

Relief Network News

Volume 1, Issue 3, Winter 2002



A project based outreach of

Relief Network Ministries, Inc.

Think water ... think life. Share what you know or have to save

Winter Newsletter

Updates for Winter 2001 / 2002

Top:

Nothing can surpass the joy of quenching a deep thirst in tropical Africa than drawing fresh clean water from a convenient well site in the village. Our first Water Well in Ogberuru serves over 600 people daily delivering over 2000 gallons.

Meeting human needs as we joyfully serve the Lord together in new ventures and regions beyond!



**RELIEF
NETWORK
MINISTRIES**

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Moving forward

from the President, Dr. A. Sunny Okorie

Exciting and challenging are perhaps the best two words that describe our situation at Relief Network Ministries, Inc. as we come to the end of 2001 and begin a new chapter in 2002. First, exciting as we reflect on the tremendous progress we have made since our inception in April of 2001. Formed our organization and board of trustees; raised sufficient funds to develop our first rural water well in Nigeria; delivered some computers to a community secondary school through the Ogberuru traditional ruler (Eze); conducted some motivational Seminars for rural High School Students, and city adults; shared our vision with several organizations / Churches, as well as government and community leaders; ministered extensively in Imo, Abia and Lagos States, and led over 625 to Jesus Christ, etc.

At the same time, it has been a challenging time, especially after September 11 of 2001 terrorist attack on America, our home base from where we raise most of the funds to support the projects we execute in developing countries. Many non-profits / Charitable organization income have significantly dwindled because of the diverted giving priorities by individuals and foundations to help the victims of the attack.

Despite these developments, we continue to make progress in researching and developing grant proposals to several funding agencies without being too worried about the apparent “drawbacks”

of being young, and “religious” in the eyes of some of the non-Christian funding agencies who may support the social work component of a religious body.

However, we keep our focus on the Lord as our ultimate source, irrespective of which organization or individual He uses to meet our most urgent need for water well drilling equipments. Our hearts are assured as we reflect on several relevant Scriptures that indicate that more often than not, God chooses to use just a few to do a lot. This sounds more like Gideon’s 300 versus the well over 32,000 turned away from battle. It is nothing for God to work by many, or by a few. The choice is His – not ours! While in Nigeria this summer, we preached and meditated so much on I Kings 17:8-16 – the Widow of Zarephath story. This is a big reminder of God’s sense of humor – using very unlikely means to provide for His work to get done. He fed Elijah for many months from a bin of flour and a small jar of oil along with the Widow and her son. Their last “card” deposited into God’s hands (though she was reluctant, but obedient) was multiplied into an unending supply of resources for her family and the man of God.

As we move into 2002, you must trust God for a turning point in your life as we all need to take advantage of this principle (though reluctantly sometimes) by depositing what we may consider a very precious last “card” into the Master’s hand. He always has a way of multiplying every seed sown into His harvest fields not only to supply

your needs, but those of your co-laboring saints and partners. You are considered a vital part of Relief Network Ministries if you are reading this Newsletter. Your gifts and tax-deductible contributions, no matter how small they look in your eyes, may very well be the seed He chooses to use to bless both your family, and our work at Relief Networks.

For many who have given in the past, we say "Thank you!"

For our new partners, we also thank you in advance for taking the step of faith to share your resources – money, or time volunteered in going on the next summer mission trip with us in 2002.

We wish you a very productive and successful New Year as we joyfully labor together for His glory!

Reports from our Nigeria Development Initiatives

REPORT ON WATER WELL #1 - UMUNNEME WARD.

The water well dug in Umunne Ward has had its delivery system completed for high accessibility standards with two public taps (or spigots), and a 1000 gallon overhead water storage tank. It is reported that the tank is pumped full several times a day to gravity deliver water to natives who continue to congregate for clean water supply. It is dry season now in Nigeria, and there is an acute shortage of water supply in many village hamlets. So they all rush for water most of the day at Umunne Ward Well #1. The demand is exceeding 2000 gallons daily estimated for 600. It turns out more than that number now come to fetch water at this well. This confirms our estimate regarding clean water demands for the rural dwellers - we need more wells.

