Whole Planet Foundation® (WPF) funds microlending programs in Ghana where The Blessing Basket Project (TBBP) sources baskets, which are sold in Whole Foods Market® (WFM) stores. WPF is a WFM non-profit whose mission is to alleviate poverty by funding microlending programs where WFM sources products as a way to support our global communities.

Through the Whole Foods Market Team Member Volunteer Program, WFM gives Team Members the unique opportunity to travel abroad with WPF to learn about WPF, see where and how WFM products are grown, provide community service, experience and learn from other cultures, and challenge themselves by exploring exciting countries around the globe.
ARRIVE AND DEPART FROM ACCRA

FLY TO TAMALE

IMMERSE IN THE COMMUNITY OF NYARIGA WITH WFM SUPPLIER PARTNER THE BLESSING BASKET PROJECT AND VISIT WPF MICROLENDING PARTNER GRAMEEN GHANA

WFM TEAM MEMBER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM TRAVEL IN GHANA
2016 GHANA SUMMARY

10 WFM Team Member Volunteers traveled to Ghana to provide community service, building toilets (KVIP) for a community craft center serving more than 7,000 people. They visited with microcredit staff and clients of WPF’s microlending partner Grameen Ghana in and around Bolgatanga, visiting microcredit client businesses and learning about the transformative power of microcredit through their stories. They learned how to batik, how to make Shea butter and how to weave baskets with the weavers who make baskets sold in WFM stores by The Blessing Basket Project. Team Members learned about Ghanaian culture, food, tradition and dance, as well as the many initiatives that The Blessing Basket Project leads to support their community.

TEAM
Cherish Garrett (Florida Region) Regional Office
Violet Warnock (Rocky Mountain Region) Regional Office
Kristy Cowart (Global) Global Office
Milena Caraballo Perez (Northeast Region) Morristown
Angeline Pereira United Kingdom) Kensington WFM
Robyn Puttock (Pacific Northwest Region) Cambie WFM
Annalee England (Southern Pacific Region) Maui WFM
Brandon Martinez (North Atlantic Region) Framingham WFM
Julia Fritz (North Atlantic Region) Framingham WFM
Lauren O’Mara (Florida Region) Regional Office

GROUP COORDINATORS
Theresa Carrington
Jason Haack
Abdulai Asuah

PROJECT COORDINATORS
Abdulai Asuah
Jason Haack

WFM TEAM MEMBER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGER
Genie Bolduc
TRIP ITINERARY- 2 WEEKS

Day 1 Monday, October 3- Depart for Ghana.

Day 2 Tuesday, October 4 - Arrive in Accra Ghana and transfer to hotel, meet Auntie Grace, relaxing dinner.

Day 3 Wednesday, October 5 - Learn to batik with Auntie Grace and her team at her batik store.

Day 4 Thursday, October 6 - Fly from Accra to Tamale and drive to Nyariga for The Blessing Basket Project community welcome with dancing and singing and check into hotel in Bolgatanga.

Day 5 Friday, October 7 - Visit Nyariga Doone Girl’s School, visit Chief, cultural exchange with students, begin community service work building KVIP (bathroom facilities) for the community center.

Day 6 Saturday, October 8 - Local market and basket tour, visit weaving center to learn how to weave baskets, volunteer project continues after lunch immersion with Azoko, a 2014 graduate of TBBP and in afternoon meet a landowner named Atindana and continue to weave baskets.

Day 7 Sunday, October 9 - Volunteer work continues at Community Craft Center, at lunch immersion meet 2013 TBBP Graduate Big Joe. Then proceed with community service project and start weaving a basket. The evening immersion was a walking tour called La Nature - to learn the nutritional, health and environmental uses for Boabab, Dowa Dowa, Kapock and Nim. Meet 2013 TBBP graduate Kofi at his bar.

Day 8 Monday, October 10 - Learn to weave and finish basket, participate in a cultural immersion with the girls at the Nyariga Doone Girl’s School, participate in volunteer project building the KVIP and meet Theresa’s honorary village grandmother at the grandmother tree.

