



GRID Update

news from Northern Ghana

Peace Award Laureates

We celebrate with the Mensahs, recipients of the 2015 Millenium Peace Award, given *“to honour two individuals who ... have engaged in activities to ensure peace in their part of the country through the fight and struggle for equal justice and fair treatment to all citizens. Your role as mediators is a driving force in advancing peaceful democratic development in communities and is commendable. **Peace is your hallmark.**”*



photo by Erika Jensen-Mann



Ghana’s prestigious Millenium Excellence Awards are given every five years after a nomination process and review by the Foundation Directors. The Mensahs received the Award at a ceremony where the Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, former President J. K. Rawlings, and other dignitaries were in attendance.

“ We knew that God had been observing our work as His peacemakers in northern Ghana over the past 25 years but didn’t realize that other eyes had as well. We humbly accept this award bestowed upon us with “both hands” and pledge our continued effort to promote peace in this great nation of Ghana and beyond. We urge you to do the same in your homes, workplaces and communities – wherever and whenever you have the influence or opportunity to do so.

- Dr. David & Brenda Mensah

2016 Christian Chiefs' Conference

by Brenda Mensah



They came from all corners of the north – Dagumbas, Dagabas, Frafras, Sissalas Bimobas, Konkombas, Chumburus, Kussasis, Gonjas, Mos, Mamprussis, Builsas, Kassenas and Nawuris - all royal chiefs who are dedicated followers of Christ. Over 100 of the 150+ that were present, have been to all five conferences.

Together we praised God with drums, dance and joyful songs in all the languages represented. We prayed often and fervently for the many concerns that were brought to us and thanked God for the great things He has done in our lives since we were last together. We studied God's word looking at Gideon, the problems he and his people faced, what the chiefs are currently facing, and the

greatness of God's power to save yesterday, today and forever.

We laughed, we wept, we broke bread together, we toured the Carpenter project site to look at the rural development initiatives that could be replicated in their communities, and we finalized the draft of the constitution that was drawn up at our last conference.

After five conferences, we have started to develop some traditions, with one of the best being that on our final evening we celebrate the Lord's Supper. There is something so deep and so sweet about this culmination of our few days together as these 150 men from different church backgrounds and from different tribes (several of which have in the past taken up arms against each other) gather around this

table in communion with Christ and with each other.

This morning the project site seems rather lonely: there is no laughter under the canopies, there are no smocks swaying, no tall hats bobbing along, but we know that as they travel back to their villages, these precious chiefs are refreshed, inspired, and energized to lead in Christ's name and power ... and we can hardly wait until next year to hear new stories of God at work in their lives and communities.

We could write pages on all of the things that the chiefs shared, but we will leave you with just two stories that illustrate the impact for peace and development that this conference is having.

Chiefs' Stories

No Longer a Land of Blood

One of the chiefs was so excited to share what has happened in his land. He said when he became the chief, the area was described as the 'land of blood' because the people in his area had had been involved in armed conflict for 32 years.

He recalled that at one of the conferences, he asked for prayer over this terrible situation. The Christian chiefs present, who represented the two different tribes, plus David, met together under a Carpenter mango tree and cried out to God for a solution. They offered themselves to be God's instruments to bring peace to their land.

They began organizing mediation meetings, and with the support of the local churches and the Christian Chiefs Association, the problem has been resolved and peace has come. Amazingly, the chief who shared this led the two chiefs who were fueling the conflict to Christ and then brought them for the first time to the conference!

Sustainable Development Contributes to Peace

Another chief said that he wanted the chiefs who had come for the first time to realize how important the tour of the NEA site is. He encouraged them to think about their observations and pray about what they can use to help the people in their jurisdictions.

He confessed that when he came the first time in 2010, he was struggling to feed his family. However, he took note of some of the simple things NEA had put in place and decided to do likewise.

He has since been able to build a grain warehouse, is working with more than 500 out-grower farmers, and now has over 1,000 bags of corn stored in this warehouse for food in the lean season! He no longer struggles to feed his family and has been able to help these others to improve their lives as well. This has brought such honour to the Lord as his people have seen that it is through their chief, who is a follower of Christ, that these good things have come.

A Foundation of Peace

Peace is essential for sustainable community development, so much so that NEA has an entire program sector devoted to peace building. In the last few decades, the Mensahs and NEA have been involved in significant peace building initiatives:

On behalf of the Canadian High Commission and working with His Excellency, John Schram, Canadian High Commissioner, David Mensah assisted in the design of projects to consolidate peace after the 1994/1995 conflict between the Dagumba, Nanumba, Konkomba and Gonja tribes.

The Mensahs and NEA diffused a conflict between the Gonja and Mo tribes over a serious issue that arose in Babator.

They solved a conflict between Mamprussis and Gonjas over cattle issues in Mankaragu.

They mediated a conflict between Nawuris and Gonjas over Kpandai.

They resolved a conflict between Mamprussis and Kussasis in Bawku along with four northern paramount chiefs ... and a dove.

And most recently, the Mensahs and NEA established the Northern Christian Chiefs' Association, which meets annually to find ways of collaborating to promote peace in northern Ghana.

Peace building is proactive work that requires sensitivity to the culture and the different perspectives of the parties in conflict. A good example of this is a peace building visit initiated by the Mensahs on behalf of the Mo tribe. The Mo and Gonja tribes had been close to conflict, so when a new Gonja chief was installed in a nearby town, David Mensah led a delegation of Mo dignitaries to congratulate the new chief and pledge support to living peacefully together. The Mensahs commented, "It's hard to express in words the importance of meetings like this and how building relationships in times of peace make it easier when problems arise over other issues. It is so much better to be able to talk face-to-face and settle cases amicably and fairly."

NEA Staff Profile: Patience Doni

Patience Doni is head of NEA's Hospitality. She comes from Teselima, a town that is close to NEA's Carpenter project site.

Patience received a NEA scholarship to pursue her education, and she now holds an Advanced Diploma in Catering (Hotel Management). It is exciting to see someone who has benefited from NEA's support return to help the organization with her skills.

Patience is warm and fun-loving and likes to work with a lot of people. She especially enjoys seeing people being fed with her food. When there is a large crowd, her heart fills with joy and satisfaction -- especially when the medical team arrives in Carpenter! As the head of the hospitality sector, her work contributes immensely to the well-being of NEA, since she and her crew seek to make sure everyone is comfortable and able to find rest in a calm setting.

When asked to describe what she receives from her work, she replied: "I love my job! Also, the income has helped me so much because I am the breadwinner of my family. I am now able to care for my younger siblings. Without NEA I don't know where I would have been by now. Thanks to NEA and GRID for the positive impact you have made in my life."

Patience was asked the secret in preparing delicious meals, and especially the foreign meals which are so different from local dishes. She gave a wink and said "I learned all those tricks from school but I will keep them a secret because that is my power." When you try her food someday, we know you will agree that it is delicious!



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donate by mail: cheques/checks payable to GRID can be mailed to one of the above addresses

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.

Carpenter Hospital Fundraising Dinner

May 27, 2016
Uxbridge, Ontario

Tickets are going quickly for a fundraising dinner hosted by Dr. David Mensah and Dr. Jennifer Wilson. You can learn more and purchase tickets online at <http://grid-nea.org/may2016dinner>.



Applications are open for this year's volunteer Ghana Health Team, scheduled for November 11 - 27, 2016. [Apply online](#) before April 1. Applicants can expect a response by April 29.



Dr. David and Brenda Mensah