



Celebrating Mother's Day

by Brenda Mensah

Happy Mother's Day!

I'd like to tell you about two special women whose dreams of helping others are coming true.

As a little girl, Deborah Mensah dreamed of growing up and helping mothers and babies. She eventually pursued studies focusing on maternal and child health. In the course of her studies, she learned that many very young children who die do so in the first month of life. The first week of life, in fact, is critical for a child. She also learned about a project in Bangladesh that had been able to reduce neonatal deaths by nearly 40% through training and supporting a volunteer village health system.

When Deborah showed the methodology and results of this project to us, we were still sorrowing with four NEA staff members who had recently lost newborns within the first 24 hours of life. From our years of work with our women's co-operatives, we knew that most rural women had lost one or more

children. We were encouraged to learn of a way to reduce so much death and sorrow. GRID/NEA had been working with 15 village health volunteers for a number of years. We could imagine that with adequate training, they could implement a project similar to the successful one in Bangladesh.

Next, there was our dear, persistent Dr. Jennifer Wilson who came to us after every medical mission and reminded us that malaria diagnoses ranked number one with the patients they saw each year. She dreamed of preventing people from getting malaria. One idea was to distribute nets at our clinics; however, we thought that there might be a better way. We imagined a program where nets would be installed in every sleeping place in communities; where local health professionals would help to track cases; and where communities would be trained on the benefits of and care of the nets.

In December 2011, we were able to combine the concerns and dreams of these two women into a single project: the Leyaata ("Rescue Us") Project. We are excited to know that we will be able to support a volunteer mother and child health system, *and* distribute nets to communities with training and support.

We believe that, through the Leyaata Project, many more little girls and boys will live to fulfill their dreams and that many more mothers will experience truly happy Mother's Days!

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.

Rescuing Mothers and Infants

Leyaata means “rescue us,” and is an apt name for a project that has saved the lives of 23 newborns in just three months.

As part of this project, community health volunteers are visiting mothers twice before birth and three times in the first week of a new baby’s life. Before birth, they encourage parents to seek trained assistance in childbirth. After birth, they discuss child care and have been trained to identify signs of distress in newborns. If they notice that an infant is fevered, not gaining weight, or otherwise unwell, they refer the baby to a local clinic or hospital for care.

Local and regional health clinic staff are enthusiastic supporters of the program. They have offered advice to volunteers and some have made themselves available for consultation at any time of day.

Local chiefs were included in the final day of training the volunteers. They, too, are excited about the project and have pledged their support for it.

Since the volunteers started visiting expectant mothers and newborns in mid-January, they have referred 23 babies to local clinics. We are thrilled to be able to say that all of the infants have survived.

One volunteer from the village of Aroya shared that when he visited a mother after delivery the baby was underweight. “I quickly referred them to Wenchi hospital where the baby was admitted for 3 days. The baby is now fine and healthy.”

CIDA Financial Support for Leyaata

GRID is pleased to announce that the Canadian International Development Agency is providing financial support for the Leyaata Project. The Government of Canada, through CIDA, will provide funds over three years for 75% of the \$845,000 cost of this project as long as GRID raises 25% of the cost (or \$211,000) from Canadians.

Both the Leyaata Project and the Deg Health Project, which started last year, receive this type of funding from CIDA that effectively quadruples donations made by Canadians. Until we have reached our donation goals for each project, unrestricted donations to GRID will be directed to one of these two projects.



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Conducting five home visits for each mother meant a lot of extra walking for volunteers, until NEA was able to purchase bicycles for them.



Ama Sarah, Carpenter’s health volunteer, recognized this infant’s fever and referred him for help. He had a dangerous internal boil; the quick referral saved his life.



Volunteers were given a kit that included a thermometer, scale, and watch. This little one is getting a check-up from a volunteer!

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February 2012 saw NEA host its third annual Christian Chiefs' Conference. We were delighted to have 120 chiefs from 15 tribes join us. Over 40 participants were with us for the first time ever.

This year we had an enlarged map of Ghana's Northern Region on the wall, and invited each chief to introduce himself and place a pin on his hometown. All of the participants seemed to enjoy learning about where their colleagues were from.