Day 9 Tuesday, October 11 - Visit with Grameen Ghana Whole Planet Foundation microcredit partner, meet staff, attend a center meeting and visit with microcredit clients at their businesses. Return to hotel to pack for overnight home stay in village homes. Meet host families, dinner together outside of the Community Craft Center and pairs depart for family homes for overnight immersion.

Day 10 Wednesday, October 12 - Wake and accompany family on daily chores, help grind millet and other chores and have lunch with host family. Return to weaving and craft center for craft market and clothes fittings.

Day 11 Thursday, October 13 - Finish community service project putting finishing touches on the KVIP, participate in a cultural exchange with the girls from the Nyariga Doone Girl’s School, learn how Shea butter is produced and learn some local dance from the girls and villagers. In the afternoon immersion the team helped cook and learned about the history of the FraFra / Nyariga /Upper East Region.

Day 12 Friday, October 14 - Visit with TBBP graduates, then serve lunch to the teachers and students of the Nyariga Doone Girl’s School and play games with students until TBBP Graduation, Closing Ceremonies and dancing.

Day 13 Saturday, October 15 - Depart Bolgatanga for Tamale and flight to Accra. Pick up batik clothing from Auntie Grace.

Day 14 Sunday, October 16 - Tour Accra, visit beach, market and specialty coffin makers, then depart for home in late evening.
Team Members meeting microcredit clients of Whole Planet Foundation partner Grameen Ghana.

**THE EXPERIENCE**

Team Members immersed themselves, meeting community members, playing with them, eating with them and learning their craft.

Team Members learned traditional dance, made batik and helped build a toilet for a community center, that previously had none.
Team Members were treated to delicious Ghanaian food, eating lunches made by community members and sampling traditional food at local restaurants. Team Members spent one night and a day with a local family, living with them and participating in their daily activities.

Hospitality is a part of Ghanaian tradition. Long before they arrived in the village the team was welcomed by an escort of villagers in trucks and on motorcycles purchased with their Prosperity Wages which they were paid for the products. The team was greeted with traditional dancing and music with every new group they met, including The Blessing Basket weavers and the girls from the Nyariga Doone Girl’s School.

It is the custom for any visitors to the village to announce themselves to the chief of that village and ask for permission to stay. The chief of the Nyariga and Zaare regions, Chief Agoo, welcomed the Team Members to the community and invited them to stay amongst his people.
History:
Grameen Ghana was created in 2001 as a not for profit to provide trainings in business and entrepreneurial skills to communities. Having worked with women groups and building their capacities in business for two years, the need to establish a loan product became evident. The local Ghanaian founders decided to change the name to Grameen Ghana to reflect its new status. Grameen Ghana started its microfinance activities in March 2003 with grant support from UNICEF and has followed the Grameen model of group loans to rural community members, mostly women.

WPF Partnership:
Whole Planet Foundation began funding Grameen Ghana in 2010 with a grant of $300,000 to reach 1,500 new clients. In 2012, WPF agreed to fund Grameen Ghana’s expansion into further remote areas of Northern Ghana and authorized a grant of $500,000 to reach a total of 6,093 new clients.

Grameen Ghana’s Approach:
Grameen Ghana forms Savings and Credit Association (SCA) of 30 to 40 women organized into smaller groups. Each small group has a group leader, and the SCA will have an elected leadership consisting of a President, Secretary and Treasurer. The SCA is led through a month long orientation process explaining the loan process and expectations of borrowers.

Nearly 95% of Grameen Ghana borrowers carry out activities in small enterprise, agricultural processing and agricultural marketing loans with an average first loan size of about $75. Payments are broken into either weekly or bi-weekly payments for each group, which are made to the Credit Officer in the rural communities. Credit Officer will typically manage 22 SCA groups of 30-40 members each, and will be expected to attend all disbursement and payment collection meetings.

