

IHDN News

December 2002

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

Message from the President

As the year 2002 comes to a close, we reflect on another successful mission trip to Ghana and thank the Lord for blessing our efforts. We also thank all those who supported us by donating their time, material resources, money and prayer support throughout the year.

The 2002 mission trip created the opportunity for us to demonstrate that "good health is not found only in medicines". We were actually able to start building the road at Agbozume this year. When we initiated the sanitation and road construction project in the year 2000, many people wondered why we were attempting such a project. We had neither the expertise nor the funds to undertake road construction. We knew, however, that prayer and trust in the Lord would provide the guidance and the needed resources according to His will. We thank the Lord for answering our prayer for the village this year. Our prayer now is that we will find the needed resources to complete all the work in a timely fashion.

Other highlights of the 2002 mission trip included providing experience in international health and tropical medicine for a third year SIU School of Medicine resident. We trained the Volta Regional District Directors of Health on how to use SPSS and Epi-Info statistical and research software. We were able to continue with our educational program in English, Math, and Computer science. We trained teachers in Agbozume on how to teach sexual abstinence and held a workshop on discovering the gift for marriage. Our team painted the classrooms of the local Junior Secondary School and held medical clinics at Agbozume and Taskcorner, a remote village from the Agbozume project site. In November, we also sponsored a volunteer Diabetic health educator from California to visit the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital for a week.

We continue to seek new ministry partners and volunteers. There is a lot of work that needs to be done. No single person has all the answers or the resources to meet all of these needs. With God on our side and the support of people like you, we will continue to make a difference. May God bless you and have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Edem Agamah, M.D.
IHDN, President

IHDN depends on volunteers and has no salaried staff. Please contact us to learn more about volunteer opportunities. Visit our

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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.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S GOODNESS IN GHANA

June Agamah and Angie Nesbit

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are the household of faith."

In preparation for our recent medical missions trip to Ghana, Angie and I planned to give as much of our time and talent as we could to the people of Agbozume. Little did we know that we would be getting back as much if not more from the people we intended to help. The villagers have so little in material possessions, yet they give what they have with such open hearts that we were taken aback by their generosity.

Praise and Worship: Our team joined the local Evangelical Presbyterian Church for praise and worship. Together we used musical instruments, sign language and beautiful voices to exalt the Lord. The congregation's ability to dance with jubilation as they placed their offering and their expression of joy throughout the three-hour long service was an incredible testimony of the people's love of God.

Elementary School Teaching: Angie and I taught Math and English in one elementary school and advised teachers and students in another school. The spartan classrooms had red dirt floors, bare walls and no visual aids with the exception of a map of Africa in one classroom. The fourth grade class had 60 students and the fifth grade class had 80 students who sat two to three children at a desk. Apart from chalkboards, chalk and erasers, teachers had no other supplies to work with and the students had no textbooks. Much to our delight, the students came to school each day and sang praises to God with voices so triumphant that it was as if God were standing right in the classroom. Angie taught the students how to write poetry and then typed the student's poems into booklets for each classroom. You would have thought she had given them a million dollars! We also donated school supplies to both schools. The teachers and students were thrilled.

Workshop on Sexual Abstinence/ Marriage Seminar: Angie and I organized a two-day workshop on how to promote sexual purity and monogamous marriages as a safe way to reduce the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Approximately 65 teachers and community leaders attended. We emphasized God's design for sex within marriage and His perfect plan for mankind. We also used the "A. C. Green's Game Plan: Abstinence" program. By the end of the workshop, many people were challenged to lead this effort. They nominated five individuals as executive officers of the Agbozume Christian Family Life Organization. After our return to the U.S., we learned that by August the executives had already held discussions at two Senior Secondary Schools. About 115 students attended the first meeting. The team took turns addressing the subject of sexual abstinence. In all of the schools, students were encouraged to identify activities, which lead to pre-marital sex and its consequences and effects on their education, physical and emotional well-being. Please pray for continued enthusiasm among the executives as they carry on this important work in Jesus' name.

Dr. Agamah and I held a Christian marriage seminar that was attended by 120 married and unmarried adults. We stressed the five most important needs of men and women in relationships. Many difficult questions were asked about the Christian perspective on polygamy. At the end of the seminar, couples were encouraged to renew their marriage vows. Everyone was very enthusiastic about this activity.

Road Construction and Repair of Classrooms: The road construction took a great deal of planning and negotiating. The challenges were numerous, including a lack of the heavy equipment needed to do the work. We were able to hire local help and by the time we left the retainer wall on one side of the road was almost completed. Both sides were completed a week later and gravel was spread on the road. This is the first modern road to be constructed in the village of Agbozume! Work on the classrooms began simultaneously with that of the road construction. The local Boy Scouts played a major role in scraping and painting the walls of three classrooms. Within three days we were able to complete the work.

The entire trip was awesome. The Lord showed us many great and mighty things as He used us to literally perform miracles in three short weeks. The work that was done in the spiritual realm was extraordinary. We knew you were all praying for us. We learned from the people in Ghana to thank God for everything and in every circumstance. We give God the glory for the good things He has done.

APPLAUSE TO DISTRICT DIRECTORS IN VOLTA REGION, GHANA!

Dr. Remi Imeokparia

As part of my service in Ghana in 2002, I had decided to give a weeklong workshop from August 15-21 at Ho, the capital of Volta Region in Ghana. Dr. Agamah made arrangements for me to be hosted by the District Directors of Health in Volta Region. These men and women are physicians and dynamic health professionals who oversee and implement policies based on the health priorities of their respective districts (populations between 30,000 to 190,000). Although I was apprehensive, the Directors gave me such a cordial reception that I am excited at the prospect of another visit!

