GRID & NEA

sustainable development in Ghana

For I was hungry, and you gave me food ... Matthew 25:35

The beauty of GRID/NEA's ministry is that it begins with Ghana's poorest of the poor.

Widows, who traditionally lose every possession when their husbands die, are among the very poorest people in Northern Ghana. Struggling to live on about $20 each year, they and their children have experienced hunger that we cannot imagine.

GRID-NEA want to see hunger eliminated for these women and their communities.

Long before 'gender equity' was commonplace in development programs, GRID-NEA began working with illiterate rural women without job opportunities.

Early in the morning these women walked long distances to search for firewood and would then carry as much as they could lift onto their heads (a formidable amount) to a market town to sell. They would earn enough money through the sale of their firewood to buy ingredients to prepare an evening meal for their families, which they would do after walking back home from the market town.

The lives of these women have changed now, thanks to your ongoing partnership and God's hand of favour on us. We rejoice to tell you that our food security program is steadily defeating hunger in Northern Ghana.

Thank you for your faithful support of our program. Because of your continued generosity, many hungry people now have good food to eat.

GRID (Ghana Rural Integrated Development) and NEA (Northern Empowerment Association) are partner organizations working to alleviate poverty in Northern Ghana. Motivated by Christ's love, our mission is to assist poor communities to meet their basic needs in a sustainable manner. You can learn more at grid-nea.org.

Some members of the Tinga Women's Co-Op

How Does the Women's Co-op Program Work?

After several meetings with women in extreme poverty, we came up with a plan together to meet their needs: co-op farming.

The women told us that they could commit their time and energy to this venture. Local chiefs would give them land.

Peanuts were selected as the ideal crop for them to grow: peanuts are low-maintenance, easily marketed, replenish the soil, and provide protein.

So twenty years ago, we launched a peanut co-op with ten women in the Janga area. It was so successful in eliminating hunger for those women and their families that today we continue to use the co-op program to help other women.

With the help of community leaders, NEA registers a group of at least twenty women in a village. The women choose a leader to liaise with the NEA Women's Program Coordinator.

NEA gives each participant one bag of seed, training, and funds to hire help in preparing the land for planting. The women plant, weed, and harvest the crop.

At the end of the growing season, NEA collects and stores two bags of peanuts from each woman. Next season, one bag will be sold and the money will be given back to the woman to hire help in preparing the land; the other bag will be used as seed.

NEA works with each woman for three years. At the end of the third year, a woman is able to stand on her own.

A graduating woman pays back her initial bag of seed which is used to help another woman start the program.

Towards the end of her three year term, she is also given training in animal husbandry and then provided with a goat. Goat-rearing provides even more food security and can be another source of income.

Results of the Co-op Program

The results of our women's co-op give us great joy. In the Janga area, over 2000 women from 14 villages have graduated from our program. Many are still producing peanuts and are able to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health care, and education for their children. They now have hope and dignity.

In Carpenter, a similar program has already assisted about 1700 women. Each woman has about five dependents, which means that our program has assisted over 20,000 people meet their basic needs.

We now have regular requests from chiefs and leaders to start a women's program in their communities.

This year, for example, we started a cooperative in the village of Tinga, about thirty miles from Carpenter. The Tinga chief had heard of the impact of the program and kept reminding us that it was needed in his area. This new co-op extends NEA's reach into the Gonja tribe, which inhabits land north of Carpenter. Twenty women have been included in the Tinga co-op, many of them widows supporting children.

One woman, Akosua Kumah, had lost two of her adult children and is now caring for all ten of her grandchildren. When we visited the co-op farms recently, she and the other women were in the process of harvesting. The peanut shells were full and they will have a bumper harvest! The women's faces were full of joy and pride in their accomplishment. We share in their excitement and progress.