During these meetings the Credit Officers will ensure proper record keeping in a register maintained by the SCA group, fill out individual borrower passbooks and fill-out Grameen Ghana accounting forms to be taken back to the main office for record keeping within Grameen Ghana. Borrowers will sign with a signature or fingerprint for all funds received and all payments made until completion of the loan.
**VISITING MICROCREDIT STAFF AND MICROENTREPRENEURS**
Team Members learned about microcredit and Grameen Ghana methodology from Prince, a Grameen Ghana staff member pictured with a microcredit client business. The rapport between the field manager and their clients helps inspire confidence in the system and the process.

**GROUP MEETINGS**
Team Member volunteers learned how the disbursement and repayment processes work at a center meeting. They got to experience the group dynamic of solidarity groups which helps clients to greater success. These groups create a community of support.

**LEARNING ABOUT MICROENTREPRENEUR’S BUSINESSES**
Volunteers met several different clients with various businesses to better understand the diversity of microentrepreneurial activities and got to visit newer clients as well as established ones like Nasoma who had grown her business into a small corner store and restaurant. Team members enjoyed a delicious meal and learned of plans to expand into a form of catering.
Information from The Blessing Basket Project:

The Blessing Basket Project® is different. The organization seeks to empower artisans to become entrepreneurs and leave the organization’s program. Using a unique Prosperity Wages® model, which the organization developed, artisans are carefully selected and remain in the program for approximately three years. While in the program, participants are required to start businesses. Once those businesses become successful, the artisan then graduates out of the organization’s program. The Blessing Basket Project’s exclusive Artisan and You® program enables purchasers to meet the very artisan who created their hand crafted product. They can see a photo of their artisan, learn about their family, write them a letter, and be informed every time they are paid. The Blessing Basket Project has been recognized by the United Nations for this innovation and continues to set new standards in global poverty reduction.

The Blessing Basket Project’s goal is to graduate its artisans sustainably out of poverty in about three years’ time. Artisans enter the program, accumulate sufficient wealth, become entrepreneurs and leave the program through a formal graduation process. Learn more about the unique and groundbreaking approach to ending poverty by clicking here: http://www.blessingbasket.org/our-models

The Blessing Basket Project
Your Blessing Baskets® product was carefully and skillfully handcrafted for you by a Blessing Baskets® Artisan half a world away. Because of The Blessing Basket Project Prosperity Wage® Model - the Artisan is sustainably exiting poverty through entrepreneurship. Now that you are connected to your Artisan through a Blessing Baskets® product - we thought you might like to get to know one another better. Get to know your Blessing Baskets® Artisan through our Artisan&You® program. The Blessing Basket has been honored by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations for our effective approach to ending poverty through intercultural exchanges. Watch the video here: www.blessingbasket.org/intercultural-innovation-award
LEARNING FROM THE COMMUNITY

From learning how to batik, to making Shea butter and weaving baskets, the team was gable not only to see how community members create prosperity but to experience the difficulty of the wok for themselves. Exposure to daily life in the community gave the team a deeper understanding of the expertise of the craft of basketweaving and the importance of the community service that they were providing by building bathrooms for the community center.

LEARN

The team leaned to batik at Auntie Grace’s in Accra, dyeing their own cloth and purchasing additional batik with which they would later have clothes made by microcredit clients of Whole Planet Foundation’s partner, Grameen Ghana.

EXPERIENCE

The volunteers are eager to learn about local culture and Ghana brings opportunity at every turn. The team saw the process of making Shea butter and weaving baskets and then got to experience doing it themselves.

