GRID & NEA

sustainable development in Ghana

Don't Cry

by Brenda Mensah

This year's 47-member medical team brought compassion and hope to thousands of people.

I am reminded of the story in Luke 7, when Jesus said to the widow who had lost a son, "Don't cry," and then proceeded to do something about her situation. There were many situations this year where together we were able to prevent tears.

I think of the woman in Buswema who hemorrhaged after having twins. Without the team's intervention, there would have been three funerals and many tears.

I think of Jackie's brother, who was unable to find help for a kidney disease until the team arrived. Without the team's help, I am convinced that we would be shedding tears at this boy's funeral.

I think of Kwame, who, thanks to medication that the team brought, has his heart condition controlled.

I think of the countless little ones who were daily hooked to IVs, usually because of a deadly combination of malaria and pneumonia.

I think of the children of over 200 people who passed through our operating rooms. Those children will be spared the tears and desperation of losing a parent.

Thank you for supporting and enabling this amazing team. By God's grace, and with your help, we have been able to tell thousands, "Don't cry."

2011 Health Team

Expatriate Members	47
Ghanaian Members	125
Countries Represented	5
Clinics	9
Patients	9000+
Surgeries	288
Budget	$50,000

Gifts Received from Villages

priceless

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.

Short-Term Team; Long-Term Impact

by Jacques Lapointe

Improving health or alleviating poverty: which should be our priority? David Mensah, NEA Director, has an emphatic response to that question. "Without health people can't work their way out of poverty in a sustainable manner, and without alleviation of poverty they won't be able to sustain good health over the long term." This makes good sense, and is why GRID and NEA's program in Northern Ghana attends to health ***and*** to the many facets of poverty alleviation.

2011 Ghana Health / Operation Hernia Team

Once again this year my wife, Brigitte, and I travelled to Ghana to help with last minute preparations for the arrival of the Medical Team. When the team arrived, we participated as members of the Eye Team. For two weeks virtually all of NEA's resources, along with the the team members, were deployed in several central village locations in an intensive treatment blitz of all types of medical issues. Thousands of patients had waited a long time and come from long distances to see the doctors, surgeons, nurses and a host of other professionals who had come to help for the fifth consecutive year. Months go into the preparation of this team, and for two weeks the health problems of thousands are attended to and some people even saved from imminent death.

And then it's over. Sometimes we wondered about the long-term impact these teams were really making.

The best perspective on the relative importance of this team's intervention was given by the Regional Director for Medical Services, who opened our eyes to the health realities of this poorest region of Ghana. The Northern Region is by far the largest region, covering about one-third of the country. Approximately 2.5 million people live in this mostly rural area and the many villages are connected by the poorest roads in the country. This entire area is serviced by only 17 doctors, most who live in the region's capital. As a result, many of the small hospitals and clinics scattered in the Region don't have a doctor. Medicine is scarce and they have only a little equipment. Ghana offers a subsidized health insurance program that gives participants free access to these basic services, and yet even at an annual cost of $5, over 90% of those who are seen by the medical team cannot afford it.

Our team, by comparison, arrived with 15 doctors with some of the best training in the world and a full pharmacy of donated and purchased medicines. The eye team came with an inventory of over 4000 prescription glasses plus thousands of reading glasses and sunglasses and the best optometry equipment possible. Even more important, the entire team came prepared to serve the long, exhausting hours in the heat day after day. Together with the Ghanaian translators and other team members they did so with a compassion that was noted more than once by both patients and Ghanaian health professionals who had joined the team.

So, how important is the Medical Team to GRID and NEA's overall holistic program? The short answer is that there is no other way that the majority of our patients could ever have access to such care. As much as better nutrition is a building block of health, and as much as education and prevention will reduce the incidence of disease over the long term, these Medical Teams are irreplaceable in getting people back onto their feet to take care of themselves and their family.

The Eye Team

Emergency surgery being performed on a young boy from Nyamboi. He was one of 210 surgical patients.

Dr. Kyle and Amanda during a busy day under the dental tent.

Lead pharmacist Susan Fockler preparing pediatric suspensions.

Pediatric nurse Danielle attending patients in our “pediatric ward.”

Dr. Kirsten assisting an emergency patient.

Dr. Jennifer collaborating with pediatrician Dr. Sean.

Local volunteers are trained to take blood pressures.

An excited team departing from Pearson International Airport with 130 hockey bags full of medicine and supplies.

Carpenter Church was transformed into an eye clinic.

The sickest children were given hand-knitted bears donated by friends of the team.

Pediatrician Dr. Julie examining a young patient.

