



GRID Update

news from Northern Ghana

One at a Time

by Brenda Mensah,
GRID Program Coordinator

When we returned to Canada after our first term of work in Ghana, I was discouraged. Really discouraged.

The magnitude of need I had witnessed over those first few years was overwhelming. Daily there were many who came our way with serious problems that they could not address on their own. Some came to our door needing food for their families; some came with medical emergencies; some with their children — young hopeful students carrying admission letters to high school, with school fees attached, that their parents couldn't pay. And to be honest, I can't remember any we turned away empty-handed.

The discouragement stemmed from seeing that the needs were so great and feeling that we hadn't even made a recognizable dent! The poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, the oppressed still kept coming.

Then God refocused me. I looked again at Jesus' ministry and all the needs that came his way. The more I looked the more I saw how often he ministered to



one person at a time. He crossed the lake for the man who was tormented; he touched the blind, the leper, the deaf, the deceased young man on the funeral bier before his broken-hearted mother. The list goes on.

I returned to Ghana knowing the needs were still great, but with the hope that we could make a difference, following Christ's example, for one person at a time. Soon the 'one' became 'two' and the 'two' became 'ten' and the 'ten' became a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand and more.

This newsletter is about some pretty special numbers: you'll see some of the 'ones,' like the Buswema baby who was resuscitated, and Alimatu, who

could easily have been another maternal death statistic. You will see some of the 200 Christian chiefs whose lives have been impacted and who are impacting their communities for Christ. You will note some of the 'hundreds' as you read that this year alone, 670 babies have been resuscitated as a result of the training received through Leyaata Ane. You will read about some of the 'thousands' as you glance down the report from this year's amazing medical mission.

But please keep in mind, each of these numbers represents a person, a family and a community, who have been touched one at a time.

Photo by Erika Jensen Mann

Leyaata Ane Project

In 2016, GRID and NEA launched the second phase of our Leyaata (“Rescue Us”) Project, which focuses on saving mothers and newborns around birth. We doubled our reach (from 80 to 160 communities), training twice as many community health volunteers and health workers to provide education and care to mothers around birth.

One year later, we can see that this project has already saved many lives:

- Over 3000 adolescent boys and girls (a high-risk group) were educated about caring for their reproductive health.
- Nearly three-quarters of all women in the area chose to have a safe childbirth. No maternal deaths were recorded in the year.
- Trained health workers resuscitated 97% of all non-breathing babies at birth, saving 670 lives.
- Health volunteers monitored newborns for their health, and the newborn mortality rate fell to about one quarter of that prior to intervention.



Buswema Blessing

In April 2016, health workers in the area received training in how to resuscitate infants at birth. Since then we regularly hear from health workers who are profoundly grateful to have both the skills and the necessary simple equipment needed to save these little lives. This month we heard from a health worker at the Buswema Health Centre:



“ This babe was born with an Apgar score of 1/10, but has survived with the training I had on helping babies breathe. Thanks be to God and the Leyaata Health Team for their SUPPORT!

The Government of Canada is providing funding for the Leyaata Ane Project.

Choosing a Safe Childbirth

The Leyaata Ane Project encourages mothers to seek skilled assistance around birth, and teaches them how to save money for safe childbirth.

Alimatu’s story illustrates why this is so important.

When Alimatu saw a health worker during her pregnancy, she learned that she could face complications around birth because her hemoglobin levels were low. She says, “I made up my mind to deliver at the facility. I was advised not to take any local herbs, as those could make me weak or even lose my baby. I knew that as soon as labour set in, I should go directly to the clinic.”

Alimatu followed that advice, avoiding local herbs and going to her nearest health facility at the first signs of labour. She was immediately transferred to the nearest hospital for better care of her complications. She was kept in the hospital for two days, where she says she received good care.

Because of Alimatu’s decision to seek skilled care around birth, she and her baby, pictured above, are both healthy today.

2017 Northern Christian Chiefs' Conference

NEA once again hosted the annual conference for Northern Christian Chiefs. Participants spent three full days together, learning about leadership, community development, and peace building from a Christian perspective. They shared stories about situations they faced as community leaders, giving and receiving advice from one another. A number of them offered their thoughts on the importance of the Northern Ghana Christian Chiefs' Association (NGCCA) and its annual conference in their role as community leaders:



“ I thought this would be a meeting of old folks resting, eating, and having fun, but I was mistaken. I didn't know the program was going to be full of relevant activities. Next time I will prepare well! I have met many Christian chiefs and spent quality time with God. Here we use our own words to speak our hearts out to the Lord. When I go back to my community, I will be fair in dealing with my people.



“ This has been a big door that God opened to help me in ruling as Paramount Chief. I am learning to be humble and sincere as a leader and to love my people.



“ This association has helped me stop pagan practices in my chiefdom. People in my community have seen a drastic change in their lives. I am very glad; as I think back to when this association started, I now see present some colleagues who I never expected to be a part of this. Being a Christian chief is good because there is liberty in Christ. I am free of entanglements.



“ I have used the experience gained from the Chiefs' Association and Conference to organize my people to improve teamwork and encourage one another.



“ I have learned a lot from this Association and from NEA. I was inspired by the turkeys that I saw raised on NEA's Project site and embarked on turkey rearing when I returned to my home town. I now have 40 turkeys. I have also learned to solve problems amicably in my community. I am learning to be firm and just in my decisions in ways that do not extort money from the poor.

2016 Ghana Health Team



In November 2016, a team of over 60 international volunteers spent two weeks in Carpenter, providing health clinics to residents of the rural communities in the area. Our deepest thanks to this team for their commitment to serving the poor with excellence. So many people received care that is otherwise inaccessible for them:



3869

Medical patients cared for by volunteer doctors, nurses, and pharmacists.



171

Dental patients cared for by volunteer dentists.



816

Patients cared for by volunteer optometrists and ophthalmologists. **98** received sight-restoring laser surgery.



217

Patients received life-saving surgery.

Join the 2017 Ghana Health Team

Applications for the 2017 Ghana Health Team are open at www.grid-nea.org/teams. Led by Dr. Jennifer Wilson, this multi-disciplinary, international team plans to offer rural health clinics in Northern Ghana November 11-25, 2017. Applications close March 31; team members will be announced April 28.

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Donate

www.grid-nea.org/donate

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.



Dr. David and Brenda Mensah