher's room, office and storeroom attached. In addition they raised their own funds for travel and in-country expenses. Then came the hard labour. They worked together with the NEA team, local pastors and local masons to get the building well on its way. On top of that, some of the team members who felt their skills would be better used with the local children spent each morning teaching the eager primary school students. The community of Carpenter is most grateful for their support and for the educational materials that they brought along for the teachers and students.

Building a school is quite a costly venture and another long-time partner, Bloomington Evangelical Community Church came to the aid of the community by supplying the other half of the materials needed to complete the building. An energetic youth team, supported by Pastor John Mangrum, also raised the finances needed to come and get their hands dirty by helping to take the school to the next level. They also brought an amazing assortment of school supplies, books, sports equipment and enough lemonade and cookie mixes for the school to have a real celebration.

Although the teams came at different times, this is a great example of partnership to reach a common goal. The Junior High is now complete and students are no longer exposed to the elements (or goats running in and out of their learning space). Three of the classrooms are used for the Junior High students and the other three classrooms are used for grades 4, 5 and 6. This has decongested the primary school and made room for grades 1, 2, and 3 plus kindergarten and nursery. The 120 children that formed the nursery/kindergarten/grade 1 group - in one - classroom-- can really spread out!

An unanticipated benefit of this project is that local government is providing more teachers and has built accommodation for them.

We extend special thanks to these teams and those who supported them to provide this asset for school children of Carpenter. A formal commissioning ceremony will take place in May when representatives of the Ministry of Education as well as GRID board members will be present for its handover.

### *Women in Development*

Working with women has been one of the key facets of our work since 1987 and we are still excited about the way that woman by woman, it is making a difference. From 2002 to 2009 we have added more than 1000 women into peanut farming co-operative groups in the Deg and South Mo areas. This year the women had a bumper harvest and recorded yields higher than we have had to date. One woman reported that from her 1 bag of peanut seed she harvested 19 bags!

At a recent workshop with 50 of the women many stories came out as to what the peanut farms have meant to them. A woman from the village of Asantekwa reported that she had been able to build a house for her blind father and now is able to pay all her children's school fees. A woman from the village of Weila told how she had sold some of her peanuts and has purchased several goats which continue to multiply and give her a good income. One widow shared that when her husband died she had eight children to support. At that time, none of the children were in school because they could not afford to send them. Through the program she has since been able to send all her children to school. One child has graduated from university and is now working. Her second child is still attending university and the others are at various educational levels.

Apart from the work with women in the Deg and South Mo area, NEA continues to assist about 500 women from 11 villages (near Tamale) that provide shea butter for The BodyShop International. This past year, these groups generated over one million dollars (\$1,000,000) from shea butter sales. So... keep buying The BodyShop's Shea Body Butter. It is truly helping a lot of women, plus their families, to meet their basic needs of food, water, healthcare, education, shelter and more.

## **Agriculture/Food Security**

### **Pigs**

NEA's piggery is a growing success story. The initial 6 from September 2007, have now multiplied to 78! We have already started to sell the young males and three of the 'second generation' females have already farrowed. The needed expansion of their accommodation is complete, but plans are already in place for a second phase of expansion. We have orders for pork every week and can't keep up with the demand.

### **Ostriches/Emu**

This is the laying season and we are pleased to report that for the first time we have had naturally hatched ostriches, meaning that rather than put the eggs in the incubators which resulted in high electricity costs, the parents sat on the eggs themselves. The babies are thriving.

## **Aquaculture**

It's been quite a process:

Build the fish hatchery > drill a well to provide a continual source of water > build a fish pond to produce fish fingerlings > hire staff > search for parent fish stock > produce fingerlings > locate communities with dams/ponds that don't dry up in the dry season > talk to the communities about fish production and have them select a team to be trained to manage the

ponds > organize a weeklong training program for the pond managers > stock their ponds with fingerlings > monitor the ponds to make sure the fish are thriving

And finally... harvest and share the fish!

On Tuesday, March 3, 2009, the first community pond harvest took place in the pond that had been stocked in the village of Tinga. NEA's aquaculture team along with the Tinga pond managers were spread out in the pond with the big nets and had a large catch of table size fish. It turned into a community celebration. The chief and his elders, men women and all the school children that just could not be kept in class while such excitement was going on lined the banks of the pond to see the first drag come to shore. There was lots of cheering, lots of smiles and for some of us a few tears of joy as we finally saw the fruits of our labours and proved against all odds that yes, fish can be grown in northern Ghana! This is a good example of a sustainable project. The pond was stocked with male and female fingerlings and the fishing net only catches the big fish. Thousands of fry, at various sizes, are still swimming in the Tinga pond and harvests will take place every few months.

And, in December, NEA received the Best Fish Farmers award for Northern Region. This was awarded by the Ministry of Fisheries. We are having lots of visitors to the aquaculture department and are sending 1000's of fingerlings out to fish ponds in northern Ghana. We have already begun to supply fingerlings to several other regions (equivalent to provinces for Canada or states in the US) in the country. We are pleased that this sector is expanding thereby resulting in improved health through additional protein being added to many people's diet.

## *Health*

In the previous newsletter, Ella updated you on the visit of the joint medical/surgical team from Canada and the United Kingdom. Since their departure we continue to hear of the effect of their visit. It doesn't matter what village we visit, someone has a story to tell of the impact of this program on their lives. A week ago, two women walked about 10 miles to bring us a basket of eggs just to say thank you for including them as hernia patients. They are now well and strong and able to go about their activities. The only complaint is that the people in these remote villages would like the teams to come more often and stay longer! We are pleased to report that Operation Hernia has chosen its team for 2009 and the Canadian team is in the process of being formed. Last year dentistry was added. This year it seems that optometry will be added as well. We could never begin to convey what this medical support means to the people of this area and are thrilled that despite the heat, hard work and difficult working conditions, our friends are willing to return - and inspire others to come with them to provide such high quality medical care to the people we serve.

## Peace-Building

David, in his new chieftaincy role, is having an even greater impact on building peace and stability in the area through working with the chiefs from about 40 villages. There are lots of challenges, but one by one they are being tackled. He has also organized youth representatives from these villages and they are very keen to be involved in the development processes of their community. It is encouraging to see this new group so enthusiastic about addressing problems in their villages and the area in general.

## Ministry

At Christmas, the churches that we work with held their Christmas convention in the village of Babatokuma. This community has been inviting us to come for some time and share our message of Christ with them. About 1500 to 2000 people came from the 30 churches for this conference and while there, they also had meetings in two other villages Soronase and Chiranda. In each of these three villages, many people made the decision to leave witchcraft and fear behind to follow Christ. The pastors are spending lots of time with these three new groups of believers. Please pray for them.

So much is being accomplished yet there is still so much more to do. As you can see from this update, together we are making an enormous difference in the lives of people in our project areas. On their behalf we send the sincerest of thanks.

## Other news

For the past week we have had an evaluator sponsored by CIDA to look at the results of our collaborative effort from 2002 to 2009. The evaluator's opening remarks was that CIDA is aware that this is a very successful project and wants to look more closely at our model and the lessons that we have learned that can be used by other projects. We are grateful for CIDA's support over the years which has multiplied the funds donated many times over and enabled us to do more than we ever dreamed possible.

Brenda and David Mensah for the GRID and NEA team

"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" - Romans 8:32

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