A Recognition & Commendation letter from the Imo State Government / Commissioner

We recently received a letter of commendation and recognition for our work done so far in Imo State from **Chief John Nwosu**, a Commissioner in the Imo State Civil Services Commission. Here's some excerpts from the letter:

"The Mission left a trail of good works, good will and good image of Christians at work. Their V-TEN initiative has

already impacted on a number of Communities including Ogberuru where a water well, sponsored by them is providing, right now, clean portable water in an otherwise remote dry village without water since creation. For us, this is Christianity at work, visible, tangible beneficial and an eloquent testimony. Communities anxiously salivate at the prospect of more programmes in the package including the components of the V-TEN Curriculum Design.

From Literatures made available to me and our discussions during their visit, their projects and programmes deserve the support of all Christian and men of goodwill seeking to reach out. I have discussed with my colleagues in relevant Government Ministries and they have promised support and cooperation as this will complement and even supplement State Government similar projects. I both commend and recommend them."

"With our V-TEN program we empower the under privileged through vocational skills acquisition."

For a full text of the letter, our Web site link is as follows:
<http://reliefntwk.net/Newsletters/msgjnwsu.doc>

The V-TEN / Water Well Development Team formation for Nigeria

Work is in progress to use an active support team or Local Organizing Committee (LOC) in Owerri for Imo, Abia and Anambara States Nigeria to do all the preliminary work for our Water Well Development and V-TEN projects. Dr. Ben Mbata of Total Care Health Clinics assisted by Rev. Luke Egbonuba are leading the group with six to eight other members from more than four different organizations and communities. A Principal Hydrologist in the Imo State Water Corporation (a civil engineer), Mr. Ogunsanya Bimbola volunteered to serve on our LOC. He will be instrumental in providing necessary geologic / topographical information during water well site selection, water testing considerations, and the formation of management committees within the communities for on-going well maintenance.

Meeting human needs as we joyfully serve the Lord together in new ventures and regions beyond!

The V-TEN Computer Technology Curriculum Pilot

During the Fall of 2001, we conducted some V-TEN training in Basic Computer Technology – Introduction to Computers and Utilization of Microsoft Office suite of software at one of our affiliate organizations - All Nations Church in League City.

We continue to work with contacts at the Texas Workforce Commission to raise trainees for back-to-work programs that may benefit participants from this community service.

Presently, Church of the Nation in Southwest Houston is planning to introduce some “After-School” program and Adult Empowerment initiatives using the V-TEN curriculum as a framework. RNM is providing them necessary assistance along these lines.

My first Experience of Africa and its people

By Meriel “Ije” Bernhard

(Volunteer Coordinator for RNM, Inc.)

Our Coordinator of Volunteer Services from the State of Oregon reports her experiences.

The following account is from the travel journals of Mrs. Meriel Bernhard or Ije (as she was often referred to by her close friends and associates in Nigerian and here in the US). Ije is an IGBO tribal name that means one wished a safe trip in life, or literally, the coming of a child of blessing into a family.

Ije’s Perspectives

This was a special mission trip for me going to Africa with a team of four others and getting immersed quickly into a sea of mostly black population and noticing that indeed I looked like the minority being the only Caucasian American in the crowds of people once we landed in Lagos, Nigeria. It was my first trip to a third world country. I was impressed with so many things. Let me tell you about a few of them.

I was excited as we approached the village of Ogberuru. The lush green forests stood so beautiful and majestic. People were walking along the sides of the road with wares to sell, or things they bought from the market. Our driver had to watch the road very carefully because of the huge ruts in the roads he had to dodge. I was a source of interest to many people along the way. Some had never seen a white person before.

This gave me the opportunity to smile and wave.

Soon we were at the place we had come so far to see; the first water well, being dug by hand, in the village of 12,000 people. Mounds of different colored sand that had come up from the well - bucket after bucket, until 115 feet and good clean water was gotten.

