



## PART 5

# GHANA TO THE NATIONS- SHORT TERM MISSIONS



*The Adinkra symbol “DENKYEM” simply means “CROCODILE” and signifies one’s ability to adapt to circumstances.*

# GHANA TO THE NATIONS: SHORT-TERM MISSIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NATIONS

**Kate Azumah**

**I**t was a day in the month of September 2012, a group of people hurriedly wove their way through Mumbai's busy airport towards the cubicles for immigration formalities. Arriving, one member presented her passport.

'What is your address in India?' The official asked.  
'Bhattiprolu,' she replied.

'Where is Bhattiprolu?' he asked, suddenly wearing an impatient frown of unwanted concentration. She consulted the leader of the group and supplied the answer.

The group of seven were Ghanaians on a three-week mission trip to Bhattiprolu, a village in the Andhra Pradesh State of India. Among other things, that mission saw neighbours of different castes and faiths—Christian and Hindu—visiting each other's homes for the first time, after years of living side by side. A community whose children were known for being fatally violent became shocked at the receptivity of their own children to the message of the gospel proclaimed by the Ghanaians.

Ghanaians have been embarking on short-term international missions and making significant impact as far back as in 1978. I was part of a pre-missions scouting team to The Gambia in 2014, where we connected with various church leaders to gather information and solicit support for a future mission trip. Being the small country it is and given the willingness of the church leaders to connect us with one another, very soon we had visited many, both expatriates and indigenes. One discovery at these visits was the many references the leaders made to the impact of Joyful Way's mission trip to The Gambia in 1978. According to Pastor Chinedum Meribole, Joyful Way's 1978 visit was instrumental in bringing many young people to faith in Christ, some of whom had become leading ministers of God in The Gambia at the time of our visit.

Reading through the book of Acts, I realized that Paul and his missionary compatriots were both short-term and long-term missionaries (Short-term mission is defined here as any mission trip that lasts less than two years). Even though the cumulated time spent on some of Paul's missionary journeys spanned more than two years, as far as the individual cities or locations were concerned, his mission trips were short-term. Paul's ministry during these short-term trips were characterized by uncompromising gospel preaching about the crucified and resurrected Christ, teaching in synagogues, winning disciples, strengthening believers, building relationships, and appointing elders, along with the manifestation of signs and wonders to confirm his message.

A number of ministries in Ghana have been embarking on short-term international mission trips over the past decade. Some of them are Excellent Youth Outreach (EYO), Teens Aloud Foundation (TAF), Footworks International (FWI), and Harvest International Ministries (HIM). In all over thirty countries across Africa, Europe, Asia and North America have been visited by these ministries on short-term missions. The duration of the trips varies from two weeks to three months. For youth-focused ministries like EYO, TAF, and FWI, the short-term teams are made up of mostly university students and high school graduates, while a church like Harvest has mainly young professionals, clergy and adults. Some teams have two people sent on a trip with others having larger teams of about twenty people. A myriad of activities are carried out during the missions--one-on-one evangelism, prayer walks, Bible teachings, crusades, church ministrations, missions conferences, youth conferences, leadership conferences, sports ministry, camps, outreaches to schools, prisons, orphanages, hospitals, villages, etc.

In spite of questions and concerns in some circles about how much is accomplished by such short trips in the long haul, the impression of Ghana's

short-term missions on other nations is profound. Thousands of people have come to faith in Jesus through the preaching of the gospel at various evangelistic activities during these mission trips. As the Lord worked with the apostles and proved their message true with accompanying signs and wonders, so does the Lord with our Ghanaian mission teams. There are testimonies of people healed from all kinds of ailments: cancers, blindness, tumors, AIDS, etc. Miracles like the instantaneous restoration of deformed limbs and cripples walking are real occurrences on the mission field. Those under the bondage of Satan are set free as his demons are cast out according to Jesus' promise. As Razaq put it, he only understood fully what Jesus meant by "Go into the world..." after participating in a short-term mission trip himself. Several years ago, one Danny Santa Lucia was a short-term missionary to Ghana whose preaching was instrumental in bringing Rev. JFK Mensah to faith in Jesus. I figure it is the unfolding of time that will fully reveal the role Ghana's short-term mission trips played in God's agenda of raising many Rev. JFK Mensahs in other nations.

It is usual to see short-term missionaries sent mostly from the West to the rest of the world. The phenomenon of African youth going to other countries for short-term missions is relatively new, and it is no vain statement to declare that Ghana is a leading nation in this new move. The general reaction of individuals and groups in the receiving nations is surprise and awe that African youth (Ghanaians for that matter) are embarking on short-term missions to other nations. There are parts of Africa where young people are relegated to the background as far as ministry in the local church is concerned.

