

BAWA Health Initiative News



A PUBLICATION OF THE BAWA HEALTH INITIATIVE

December 2009

*Small things, done with great love, can change the world !**

Dear Friends of the Bawa Health Initiative,

I have asked Dr. Blaise Dondji, our Co-Founder and Vice President, to write a letter for this issue of BHI News. Blaise has a story to share and he, more than any of our Board members, can speak to what the work of the Bawa Health Initiative means to the families in his village.

Since the Bawa Health Initiative was formed in 2005, we have made significant strides in improving public health in the villages of Bawa, Nloh, and Ntah in the West Province of Cameroon. When we began this work, infants and children were too often sick or dying from preventable illness. The lack of clean water for drinking and cooking, worm infections, and the constant threat of malaria were primary concerns.

Because of your support, the children of Bawa have clean water to drink, more healthy days, bigger smiles and a much brighter future.



Our progress continues - sometimes slower than we might wish. Yet, always with a vision and promise that guides our steps. We have raised the money needed to do ground preparation for a health campus and have completed the footings for the Primary Health Clinic.

We continue to need your help and support.

I hope you will read the letter from Blaise. I know you will be touched by his words of gratitude and hope. Because of Blaise's passionate and tireless pursuit of a better life for children growing up there, his village has become our village as well.

Margaret Jay

President of BHI

* From *Table for Five...Thousand* by Thomas Long and Allen Pote

A Letter from Dr. Blaise Dondji, Co-Founder of BHI



Dear Friends of BHI,

It is my great pleasure to extend the gratitude of the people of Bawa and neighboring villages in the West Province of Cameroon, Africa to all of you. I have been amazed by the support you have given to

people that you do not know, people that you have never met.

I started this organization in 2005 with my friend and colleague, Dr. Dennis Richardson with the sole mission of improving the health of children and families in Bawa and the surrounding villages.

One of the main reasons was that I grew up in this village in the midst of malaria and many other diseases, drinking muddy water, wearing torn clothes and running around without shoes. I suffered from these diseases but was blessed with opportunities. I had a very ambitious father who still lives in Bawa. I did not know my mom that much because she died when I was 12.

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Despite the fact that I am a native of Bawa, a locality not found on any world map, I have succeeded to be where many might not expect anyone from Bawa to be. In 2001, I was recruited by the Yale University School of Medicine and worked there as a researcher and member of the faculty for a total of 6 years before moving to Washington State as a Professor at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington.

I know at the bottom of my heart that there many smart kids in Bawa and if given the opportunity, they will be among the best scientists, doctors, engineers ... in the world. However, they are afflicted by diseases, poverty and some die before the age of 10.

Fortunately, thanks to your financial and moral support, the Bawa Health Initiative (BHI) is coming to their aid with insecticide-impregnated bed nets to fight malaria, water filters to reduce the burden of water borne diseases, and helminth (worm parasite) treatment programs. We have already recorded considerable reduction of deaths due to malaria and water borne disease since the initiation of BHI activities in the area. We have made considerable progress in changing the lives of people served by BHI programs. This comes with an improvement in general well-being. The people of Bawa and neighboring villages are very proud of BHI and hope has come back to them. They now know that they are not the forgotten children of God.

However, my experience as a tropical disease expert has demonstrated that such achievement is not permanent if it is not sustained. Also, there are several health conditions that could not be targeted in our programs since we do not have the required physical structure — a primary health clinic. Such conditions include respiratory diseases, dental

health, vision and hearing to name a few. I cannot count the number of medical doctors, nurses and health professionals in these areas of specialties from the United States and Europe who have expressed to me their willingness to volunteer their time and expertise in Bawa when BHI has an adequate structure in place. The Bawa Health Initiative plan to build, equip and staff a primary health clinic in Bawa will go a long way in sustaining current achievements, while developing and implementing more programs that will not only improve people's health but also their socio-economic conditions. An accessible clinic will limit the number of deaths due to preventable causes such as that of my Mum who died from severe bleeding after giving birth to my sister.

"The people of Bawa and neighboring villages are very proud of BHI and hope has come back to them. They now know that they are not the forgotten children of God. "

BHI needs your financial support, the people of Bawa need your support to get them out of the cycle of disease and poverty and we know that you will be there to help.