Exchange of ideas: We decided to begin the workshop with an introduction to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) software, Epi-Info 2000. The Directors were interested in using this software for fieldwork. They must perform their responsibilities with limited resources, and as this software is in public domain it is cheap enough to easily fit the district's budgets. I also trained them on how to use SPSS, a statistical software. We exchanged ideas about research methodology such as data entry and statistical analyses. The software applications presented them with options that some had not considered possible.

Opportunity for partnership: The interaction opened up some opportunities for networking from a distance. Ultimately the dynamic leadership and resourcefulness of the two female and ten male participants should help to build on what we accomplished. The atmosphere they created was conducive to enhancing our relationship. I was impressed with their dedication to health care and their ability to work as a team. Such attitudes should immensely benefit the communities that they serve.

ANSWERING THE CALL TO SERVE

Dr. Sagi Mathew

Although I started my professional career as a High School Chemistry teacher, God led me into the study of medicine. Four years of Medical School and three board exams later, He directed me to accompany the IHDN on its 2002 mission trip to Ghana. I hope this will be the first of many mission trips in my career.

Having grown up in India and Uptown Chicago, poverty and hardship were things that I had seen before and I was prepared to face them again on this mission. To my surprise, when I arrived in Ghana I found myself in a guesthouse with an air-conditioned private room, modern toilets, hot and cold running water, great food, fresh juices and bottled water served in an air conditioned dining hall. It is the philosophy of the IHDN that precautions should be taken to protect the health and maintain the strength of the mission team with a home-like facility to insure that the maximum amount of work can be performed in the short time available. I did not lack anything – God was good.

Part of my focus for this trip was to learn how to set up a medical clinic in a third world country and keep it functioning. The Lord led me to the right place and the right organization, IHDN, to witness this in action. Dr. Agamah and I saw patients at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra, the Family Medical Center in Agbozume, the Ho Regional Hospital in the town of Ho, and at an outreach clinic at Tasckcorner, a remote village near Agbozume. Although we did our best to provide immediate health care services to the people we saw at these clinics, it was evident that the long-term battle to improve the health of the people would depend on educating the communities to care for themselves. This is the goal of the IHDN sponsored Family Medical Center in Agbozume. I pray that the Lord puts a burden on the hearts of more physicians and other medical professionals to contribute to combating the massive medical problems faced by the people of Ghana and other developing nations due to debilitating but treatable conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, malaria and other parasitic infections.

I don't know exactly where the Lord will send me in the future, but I feel truly blessed to have served in Ghana. I learned a lot about myself and about group dynamics through our team. Above all I witnessed the infinite love that God has for His people in Ghana and I'm sure in other parts of the world. I thank the Lord that He led me to the Agamah family and the IHDN mission. I have met very few people in my life who are able to integrate so well their love for Christ into the very fabric of their lives as the Agamah family has (both in Ghana and in the U.S.) They have taught me more than I expected and they continue to teach me as they care for me as one of their own. I would like to thank the Lord for allowing me this opportunity and for all those He used to support me both financially and in prayer. God Bless you all abundantly and may He give you the desire to reach out. The harvest truly is plenty and the workers few.

COMPUTER SCIENCE TRAINING CONTINUES AT AGBOZUME

Betty Morrison

Several months prior to retirement, I had prayed for divine guidance concerning an area of ministry for the year 2002. My physician, Dr. Treanor-Armich, approached me concerning the IHDN Medical Mission to Ghana. Within two weeks of that conversation I made a commitment to join the 2002 IHDN team. It's amazing how God orchestrated an opening on the team within my profession. My commitment to teach computer science was honored through much prayer and assistance from my husband Farries, my family, church family and friends.

Although communication is my field, I have no words to express the joy and blessings afforded me while sharing my time, skills and other resources with the people of Ghana. For nearly two weeks I taught two classes a day for 14 students, ages 19 – 32. The curriculum included the basics of computer science, basic Windows 95, Microsoft Word 2000, Excel, and PowerPoint and a typing tutorial. My heart was greatly inspired by the enthusiasm and perseverance of each student although 85% of them had never used a computer before. We were able to complete the basics of each area of the curriculum. Due to the short time frame allotted to cover the materials, I urged them to "Push! Push! To my delight, Richard, a very articulate student, caught the vision and told me how to say the phrase in Ewé. From that day forward, I became known as "Tutuii! Tutuii!"

Because of their diligence, most of my students were successful in learning all of the software applications. Since returning to the United States I have received many e-mail messages from my students that demonstrate their typing abilities and in which they express their gratitude to me for sharing my time and skills. God placed me in the presence of many endearing young people.

Besides sharing meals, devotion, projects and seminars with the IHDN team and local workers, some of the most memorable occasions are the times of sharing Christian fellowship. There is so much to be learned and love to be shared with the wonderful people of Agbozume, Ghana. The reception and warmth of the citizens of Accra and Agbozume is indescribable. I was tremendously blessed while attempting to be a blessing. The memory of IHDN Medical Mission 2002 shall forever live in my heart.

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**Angie Nesbit conducting workshop
"Teaching Sexual Abstinence" for
Agbozume teachers**



Local students in the classroom



**Sarah Agamah and other
volunteers painting classrooms
to enhance learning
environment**



**Betty Morrison training computer
science students**



**Dr. Remi conducting SPSS & Epi Info
Training for District Directors of Health
from Volta Region**



Dr. Mathew interviewing patient at Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, Accra



June Agamah with women's group seeking marketing help for their tie-dye and batik materials.



Agbozume Evangelical Presbyterian Church Choir displaying their new robes donated by IHDN



Major Road at Agbozume in 1996 (left) and in 2002 (right) showing IHDN led construction efforts