As a coordinator for short-term international missions, I have had the opportunity to debrief scores of teams on their return from mission trips. From the reports, youth in other countries are inspired when they see Ghanaians, young as themselves preaching, teaching, leading, and serving in ministry, especially cross-culturally. It motivates them to rise above timidity and a limiting mindset to deploy their potential for God's service. Steve, a Kenyan, had his first mission experience accompanying a short-term mission team from Ghana as they went about their mission activities. After the Ghanaian team left, Steve organized some of his friends for a mission trip to the northern part

of Kenya where they applied all he had learnt from the Ghanaian team. The results were tremendous; the young people could not believe God would use them that way. Since then, Steve has kept in touch with his Ghanaian friends with his interest in missions alive and growing with action.

Ghana has a rich heritage of sound Biblical teachings and resources as far as the evangelical and missional Christian community is concerned. Short-term mission trips serve as a conduit for Ghana to bless the body of Christ in other nations up close with this heritage. Churches in other nations have been stirred to action concerning the Great Commission during programs like mission conferences and seminars that form part of short-term mission activities. There are stories of young people in other nations who first learnt about Quiet Time from Ghanaian short-term teams. As teams live with families and interact with individuals on the mission field, their exemplary lives of devotion to God and Christlike character become a legacy their hosts are challenged to emulate. A family in Tanzania started a culture of having family devotions after hosting one such team from Ghana. I recently received exciting news with pictures from Angola about how one church was using the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) method to grow and increase several house churches during the covid-19 pandemic. The church, Nascidos de Novo (Born Again) first learnt about DBS from one of our short-term teams. A similar church in Sierra Leone also sent a report of how they were sending DBS to surrounding villages and its impact on the people.

Short-term missions by Ghanaians have helped to boost missionary work in other nations in a number of ways. Firstly, long-term missionaries who receive the short-termers are edified and encouraged when teams come to support their work. Secondly, short-term missions serve as an extra recruiting tool to mobilize both the receivers and those that are sent. For the receivers who have little or no awareness of missions, the activities of short-term missionaries present the needed exposure that creates the desire to get involved. In the University of Namibia, leaders of some Christian groups on the campus came together for the first time to designate some time on Wednesdays for campus evangelism. This was after a short-term team from Ghana had organized a program with them on 'Practical Evangelism'. One Namibian participant shared this testimony: "Your teaching on Friday took away my fear. At first, I

used to hide behind people during outreaches, but this time I went out all alone and won two souls for Jesus." Those who take part in short-term missions are also more likely to consider and choose missions as a lifelong career because of their short-term experience. Following their respective short-term missions' experiences in Kenya and The Gambia, Solomon and Issaka, two Ghanaian university graduates, went back to serve as missionaries in these countries for over two years.

There have been revivals, and the birth of churches and ministries in other nations through short-term missions by Ghanaians. Teens Aloud, Footworks and Excellent Youth Outreach all have branches in other nations through the activities of short-term missions. These branches are set up to disciple young people and to train them to also do ministry. Over the years the branches have mobilized young people in their respective countries to also go for short-term international missions. In 2019, young people from six different countries joined EYO's short-term mission trips to other nations. For some of the people from the six countries, this was their first ever cross-cultural missions experience. In South Sudan, a church was pioneered by a short-term team from Ghana with the help of a local man of peace. With the ensuing war, the church moved to the refugee camp in Northern Uganda where it hosted another short-term team from Ghana that did a lot of work among the refugees in the camp.

In being a blessing to other nations, the Ghanaians who take part in short-term international missions are themselves impacted and motivated to do more for the sake of the gospel. Priscilla, a medical student who went on a short-term trip to Uganda in 2017 shared, "The mission was a personal call for me to focus on disciple-making and not on convert-making. Living in the Hindu-populated town of Jinja has challenged me to secure the Christian heritage I have as a Ghanaian." After a short-term trip to Zimbabwe, Rev. Prince Achin, a senior pastor expressed that, "Missions to Zimbabwe has transformed my perception about soul-winning. The urgency and speed required was so much implanted in my spirit and ministry. My theme for the years to come is, 'the harvest is now.'" Other short-termers, after experiencing a hurdle of challenges with respect to raising funds for the mission trips, returned with a commitment to be financiers of mission work themselves.