I watched with amazement as two men pulled in rhythm to get the bucket of sand out of the well. Soon a very tired sand covered man came out of the hole to rest.

The people of the village were just so thrilled to have good clean drinking water without odor or taste.

No longer did they have to send their children to the nearest pond or river, sometimes several miles away, to bring back contaminated water for home use for this particular part of Ogberuru called Ummunneme. We saw children with extended bellies, and skinny bodies, apparently with some parasites ravaging their bodies. My heart was burdened to see the great need for more wells there, and in so many other places during our

travels.

As we met a physical need in a small area there, the



Above:
Children fill up their containers from the water well in Ummunneme ward.

Below:
Our volunteer coordinator - Meriel (Ije) Bernhard points to an underground water tank used by some village homes in Ogberuru for domestic water supply. The source of water is from rain fall collection off corrugated zinc



door opened wide for Sunny to preach in the village Anglican Church, for us to meet the spiritual need of the people. Several hundred came forward to accept the Lord. What a thrilling sight. I had the blessed opportunity to introduce many women of the village & city to Moms In Touch International. Moms gathering together once a week for one hour to pray for their children, the schools and the teachers.



How I sensed God's presence as we prayed together. Children around the world need to have Moms praying for them.

The needs in the village are so great. They include the following - more water wells; good nutrition; basic hygiene and health care; agriculture-raising meat, vitamin rich foods; teaching skills for people to earn a living, etc.

Do you find yourself thinking that you have something you could share to help these people have a better more productive life? Ask God to see what you could share yourself. It maybe time to go and share on a mission, or

give financially for water wells.

I will try to share my experiences going to the predominantly Muslim Northern Nigeria on the next edition. The beautiful new city of Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, our visit to Jos and Bauchi, near the wild life game reserve called Yankari. So, keep your eyes open.

Water Well Equipment / V-TEN Projects Fund-raising Update

We continue to strive to raise the funds necessary for our project initiatives in Africa.

To date, we have raised about \$5,500. We had done a combination of things – held a small fund-raising dinner, which presented an opportunity to share the vision with others new to the organization as well as share our Mission #1 video clips. The video clips were well edited and put together into a 23-minute movie. Some portions of this will soon be presented on the Internet for easy reference and dissemination to others who need to see it. We also sent invitation letters to friends and partners of the ministry soliciting contributions, and have since produced a comprehensive brochure for the ministry.

Recently, our Web site is being updated and will soon be launched in January 2002 at its new host site and home page – <http://reliefntwk.net/> or try mirror site at: <http://relief-networks.org/> away from the Solidrockinternational web site where we now maintain a permanent web site.

Equipment Goals

Our equipment goals are as follows.

- Raise \$15,000 plus \$3,500 for shipping / handling of a water well drilling rig that will dig about 200 feet 4-6" diameter hole, (see photo), or exceed that for
- A mid-sized rig that cost about \$25,000 plus \$5,000 shipping / handling that will dig up to 300 feet 4-6" diameter hole with some diesel power between Fall 2001-Summer of 2002.

Linkage / Partnerships

Living Water International (LWI)

We recently met with Mr. Gary Evans, the President of LWI to discuss ways in which our two organizations could collaborate in order to benefit and compliment each other. Mr. Evans provided us with a lot of useful information for doing water well related mission projects. We have also made arrangements to attend the Drill Camp training program run by LWI in late February of 2002 to better prepare for these kinds of services as well as training others on how to use a water well rig and maintain hand or foot pumps.

IAA - Institute for African Awareness

We recently took corporate membership in the IAA to enable us collaborate in many ways for issues related to Africa and the work we do there as well as among Africans living in the USA. IAA has some focus areas that match our V-TEN concepts on training that empowers the unskilled, or under privileged individuals in civil society. The goal of course is poverty reduction and alleviation.

Mail To:

*Top:
One of the Drilling Equipment to be purchased by RNM soon with your financial support.*

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