GRID & NEA

sustainable development in Ghana

Who is My Neighbour?

by Dr. Jennifer Wilson

Almost ten years ago, Dr. Stephen Lewis, speaking at a conference for physicians, laid down a challenge. He encouraged us to consider how we might use our skills and resources to help our global neighbours in Africa. I was familiar with God's command to "love your neighbour as yourself," but at that moment my definition of neighbour expanded, and I knew I had to accept the challenge.

Soon after, I learned that David and Brenda Mensah were looking for global neighbours to come alongside them to support the health care aspect of NEA's sustainable development program. That was the birth of a beautiful and exciting partnership between the health care community in North America and the UK, and NEA in Northern Ghana. Through this partnership, six international health teams have provided care to nearly 50,000 people and completed 1300 successful hernia surgeries.

I have learned much since my definition of "love my neighbour" expanded. I have learned that when we are faithful to do our part, God is faithful to do his. I like the term "divine-human cooperative." Today newborn mortality around Carpenter is plummeting, stillbirth rates are dropping, and the entire region is being lifted out of poverty because of NEA's work and the support of their global neighbours. Our God truly does more than we could ask or imagine.

I have also learned that when we are faithful to do our part, others will rise up and do their part. I could never have imagined the number of health professionals who were ready and waiting to be given an opportunity to help globally. I had no way of anticipating the people who were looking for a way to show mercy to their global neighbours through giving so generously.

In his challenge to physicians, Dr. Lewis also told us not to underestimate the ripple effect that the smallest gestures of help and hope can have. Many of you reading this have made so many of these gestures towards your neighbours in Ghana, and you will be delighted in the stories that follow to see some of the ripple effects of your acts of kindness.

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.

A School for Tandigne Students

by Brenda Mensah

When we first visited Tandigne, we found that there were 254 school-aged children in this village without a school. Students had to travel to other villages that were at least 5 km away. When the rains came, students would be prevented from attending school, since the round trip was too difficult. The junior students just met under trees when the weather permitted since they were too small to make the daily journey.

Thanks to the the generosity of our global neighbours, NEA could construct a school for Tandigne. Now that a facility is in place, the Ministry of Education has provided the teachers with the books that they need to teach.

It is hard for us in North America to imagine the difference that this building can make in a child's ability to reach his or her potential. Children will have more instruction time, no longer prevented by rains from traveling to their school. They will not be as tired since they won't have to walk the 10 km round trip each day. More children will be enrolled since the school is nearby and visible.

The school is also used on Sundays for the growing Tandigne ECAC congregation.

Supporting Teachers; Improving Education

Ybraso's primary school serves three communities, yet these communities did not have suitable accommodation for teachers assigned to the school. Thus the teachers had to travel by bicycle from a town at least 8 km away, meaning that school was cancelled on rainy days when travel was very difficult.

Parents were concerned about the missed days and the impact on their children's education, and asked for help to build a place for teachers to stay. With funding help from friends in North America, NEA responded to their requests. The building is completed, teachers have moved in, and students are benefiting from consistent classes that are starting on time.

Enabling Women

by Brenda Mensah

Another 210 women have 'graduated' from NEA's women's co-op program which enables them to raise peanuts and to rear goats.

To graduate, women are in the program for three years, during which time NEA provides training, peanuts, sacks, ground preparation and supervision of their one-acre peanut farms. By the end of the third year, the women are able to produce enough to sell and still save two bags of peanuts: one to plant, and the other to sell to hire labour to till the soil.

When the women graduate, they also return a bag of peanuts to NEA, who gives the bag to another woman starting in the co-op program. This not only makes the program sustainable, but gives women the chance to practically help others -- to be neighbours to one another.

In the final year, the women participate in training on rearing goats and are given a female goat to start their own new enterprise. With goats reproducing sometimes twice in a year and often having twins, this business grows quickly. Having a second source of income mitigates against any years when crops either fail or yield is below average.

With the graduation of these 210 women, NEA has also completed its co-op work in 20 more villages, since every woman in these villages has now been assisted. These small but vital businesses help the women to meet not just their own basic needs but also the needs of those in their care.

Women participate in training on practical topics like farming, animal husbandry, hygiene, and health care.

Ripple Effects

$20

Women earn as little as $20 per year prior to entering in the co-op program.

$700

After graduation, women can expect to have an average annual income of $700 from their peanut farms alone.

5500

5500 women, primarily widows with dependents, have graduated from the program.

25,000

This means that about 25,000 women and children now have their basic needs met, thanks to your faithful support that allows us to invest in training, peanuts, and goats.

Securing Food Sources

NEA's aquaculture project, led by Mr. Gbeadese Soale, provides both food and employment opportunities to residents of nearby communities. The project's fish pond, which supplies catfish and is a source of drinking water to project cattle, needed to be fenced to protect it from nomadic herds that may carry different diseases. The dam was completely fenced this year, ensuring a sustainable supply of healthy food for communities in the area.

Anyone who has visited NEA's project site in Carpenter will remember Abraham, our former hospitality manager. Thanks to a scholarship made possible by our donors, Abraham is now in the UK pursuing a Master's degree in Hospital Administration. He reports that he is experiencing culture shock in a country with inclement weather, different food, unfamiliar people, and a habit of "rationing" time! Please pray for Abraham and his family at home in Ghana.

GRID in USA

We are pleased to announce that GRID has been approved as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. The application and approval process was remarkably quick, for which we are thankful.

This registration will soon make it possible for us to accept charitable donations directly in the USA. For many years, our friends at ECC Bloomington have accepted donations on GRID's behalf. We deeply appreciate their long and generous service for us.

For the time being, our American friends can continue to use the ECC contact and donation information. (See below.) Please stay tuned as we work through the details of establishing GRID USA.

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