

DECEMBER 2003

International
Health and
Development
Network
"Thanks for
making a
difference."

IHDN News

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Water, Sanitation and Roads - the Axis of Health

As the year comes to an end, we seize this opportunity to thank the Almighty God for seeing us through another fruitful year. We also thank you for your prayers and material support.

In this issue of IHDN News, we describe some aspects of our mission trip to Ghana. We also discuss the needs of villagers in Ghana and what IHDN is doing to help. Schistosomiasis, one of the water borne parasitic diseases, is discussed. We also provide an update on our sanitation and road construction project.

As I reflect on the impact of the road being constructed at Agbozume, the numerous diseases people suffer from because of lack of potable water, I can only conclude that the triad of potable water, good sanitation and good roads constitute an axis of Health in the world. People need these to survive. For those of us in the developed world, it is unimaginable that we will not have water coming from our faucet when you turn on the tap. We take these for granted each day. These services usually cost a lot of money and are financed through taxes or development bonds. Most people in the developing world are so poor that even if they pay taxes, this will not be enough to pay for these services. They need outside help to make these services available to themselves.

Through your generous support we were able to initiate and complete 80% of Phase 1 of the sanitation and roads project in Ghana. We are currently praying for resources and support to enable us supply potable water to the villagers at Vome Battor. Our greatest prayer is that you will be blessed during this Christmas season. We pray that you and your family will drink from the fountain of life. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

God bless,

Dr. Edem Agamah
IHDN President

IHDN welcomes the interest and support of friends as we seek to make a difference in the developing world. Please make your tax deductible gift payable to IHDN. Thank you.

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"Reflections on My Trip to Ghana: Come Lord Jesus"

by Dr. Ruth Mayforth

During one of his sermons, Pastor Chad Pickering of Hope Evangelical Free Church, recently described the humble living conditions in which Jesus grew up in- dirt floors, clay/mud walls, one change of clothes, and the barest of utensils with which to eat and cook.

While listening to his description, I realized that Jesus lived in a place much like the villages that I had visited last summer in Ghana: a place where the biggest health needs faced by many of these people is lack of clean water and enough nutritious food; a place where many of the roads have so many pits and ruts that they are somewhat difficult even to walk on, let alone drive on. It is a place where so many things we take for granted (food, water, good roads, access to medical care) are a primary concern.

Yet, our Lord Jesus **CHOSE** to come to earth at that place and in that time. He could have chosen to come any place, at any time. He humbled himself and **CHOSE** to live in a place very much like Ghana. I now have a new understanding of Jesus' words when He proclaimed, "I AM the Living Water," and "I AM the Bread of Life," and "I AM the Way." He claims to be **THE ANSWER** to the most basic needs of **TRUE LIFE**.

There was something beautifully simple, joyful, and attractive about the humble lives of my Ghanaian brothers and sisters. In America almost all of us are rich (by their standards); yet we are so often encumbered with things and limited by time. By contrast, even in their poverty, many of these people were so joyful and thankful - so full of faith. And I found myself asking why? How can these poverty-stricken people be so joy-filled, so thankful?

Two reasons came to mind. First they are a praying people. They are "forced" to pray and rely on God for their daily lives. One of life's biggest joy is seeing prayers answered-a joy which they often experience. The other reason is that God has blessed **ALL** people with many things for **FREE**. In fact, I realized that everything I hold closest to my heart in this life has all been given to me by God at no charge. First and most importantly, He has blessed us with His Son, and with salvation through Him, and has chosen us to be His sons and daughters.

He has provided us with the sweet presence of His Spirit until He returns, and has given us the comfort, joy, and richness of His written Word. A master painter, He has filled the earth with His beauty and daily paints sunrises and sunsets simply for us to enjoy and to remind us to worship Him. He has blessed our lives with friends and family He has given us laughter and hugs and smiles - a universal language understood even by people who speak only Ewe (like they do in Ghana). And I think the joy in the Ghanaian people (and in us too) comes in recognizing and thanking God for His many free-but priceless-gifts to us.

We helped many people in Ghana. There are far many more who could not be helped. I could only pray for the children, who were blind, deaf, mute or unable to walk. That they be healed, and I would have more faith. So far none of these children have been healed. Yet I know someday all of them will be healed. He will come to save us. I dwell on Isaiah 35:3-10 that we should take courage and fear not. For our God will come to save us. And I pray Lord Jesus Come. Amen.

UPDATE ON SANITATION AND ROAD PROJECT—PHASE 1

Praise God, we have completed about 80% of the road work in Ghana. The cost so far to IHDN is approximately \$15,000 for a 0.5 km road. We will need about \$5,000 to complete the work and then move to other roads in the village. Note that the cost is 50% less than what it would cost to hire a private contractor and only 30% of amount that Ghana will pay if she was building a similar road.

Where Does My Money Go?

