

Hoping for the Rains and Planning for a Drier Future

Just as California's drought is affecting agriculture there, so is the lack of rain affecting agriculture in northern Ghana. The rains are supposed to come in May-Sept but hadn't yet when I was there at the end of July and early August. In the barley fields, plants were drooping over, limp from lack of water. The rice fields were mostly dried up and the plants very small. The mango trees were losing their leaves, which had turned yellow and brown. Crop shortage will likely ensue and that means the cost of the basic grains (rice, barley, millet) will rise.

Dry winds blow through the area, stirring the soil. When we would go out, coated with sunblock and insect repellent, the fine red dust carried by the winds would stick to our skin. Each night as I showered, I was surprised at how dirty I had gotten during the day!

Dr. Joseph Amikuzuno, the leader of our sister parish partnership committee at Our Lady of the Annunciation parish, teaches and does research at the University for Development Studies near Tamale, Ghana. He is doing economic modeling on how the changing (decreasing) rainfall in northern Ghana will affect Ghana in the future and how that information may help in defining economic policy in Ghana. During the time I was in Tamale, Joseph started teaching an intensive statistics class--four hours a day, 5 days a week, for three weeks (in addition to hosting my visit!). His students were from all over northern Ghana and, he said, very driven to gain tools to use in understanding the variables and changes in their environment. For them, climate change is reality and needs to be understood and planned for.

— Barb Luxenberg