Ghana has a lot to offer the world in terms of a solid

gospel-advancing legacy. Short-term international missions have revealed themselves to be laden with opportunities and potential for Ghana to advance the interests of Christ in the nations. I believe our Ghanaian story of short-term international missions did not start with just the ministries actively involved in it today, other individuals and ministries have contributed to building this legacy over time in diverse ways—a school ministry here, a Bible study there, an evangelistic group here, a mission conference there, etc.

In the face of the many worthy stories of the impact of Ghana's short-term missions, the enemy is also relentless in raising and marketing his false prophets and teachers to discredit and undermine genuine gospel work in the nations. During a recent short-term trip, I observed that some people had become unreceptive due to their wariness of false ministers. This makes it all the more imperative for us as individuals and an evangelical body to preserve our identity and calling in this regard by holding fast to and passing on the true faith entrusted to us in God's word. If Ghana is to continue with her impact in other nations through short-term missions, then our work of evangelism and disciple-making at home must be extensive and vigorous, especially among the younger generation.

A short-term team returned from Guinea Bissau with this, "Everywhere we went, people said, 'Ghana is so blessed! Can you send more volunteers to stay longer?'" Can God count on us to continue to be His answer to the nations' call?

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a youth ministry that runs mostly in tertiary institutions in Ghana and has branches in The Gambia, Kenya and Uganda. The ministry has sent short-term teams to over 30 countries mostly in Africa.

## THE 'LUKE 10 TRIP' THAT NEVER ENDED

**Saviour T. H. Daitey and Alvin K. Baidoo**

"These were his instructions to them: The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves."

Luke 10:2-3

We searched, we prayed and got ready to move. On February 12, 2020, we set off by bus for the Gambia. Basically, to scout the Mandinka people group of the Gambia and the Fula Jalons of Sierra Leone respectively— we have been praying for them for a while and had hope that the scouting would lead to future mission work amongst these people groups. It took as a dramatic trip through Burkina Faso, spent two nights on the streets of Mali and spent several hours crisscrossing Senegal before finally seeing the clear skies of the Smiling Coast of Africa, the Gambia, in the early hours of February 18, 2020.

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We had planned to spend two weeks finding people of peace for immediate Discovery Bible Studies (DBS), talking to missionaries and church leaders for possible partnerships and Disciple Making Movement (DMM) trainings and proceed to Sierra Leone for the same task. Then head back to Yagaba, Northern Ghana, our official service field by the first week of April. Little did we know that God was grandly weaving it all for His glory.

Now hosted by the Great Commission Movement of the Gambia, (GCMG), we started our evangelism activities with their campus team. We actively and intentionally reached out to university and college students on daily basis and focused also on finding persons of peace amongst them. At least there was no language barrier in this student environment.

It was fun to do that every day. Yeah fun— from encounters with cynical muslim polemics against Christianity, to skeptical muslims seeking secretly, to those starting DBS groups until someone betrays them to stop and to those who would continue to discuss with us openly or secretly and continue (till date) to receive Christian materials (evangelistic videos) from us. At least what it looks like for us to be disciple makers in the Gambia would begin with the campuses —we already got a fair idea of the Gambian field and we were ready to roll and enjoy the power and sweet fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

It was now time to experience rural ministry in the Gambia. We travelled several hours to the far east “to journey” with two of GCMG’s passionate and faithful church planters and disciple-makers in Basse Santa Su. \*Uncle KB and Auntie Toulie (not real names for security reasons) both came from muslim backgrounds who, as though they had been born at the wrong time, also saw the Lord through miraculous encounters. We were more than glad to journey with them from village to village, fellowship with their home churches and share DBS with them, dine with them, pray with them, hear amazing stories from one another and thank God together for the gift of His ministry of reconciliation and the opportunity to proclaim His saving grace in

Islamized communities and villages in the region. One more person came to faith in Christ Jesus in a DBS meeting before our two week stay in Basse would end.

As we were about to head back to the city, we sensed that we were not going to travel to Sierra Leone that week but the Lord didn't immediately tell us what the reason was. It was towards mid March and the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet made major headlines in West Africa. We kept praying, saw cheaper flight tickets available but our multiple attempts to book, all failed for one reason or another.

By the end of March, we saw the cheapest tickets ever and as close as we got to laying hands on them to fly in the first week of April, the pandemic would hit the region and borders would begin to close for all commercial flights. It was as if we had the last flight but God said, "We've got work to do sons". Absolute peace flooded our hearts and He reminded us again, "Stay with me, not too fast or too slow. Just go at my pace." The trip is not over.