Jacques Lapointe, GRID Chairman, thanking the village of Yaara for their generous gifts to the team.

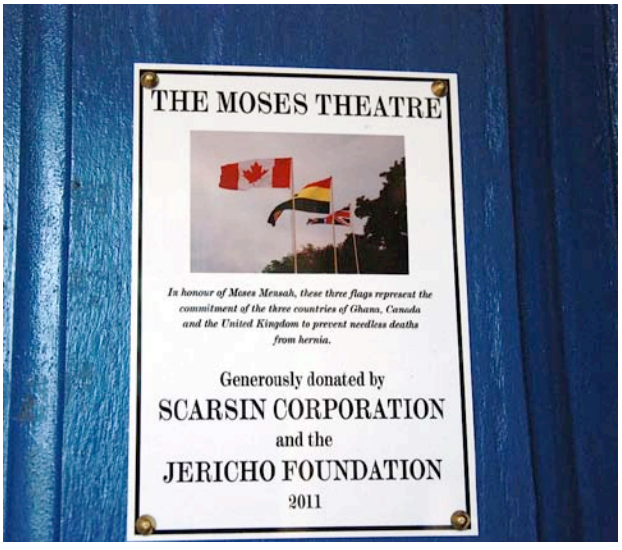
Nurses Glenda, Elena, and Erin setting up a station for rapid malaria testing.

Each day Mary circulated a tin containing an inspirational quote and a treat for each member.

A full waiting room.

The 2011 Physician Team: (back) Drs. Julie, Carol, Sean, Jennifer and Joe; (front) Drs. Gillian, Sarah, Kirsten and Rob

Dr. Sarah with a special young patient.



The third operating theatre was named in honour of David Mensah's father.

Nurse Erin at the pediatric temperature and weight station.

Until We Stand On Our Own

by Dr. Jennifer Wilson

Dr. Jennifer with midwife Ayi, medical assistant Ernestina, and infectious control nurse Mariama.

Of all the things I saw, heard and experienced during our fifth Ghana Health Team mission, these six words resonated in my heart in a special way. The Regional Director of Medical Services was addressing our team on the last day of our mission. He outlined the many challenges facing their health care system and concluded by saying that, until they could stand on their own, they are so grateful for any help we can give the people of the North.

Until we stand on our own. We recognize that the solution to the health care crisis in Northern Ghana is not our two-week mission every year. We know that the ultimate goal is a sustainable health care system that does not rely on help from abroad. However, developing a sustainable health care system will take time. Until such a time it is a privilege for our medical, dental, eye and surgical team to help as many people as we can. It is a privilege for us to partner with NEA and GRID, who are so effectively addressing the basic determinants of health in so many villages. It is a privilege for us to see our statistics and observations being used to create programs that will make a difference to thousands of lives.

Until we stand on our own. One of the greatest joys of our team was the transfer of skills to local health care personnel. Ernestina, a medical assistant who has worked with us for five years, told us that she has gained a great deal of wisdom from working with our team. Her clinical skills have improved so dramatically that the government has now put her in charge of a large clinic that has no doctor. She has taken what she has learned from us and has now trained her staff of 30. As a result, her clinic is functioning at a very high level and their productivity has doubled. Ayi, who is a local midwife, explained to me that after watching our team deliver a baby in 2007, they have completely changed their technique of delivery in the Bamboi Clinic. It was such a pleasure to hear the testimony of Isaac, an optometrist from Sunyani's regional hospital. He and his assistants learned so much from Dr. Martin and the eye team and they were excited to return to their clinic and begin applying all that they had learned.

Until we stand on our own. These are powerful, hopeful words that reflect a vision for the future. I am reminded of the passage in Ezekiel 22 when God was looking for someone to stand in the gap on behalf of a nation. Scripture is full of examples of men and women who were willing to stand in the gap to fight battles on others' behalf. That is what this mission is all about. It is about standing in the gap to help our global neighbors. It is about standing in the gap to articulate and embody God's love.

Until the vision of sustainable health care is realized in Northern Ghana, the Canadian flag, the UK flag and the Ghanaian flag will continue to fly together outside the NEA headquarters. Until the vision is realized and the gap is closed, these three countries are committed to working together, with God's help, to prevent illness and death and improve health for all.

On behalf of each life saved and each person who suffers less as a result of our visit, I want to thank each team member, each family member, each supporter and each donor who has been willing to stand in that gap until such a time as our friends in Ghana can stand on their own.

Donate to GRID

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http://grid-nea.org/donate

Cheque
Cheques made out to Ghana Rural Integrated Development should be sent to our address in Milton.

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