

FEATURE

● Mayor Bert saluted after a busy year as Dacorum's first citizen – page 63

Victoria West finds out about a charity project that offers practical help to mothers trying to save their children from malnutrition

A new project to save the lives of children suffering from malnutrition under a charity set up by a Hemel Hempstead surgeon has been launched at Westminster.

Motec Life-UK, works in one of the harshest and poorest environments in the world – Jirapa, a district in Ghana – where it teaches women how to sew so that they can earn money to put food in the mouths of their children.

Now the good cause is undertaking a nutrition rehabilitation project called NUWLIFE, which stands for Nutrition Working for Life.

It involves setting up a dedicated nutritional rehabilitation centre – expected to cost in the region of £110,000, with maintenance and running costs of £12,000 per year.

This will house a hostel for mothers of sick children, provide vocational training to help the mothers to generate an income including teaching soap manufacturing, traditional cloth weaving and sewing, and an on-site shop floor for the sale of the products that are made to help fund the centre.

Mothers will also be involved in farming on land donated by the local chief Naa Ansoleh Ganaa II where they will get guidance from a delegated agriculturist and nutritionist and they will

Sew simple, but this lifesaving scheme needs storage support



Making his pitch: surgeon Paul Ofori Atta at Westminster, left, and meeting outgoing Mayor of Dacorum Bert Chapman with charity colleague Linda Bingham, right.



malnutrition to be get better in hospital, meanwhile other children from the family are at home suffering, which means families are often repeat visitors to the hospital.

The NUWLIFE scheme aims to break that vicious cycle so that when mothers and children leave the centre they can generate an income and know the importance of nutritious food. In turn it

is hoped that the number of little ones being hospitalised with malnutrition will decline.

Around 12,000 children in Ghana alone die each year from malnutrition.

Statistics also indicate that under-nutrition contributes to about half of all child deaths beyond early infancy while one out of every 13 children in Ghana die before

their fifth birthday, mostly as a result of under-nutrition.

Orthopaedic surgeon Paul Ofori-Atta, who lives in Grovehill, presented the project to politicians at Westminster earlier this month and hopes it will generate support, publicity and funding from across the political parties.

Closer to home outgoing Dacorum Mayor Bert Chapman donated two manual sewing machines to the project.

One belonged to his mother Mary Chapman who passed away in 1972.

Mr Chapman, who this month completed his year in office as mayor, said: "It has been laying in her house since then and I know that she would be so pleased that it is going to a group that needs help and will make the best use of it. My mum would be very pleased."

The second sewing machine had been given to

Mr Chapman after the donor heard about the project.

Nurse and charity trustee Linda Bingham said they currently have around 80 sewing machines waiting to be shipped to Africa and are desperate for free storage space.

"I'm spilling over into my son's garage now and we have got them under the bed," she said.

Because shipping is so expensive one giant container is sent over to Ghana each year and as well as the sewing machines it also includes children's books, teaching aids and hospital equipment – "just whatever is needed. We do try and put in as much as we can," said Linda.

Visit www.moteclife.co.uk or call 07551 067069 to find out more about the charity's work

You can watch a video of Councillor Chapman handing over the sewing machines on our websites