With gratefulness,

Blaise Dondji, Ph.D.

Co-founder and Vice-President of BHI
Son of Bawa



A NEWS NOTE

- Congratulations to our Bawa Health Initiative *Field Coordinator* in Cameroon, Sylvain Foulefack and his wife on the birth earlier this year of a daughter, Ange-Jeanette (who was named in honor of Jeanette Gross, BHI Board member and frequent Bawa volunteer).

You Can Stay Connected with BHI Online

Check out our website (bawahealth.org) for background information about Bawa, Cameroon and health issues in sub-Saharan Africa; our BHI mission statement, a listing of Board Members and Officers, scientific research articles and studies, pictures, newsletter updates, and more.



We also have a new **Facebook** page. Find us by searching ... just type *Bawa Health Initiative* and become a fan!



Building a Healthy Future Together

Phase One :

The property for the **Primary Health Clinic, Nurse's Residence** and **Health Education Resource Center** was given by the village. Bawa Health Initiative volunteers have used it as a place to pitch tents while working in Bawa and it has been a place for community gatherings and celebrations.

Phase Two:

During the *Dry Season* (January—April) of 2009, ground work was completed and construction began and was completed for the foundation footings for the **Primary Health Clinic**.

Now we need to continue the work

The foundation footings for the **Nurse's Residence** and the **Health Education Resource Center** (which will also serve as a residence for visiting doctors and BHI volunteers) need to be constructed. The estimated foundation cost for each building is **\$6,000**.

We need to continue the construction until the Health Clinic Campus is ready to be equipped and staffed. The estimated costs for construction are:

Primary Health Clinic: \$103,000.

Nurse's Residence: \$54,000.

Health Education Resource Center: \$60,000.

Your help is needed ... your gift to BHI will make a difference!





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Our Mission: The Bawa Health Initiative (BHI) is a non-profit 501c (3) organization founded in May 2005 by Dennis Richardson, PhD. and Blaise Dondji, PhD. (a native of Bawa). Our mission is to improve the health of children and families in Bawa and surrounding villages in Cameroon, West Africa by addressing vital public health issues - safe water, malaria, HIV/AIDS prevention, parasite infection treatment, socio-economic improvements - and by building, equipping, and staffing a **Primary Health Clinic**.



**With your gift to BHI,
we can continue to work
together to bring health and hope
to the families of
our village!**



A gift of **\$10.00** to BHI can purchase an insecticide-treated bed net and reduce the threat of malaria - a leading cause of childhood illness and death in Cameroon and much of sub-Saharan Africa

A gift of **\$40.00** to BHI can provide the materials for local villagers to construct a simple Bio-Sand water filter to ensure safer drinking water and reduce water borne parasites and illness.

Summer 2010 Health Survey Planned

During June and early July 2010, the Bawa Health Initiative will be sending a team of volunteers to Cameroon. The team will assess the progress that has been made in all areas of our public health work - the distribution of bed nets, installation of water filters, parasite treatment program, and HIV/AIDS education and prevention - as well as inspect the progress on clinic construction. The visit will provide an opportunity for our team to consult and work with BHI Field Coordinator, Sylvain Foulefack and members of the Village Health Committees (VHC).

In 2007, a BHI team - led by Dennis Richardson, Co-Founder and Quinnipiac University Professor of Parasitology - conducted a complete health survey of the villages of Bawa and Nloh. Research done at that time has given us a solid baseline for prioritizing our work and this 2010 trip is a vital part of our research plan. This three year follow-up will enable us to confirm the effectiveness of our public health initiatives. We will be sending a three person team: Dr. Dennis Richardson, his wife Kristen, also a professor at Quinnipiac, and Jeanette Gross, R.N., who was part of the initial 2007 team and will be returning to the village. Our research guides our work and ensures that every dollar you donate is put to the best possible use.

We need your support to cover the travel costs for our team and expenses for test kits and supplies. Your tax deductible financial gift to the Bawa Health Initiative will support the continuing public health work being done in Bawa and is vital as we continue the building of a Primary Health Clinic.

Please mail your check today!

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