By this time we knew we would stay for a little bit longer and we needed to ask the Holy Spirit what next for the pandemic— we don't want the pandemic to determine what we do but He determines what we do. How do we evangelistically keep in touch with people? How do we make good use of the lockdown periods for the purpose of discipleship?

He gave us the insight, an amazing idea of putting the DBS principles into easy and user-friendly animation videos to continue to reach individuals and families in their homes. We discovered our digital evangelism gift right here. Today, this explainer-animation disciple making videos are seen and shared near and far— mainly in the Gambia, Senegal, Ghana and Uganda. A lot of people are involved in sharing these videos with those they're also discipling and we really appreciate their partnership to digitally reach the lost. The "Creation to Christ" series, a chronological study journeying through the creation story to Jesus' ministry, has been the longest project we worked on during this unusual season. "The videos are easy to understand and really brought memories of some Bible stories he had heard in primary school," a muslim friend shares.

We have also been blessed to run a few DMM trainings— for one Mandinka family and two other groups. All of a sudden we could also bring in our

digital evangelism ideas to help a few others in GCMG to actively engage people with their devices. We felt really honoured to be part of that well received training.

Through our active preaching of the gospel when the lockdown restrictions were relaxed, the Lord has blessed our labour with a couple of discipleship/discovery groups, baptisms and few others to coach and mentor on regular basis. Which is why we always believe and clench to the fact that **we are not men working out our plans and strategies and are inviting God to be part of it.** It is God Who is systematically and strategically at work in the Gambia and has invited us to be part of what He is doing and to journey along with Him. We feel extremely honoured to be part of it all.

## Few Testimonies

Over the past months, we have been encouraged with various testimonies ranging from God's provisions, to His deliverance for people we are engaged with, to miraculous encounters , etc. Here are a couple of them below:

- "There's something that runs in my heart anytime I see you guys, which you will not understand"— Aliu testifies. Our response: "It is Jesus who makes us who we are." Aliu accepted Christ that day and agreed to have a secret baptism before travelling to Senegal the following day. "Giving me a copy of the New Testament is one of the greatest things anyone has done for me," Aliu joyfully appreciated.
- In another village, with Pastor Alex (formerly Alhassan), a former Muslim, we encountered a young learned man, Lamin. He was actually debating with another person about the deity of Jesus Christ, when we met him. After he had given us the chance to talk, he would interrupt a few times to make a comment or refutation. But at a point he just stopped and said, "You are angels of God. Your faces are shining. I know God sent you to me". Recently, in another meeting with Lamin, being the third time in a period of about three months, Lamin accepted Christ. He told us that he believes the Holy Spirit is working in him. Lamin agreed to be baptised later on.
- Being inspired by missionary stories like one told by Jerry Trousdale, in his book, Miraculous

Movement, about a man who had been waiting under a tree since morning just to meet a missionary whom he had met in a dream, we also have been praying and waiting for unique miraculous encounters. And just recently, one man we have been trying to reach, but almost gave up on because of language barriers and his unavailability, came to our house early one morning. After trying the little we could, we decided to play a Bible passage in the Mandinka language for him. We got one boy to interpret. And with that opportunity, knowing that, Mohammed works from Monday to Saturday and closes late at night, we knew we had to make use of the visit. He believed the gospel message. And when he was asked, he said that, if it's fine with us, he could be baptised the same day. This was after briefly explaining baptism and its significance to him. It was at the beach ready for his baptism that a dream he had the previous night would begin to unfold. "I saw a dream of you guys the night before. You took me somewhere

to pray with me and the whole place was very bright," he recounted. A dream that would assure Mohammad that we knew of a path that he needed to follow which was why he needed to come see us immediately. When Mohammad got out of the water, in a careful baptism ceremony at the beach, he told us through the boy who interpreted for us that, he would like his whole family to become Christians. He now joins us for a home fellowship on a weekly basis.

The Lord keeps encouraging us with testimonies. In as much as we have had a good stay in the Gambia, it's our hope that we bear lasting fruits even after we have left. On several occasions, we were received and we proclaimed the peace and the Kingdom of God. On other occasions, we were rejected, the wolves gnashed their teeth against us and stopped others from listening to our message, yet we warned and moved on. So the Luke 10 trip still continues. It's not over yet because the harvest is still ongoing.

"But if a town refuses to welcome you, go out into its streets and say,  
'We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have  
abandoned you to your fate. And know this—the Kingdom of God is near!'"  
—Luke 10:10-11