Akosua Kumah harvests peanuts

Seed Planting and Crop Production

NEA grows many crops, such as corn, peanuts, cassava, beans, and various garden vegetables. We use these crops to test and model organic agricultural practices, to provide food and seed for participants in our program, and to generate income for the ongoing work that we do.

We have had remarkable success with our corn crops, and NEA is the only Certified Seed Producer for corn in the Bole District. After we harvest and dry the corn, we sort it by hand. The very best seed is packaged for distribution.

The result? NEA seed has a 97% germination rate! Corn purchased in the market has a germination rate of under 40%, so our seed has the potential to more than double a farmer's yield with no additional work.

As the word gets around, many people are turning to NEA for good seed and it is difficult to keep up with the demand. We are grateful to God for this unaccountable success.

Come and hear our news in person

David and Brenda Mensah will be speaking at the following services. You are welcome to join us for any of these.

Sun. Sep. 12 (7:30P): Uxbridge Baptist Church, Uxbridge, ON

Sun. Sep. 19 (10:00A): Talbot Creek Community Church, Brechin, ON

Sun. Sep. 26 (10:30A): Westney Heights Baptist Church, Ajax, ON

For more information, please contact us at grid@grid-nea.org.

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To learn more, go to grid-nea.org.

Ella's Corner

In August, my husband and I attended the Annual GRID Board meetings. As we listened to reports, looked at the past, and planned for the future, we thanked God for the various aspects of this work that have changed the lives of so many people, bringing self-sustainability, which is our goal, to a great part of Northern Ghana.

Both days our morning devotionals were very challenging. Dr. Doug Webster reminded us that we are not in a "sprint" but in a "marathon", when we care for the poor and needy. In other words, spiritual sustainability is what we all need to strive for.

Rev. Doug Porter in his devotional spoke of oppression of the poor, saying that those who cause oppression of the poor are out of touch with God (Proverbs 14:31).

Dr. Jennifer Wilson, who has led several medical teams to Ghana, reminded us that 20 million children die each year in Africa from severe malnutrition. I would encourage you to continue in the "marathon" to help GRID do this God-given work.

Please pray for David and Brenda Mensah as they return to Ghana to continue this work, and for their family in Canada, the US, and England.

Ella Porter

Ella Porter serves on GRID's Board.

Our holistic program

by Dr. David Mensah, GRID/NEA Director

It is impossible for us to convey in a single newsletter the scope of our integrated program in Northern Ghana. We have chosen to use this newsletter to highlight some of the exciting results that we are seeing in the agricultural part of our food security program.

Food security is a vital component of our overall program. It is intimately connected to our other sectors, such as environmental care, peacebuilding, education, health, and church growth.

Sometimes the connection between the church and feeding the hungry becomes confusing for Christians. We compartmentalize "humanitarian" and "evangelistic" activities and then try to decide which one is more important.

We at GRID/NEA do not want to divide our ministry like that. Every aspect of our work is ministry, offered out of love for God and a desire to obey Christ. We know that when we give someone a cup of grain to eat, we are preaching the gospel just as surely as we are when we use words to announce the good news.

We assist people regardless of their religion, and we do not begin a relationship with a community by preaching with words. Rather, we come alongside them and live with them, helping them as we are able.

Our experience has been that after a while, community members ask us to explain why we are doing this. Right now we have a waiting list of villages who would like to hear the gospel in words.

And so we plan for future ministry that will include sharing our faith in words and in our actions. We remain thankful for you who have been our friends in this work and hope that you are encouraged by the results that are impacting Northern Ghana.

2010 Ghana Medical Team

The 47 members of our annual medical team are preparing for their stay in Ghana from October 29th to November 14th. We are excited to have a dental and eye team joining the core medical team. They invite you to pray for their unity, compassion, wisdom, health, and safety. Check our website often during their stay there, as we'll post updates as we can.

Donating Online

You can now **donate to GRID online**. It's easy, secure, and you'll receive your tax receipt within minutes.

To learn more, go to grid-nea.org/donate.

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