By Rhonda Miller – IHDN Board Member

Have you ever wondered how IHDN uses the money that you donate? The following frequently asked questions help explain the financial side of IHDN.

What percentage of IHDN's expenditures is for administrative salaries?

The board members and officers take care of the administrative details of the organization. None of the board members or officers receives any compensation for their work.

What types of donations does IHDN need?

First, IHDN recognizes that donations come in many forms. Monetary contributions, are one form of donation, but many people make donations to IHDN with their time, talents and prayers. Others make donations of tangible goods, like medical supplies or school books, computers and office equipment etc. We also receive donations of stocks and properties. IHDN is a recognized as a 501(c) (3) organization by the IRS and all donations are tax deductible.

How does IHDN spend the monetary contributions?

In brief, IHDN spends almost all of the monetary contributions in direct mission outreach. This includes buying and shipping supplies to Africa. It also helps with the expenses of sending a missionary team to Ghana each year. Individual volunteers raise their own support, but the organization still incurs costs.

So, IHDN just helps people in Africa?

IHDN strives to develop a ministry using the earthly work of Jesus Christ as a model; seek the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of individuals in communities, especially in developing countries; provide humanitarian assistance, education and research on issues of health, family life, conflict resolution and Christian values; and emphasize faith in Jesus Christ as the basis for successful living. While most of the work to date has been in Ghana, West Africa, IHDN has a very global view. The organization is planning to do some local (Springfield) outreach in 2004.

Does IHDN receive any federal or state grants?

At this time, IHDN has not received any governmental grants. IHDN relies 100% on the contributions of individual donors.

When should I make a donation?

IHDN welcomes your donations at any time. (For donations of tangible goods, prior arrangements are required.) Many donors like to make charitable contributions at the end of the calendar year. We will issue a tax deductible receipt for your donations.

“Prevention is better than cure”

by Dr. Remi Imeokparia

Most of us in the US use several gallons of water each day in drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning. Yet, over 1.1 billion of people in the world do not have access to clean water. Only 47 % of Africans living in rural areas have access to good drinking water.

This year, the IHDN mission team visited Vome Battor, a small village on the banks of the Volta lake, the largest man-made lake in the world. Even though it is located near water source people living in this village still lack clean water. Each time they go to fetch water, most of the 2,000 villagers are exposed to an infection called schistosomiasis, a water borne parasitic disease.

What is schistosomiasis?

Schistosomiasis is also called ‘snail fever’ because snails are involved in its transmission. With about 200 million people infected worldwide, the infection occurs in Africa, the Middle East, some Caribbean islands, some parts of South America and Southeast Asia. There are different species of the schistosome [the parasite] in each geographic area. Depending on the species, snails living in fresh water are contaminated from the urine or feces of infected persons. People become infected when the parasites penetrate the human skin from contact with water which is populated by the infected snails. In the human body, the infection could cause fever, chills, and cough in the early stages.

"Prevention" continued:

Later, it could cause diarrhea, abdominal pain, and damage to the liver and urinary symptoms with bleeding at the end of urination. Eventually, people get liver damage and bladder cancer.

Can the infection be controlled?

Yes, the infection can be controlled by using preventative, public health measures. There are also safe and effective drugs for treatment. The World Health Organization led a global effort to eradicate guinea worm, another parasitic disease. We believe this could be done for schistosomiasis.

'Prevention is better than cure'

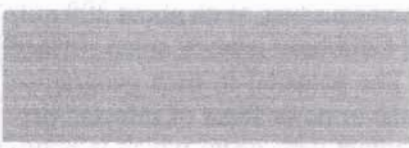
This adage is true, if one could afford such amenities as clean water and good sanitation. Prevention *and* cure are better in this situation. IHDN has a challenge for a new initiative—specifically to help the villagers in Vome Battor control this infection. The best approach would be to do two things: one, eliminate the disease [secondary prevention] and two, prevent the infection [primary prevention]. Secondary prevention involves reducing the amount of infection in the community by treating those who are already infected. Primary prevention includes providing clean water to reduce the transmission of the parasite, hence, minimize contact with contaminated water. Other control measures would include ongoing health education about maintaining good sanitation in the community.

How can you help?

'One step at a time.' IHDN is planning to assist the people of Vome Battor build a water treatment plant. This will involve purchase of water pump and pipes. The people will provide manual labor for this project. The details, which are being worked out will be shared with you later. Please join us in thanking God for the people of Vome Battor. Do consider how you can be involved with the water project. Remember the old saying "Love thy neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). This time, your neighbor is halfway across the world in Vome Battor, Ghana.

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IHDN Ghana Mission 2003 - Thank you God



Road Construction in Ghana – 2002



Road Construction in Ghana - 2003



Patient's waiting room -Vome Battor



Dr. Ruth Mayforth with a malnourished child



Two SIU Medical Students with patients



Computer Science Training at Agbozume