

GEMA – 30 YEARS OF SERVING AS THE NATIONAL MISSIONS UMBRELLA BODY.

(Part 1)



Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA) is the national body that brings together all mission-related organizations in Ghana, both indigenous and foreign-based.

BEFORE THE BIRTH OF GEMA

Due to the works of the Scripture Union, the Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students, and the birth of the Christian Outreach Fellowship (COF) through the efforts of the late Politician and Christian Statesman, Mr. William Ofori Atta, Ghana began to experience increased interest in both urban and rural missions. There was however no coordination nor cooperation among these societies since there wasn't any national alliance. Into the late 1980s, the number of indigenous mission societies steadily increased, and a need to unite these new Mission Societies became more pressing.

THE GENESIS OF GEMA

In 1989, a Ghanaian Missionary Pioneer, Dr. Seth Anyomi was invited to attend a consultation organized by the Third World Missions Association (TWMA), representing the African Christian Mission (ACM) which he and his wife Christiana had founded in 1983. He was the only Ghanaian joining two Nigerian Mission leaders, Rev. Panya Baba and Rev. Reuben Ezemadu who represented the Nigerian Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA) at this maiden TWMA meeting.

At that time, NEMA was the only African missionary association on the African continent. Consequently, Dr. David Cho, then President of the TWMA, tasked Dr. Anyomi with the responsibility to identifying and mobilizing existing mission agencies in Ghana to be constituted into a Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA).

The opportunity came, when a few months later in

1990, a Missionary from New Zealand, Rev. Ross Campbell, then Director of the Ghana Evangelism Committee presented his survey results on the unreached people groups in Ghana. Rev. Reuben Ezemadu represented NEMA at that event and he was one of the speakers. Dr. Anyomi sought his assistance to call a meeting of every head of an indigenous Mission Society present at that meeting. Those who responded agreed to the proposal to form a National Association and Dr. Seth Anyomi, was elected as first President of the newly formed "GEMA."

Thirty representatives of mission societies formed the foundation membership of GEMA. By 1995, the membership had risen to 51, including denominational and non-denominational mission societies and para-Church organizations.

THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF GEMA

- To unite all mission-related organizations in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ to pray for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the Great Commission in our land in our time.
- To promote co-operation among missions and mission-related bodies in Ghana.
- To eliminate wasteful duplication of efforts and to pool resources.
- To create a forum for the sharing of strategies and techniques.
- To establish a strong and reliable association, to properly represent Ghanaian missions at national and international levels.
- To set and maintain improved standards of integrity and accountability to increase confidence in Ghanaian missionary activities.
- To provide the machinery for the compilation and dissemination of information on Ghanaian missionary activities.

- To cultivate productive partnerships between the church and missions.
- To associate and affiliate with the appropriate regional and global bodies.

THE GEMA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The initial structure comprised of the General Council, which was the final legislative and disciplinary body, with the power to delegate all or any of its authority to any committee appointed by it for that purpose. The Executive Body was responsible for policy formation and for ensuring that decisions are carried out. This body also ensured that regular meetings are held and that the recommendations of such meetings are given due consideration. The day-to-day administration of GEMA rested on the General Co-coordinator, who was the Chief Administrative Officer of the Association. He was fully responsible for the structure and employment of the administrative staff and also made recommendations to the General Council through the Executive Body for the engagement of field staff. Additionally, the respective officers reported to him concerning their particular sphere of operation. The assets and liabilities of GEMA were legally entrusted in the care of the Board of Trustees. There were also standing committees, which included the Committee for Training, Research and Information, and Strategy and Operation.

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF GEMA

The Executive Board comprised of:

- President,
- Vice-President
- 1st and 2nd Secretaries
- Treasurer
- Chairperson of the Committee for Research and Information
- Chairperson of the Committee for Strategy and Operation

These leaders performed or functioned as their titles suggest and as otherwise prescribed by the Constitution or by the resolution of the General Council or the Executive Body.

GEMA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH, NATIONAL EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP, THE GHANA EVANGELISM COMMITTEE, AND OTHER BODIES

GEMA sought to promote, sustain, and maintain effective co-operation with all churches as well as all Evangelical fellowships both inside and outside the country. GEMA seeks to serve the Church in Ghana and co-operates with GEC and other ecumenical bodies, to effect the cause of the Great Commission and for certain projects in the country.

GEMA PROGRAMS:

GEMA engaged in promoting missionary awareness programs in churches and mission research. Mission seminars for Christian leaders, pastors, etc., are also organized periodically. GEMA also fosters co-operation among the membership by holding seminars and Starting and Strengthening National Missions Movements.

GEMA organized workshops to share human, financial, and material resources, to make maximum use of these resources and to face the missionary task as a united force.

GEMACON (Now GEMAFEST): An annual missionary convention, dubbed "GEMACON" and organized by GEMA, brought together missionaries from all over the country for fellowship, sharing of ideas, evaluation of mission strategies, adoption of new ones, etc. It is a time of great refreshing for the missionaries, some of whom come from very distant mission fields, where they receive little information and encouragement.

GEMA co-operated with one of its members, the African Christian Mission (ACM), and its Western partners to establish the Ghana Evangelical Missionary Institute (GEMI), which is Ghana's first and only indigenous missionary training center. The Association unsuccessfully attempted to build a missions resource center. It has also supported the work of Sports Evangelism in Ghana. GEMA helped to start mission awareness campaigns in the rural areas and the Bible colleges in the country. GEMA also published and still produces a quarterly missions publication known as the "Voice of Missions." The purpose of this publication is:

- To create mission awareness.
- To help raise moral, prayer, and financial support for missionaries on the field.
- To create a forum for the sharing of mission strategies and techniques.
- To provide information on Ghanaian missionary activities (and on those of other countries as well).

GEMA’S KEY AREAS OF FOCUS DURING THE FIRST TEN YEARS:

- Motivating the local church to rise to the challenge of reaching the unreached people groups in Ghana and beyond.
- The mobilization of all available resources for missions.
- Training.

CHURCH-MISSION COOPERATION:

To achieve maximum results in the Church, GEMA made every effort to:

- Reach out to heads of churches and Christian organizations for full participation in national missions.
- Establish a resource center for the use of the Christian community, especially with missionary work in Africa.
- Provide missionary training for the many

untrained Christian workers in the rural areas who are actively involved in missions and para-church planting.

CHALLENGES OF THE FIRST TEN YEARS:

Communication- That was before mobile phones became so common.

Accessibility: It very difficult to Locate and identify and screen missionaries needing assistance such as medical and training.

Acceptance by the mainstream Church- Some local Churches did not readily embrace this newly formed National movement and her young mission societies.

Conclusion:

These challenges did not hinder nor stop the work of the Association; rather it learned to overcome the obstacles.

Today, members of the Association are scattered across the length and breadth of Ghana and are doing wonderfully well. After thirty years of existence, GEMA can be said to have come of age now. GEMA has by the Lord’s help been able to stick to its objectives. Newer programs have and are being put in place, such as the production of a missions journal, the establishment of a mission resources center, training programs, and mission awareness campaigns are helping the Association effectively achieve its objectives.