At the close of our first day together, the chiefs lingered over their evening meal, chatting and laughing late into the night. It was entirely different from our first conference, where chiefs were wary of one another, ate in silence, and quickly dispersed to their beds.

We were privileged to have Justice Kwame Ansah, a High Court Judge and Chief, join us to explain the legalities of installing and deposing chiefs. These issues are known to cause conflict in Ghana, and we felt that if participants understood how chiefs are recognized by the law, some of these conflicts could be avoided.

Last year, David spoke to the chiefs about the leader Daniel. This year he focused on Joshua and God's relationship with him. He challenged the chiefs to be the "Joshuas" of their tribes: to remember that the Lord is with them; to be honest; and to judge justly.

There were many stories from our brothers over the course of the weekend. One of them in particular expressed the tone of the weekend:

I am the first Christian to become a chief in my area. I prayed that God would give me success. I sought ways to solve poverty in my area, and this year I won the award for District Best Farmer! Another Christian chief also won an award. We are dedicating these awards to God. I want to encourage you to take your calling as a Christian chief very seriously. Christ used 12 to change the world. We are over 100 here -- imagine what we too can do!"



Hear the Mensahs

David and Brenda Mensah are scheduled to speak at the following churches in 2012:

- Jun 3: Newmarket Christian Baptist (ON)
- Jun 10: Uxbridge Baptist (ON)
- Jun 17: Unionville Alliance (ON)
- Jul 2: Talbot Creek (ON)
- Jul 22: Bloomington ECC (IN)
- Jul 29: EastRidge EMC (ON)
- Aug 12: Uxbridge Baptist
- Aug 19: Uxbridge Baptist
- Aug 26: Orillia First Baptist (ON)
- Sep 9: St. George Baptist; Gunningsville Baptist (NB)
- Sep 12: Hebron Baptist (NS)
- Sep 13: Stevens Rd. Baptist (NS)
- Sep 16: Coldbrook Baptist; Middleton Baptist (NS)
- Sep 19: Immanuel Baptist (NS)
- Sep 30: Westney Heights Baptist (ON)
- Oct 14: Georgetown Christian Fellowship (ON)
- Oct 21: Claremont Baptist (ON)

For more details about these events, see our website or contact our Canadian Office Coordinator, Lynnita Weber, at lweber@grid-nea.org.

Little Eyes



Eyes reveal a lot about a child.

In June 1999, our family made our first trek to Ghana. As we walked through villages, I was drawn to the little faces and eyes shyly peering at us. The eyes were curious, but they also were eyes that had seen great hardships in life. No clean water, mosquitos everywhere, protruding stomachs from worms and lack of food.

Last June, Doug and I made another of our multiple treks to see what God has been doing through the NEA programs. I saw little eyes that twinkled with smiles to match. Eyes that behold clean, running water, and enough yams and meat to fill the stomach. Eyes that reflect medical care and happy parents who can send them to a good school. Eyes that see families worshipping God together.

God hasn't forgotten these little eyes. We are reminded in 1 Peter 3:12, "for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer." We are seeing God answer prayer for these special ones. Prayer and giving are such a privilege when you see these little eyes.

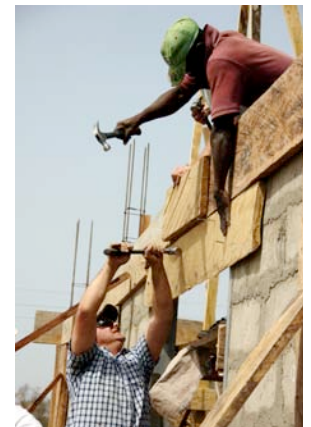
*by Virginia Webster,
GRID Board Member*

Tinga Team



In February of this year, NEA was delighted to host a team of 24 people from five different churches in Ontario. While in Ghana, these hardworking volunteers either helped construct a church or worked in schools in the village of Tinga. On top of volunteering their time and covering their travel costs, team members raised funds for equipment for the church (such as chairs and drums) and for scholarships.

We were blessed by the cooperation of different churches in putting this team together. In particular, we want to thank Uxbridge Baptist Church for providing the funds for the church building.



Donate to GRID

Online

<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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