PARTICIPATE

The volunteer program provides an opportunity for Whole Foods Market to fund a community project in which the team of volunteers participate. They helped to build bathrooms for the community center and interacted with students the Nyariga Doone Girl’s School.
ARRIVING AT NYARIGA DOONE GIRL’S SCHOOL

Whole Foods Market and The Blessing Basket Project have worked together on several projects in Nyariga, including building classrooms, a computer lab, bathrooms and a water well at the Nyariga Doone Girl’s School. Arrival at the school is a celebration where the students line the road, welcoming the team with an enthusiastic dance and singing. A highlight of the trip for Team Members is the opportunity for lunch and learns with the students where they get to work on projects and play sports with the girls.
BUILDING A COMMUNITY TOILET (KVIP) FOR THE NYARIGA COMMUNITY CENTER

PUMPING WATER FROM THE WELL AND HAULING IT TO THE SITE

MIXING MORTAR AND MORTARING THE WALLS OF THE BATHROOM ENCLOSURE

WHOLE PLANET FOUNDATION
Proud Volunteers

Ribbon Cutting and Dedication of the Finished Kvip

Whole Planet Foundation
For one night and a day, Team Members in pairs stayed overnight with a family in the village with no electricity or running water. It was a “day in the life” opportunity to shadow family members doing everyday tasks, becoming family members for a day.

“...the best way to do that. We would get water at the well alongside folks getting water for their compound or their laundry and they would laugh at us and then help us when we tried to carry the water on our heads. They laughed at our fascination with the wild turkeys. We sang songs together. We smiled and laughed. We got dirty together with the other folks working on the KVIP. We would take water breaks and dance with the kids. And knowing that out of this wonderful way to spend a few hours of each day was a facility that will be in that village for a long time to come was icing on the cake.” Christy Cowart
Chief Agoo invited the team to his home for a visit and lunch and then decreed that there would be an En-skinning Ceremony in which Theresa Carrington, founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Blessing Basket Project was named Queen Mother of Development and Brandon Martinez, a Team Member from the Framingham Whole Foods Market, was named Prince of Development.

MEETING THE CHIEF
Upon arrival Team Members visited Chief Martin in keeping with the tradition that when visiting a village, the first stop is to the chief to receive his blessing, enabling you to stay in the village. On the right is Chief Alex’s linguist in a Whole Planet Foundation hat with Chief Alex’s children.

EN-SKINNING CEREMONY
Chief Agoo invited the team to his home for a visit and lunch and then decreed that there would be an En-skinning Ceremony in which Theresa Carrington, founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Blessing Basket Project was named Queen Mother of Development and Brandon Martinez, a Team Member from the Framingham Whole Foods Market, was named Prince of Development.
**ANGELINE**

“I will treasure the endless memories of my new friends of Nyariga, the amazing experience I had and I will never forget Ghana.”

**CHRISTY**

“Meeting the microcredit loan recipients at their businesses was amazing. They were so proud to show their business off and to tell us how they spent their loan.”

**VIOLET**

“I was surprised at how much we were able to integrate into the community in such a short period of time. The focus on cultural immersion made it so I got to really understand the people of Nyariga, the struggles they’ve been through, their successes, and the impact that The Blessing Basket Project (TBBP) and WFM have had in the community. The enskinning ceremony with Chief Paul Agoo and being adopted into the village of Zaare was a complete surprise for all of us. It was truly a once in a lifetime experience that I am so grateful for.”

**MILENA**

“I am so thankful for being a part of the TMVP-- it was truly a life changing trip and amazing experience. We could really feel and see the impact Whole Foods Market has.”

**ANNALEE**

“This was one of the most enriching experiences of my life and the connections we made with community were unforgettable. I proudly carry the responsibility of making a successful Whole Foods Market so that we can continue our global stewardship mission.”

**BRANDON**

“The trip to Ghana was amazing! I imagined that while we were in the village we would only be working on the KVIP but we did so much more. We got to weave baskets, pick groundnuts, make shea butter, and have a homestay in the village. The trip was really immersive and because we got to do a variety of tasks, I felt I learned a lot about a new culture.”

**BRANDON**

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**ROBBY**

“It was highly beneficial to meet microcredit clients, to see what businesses they run, and the see their success firsthand with my own eyes. I learned that some of the clients would still be living in squalor if they hadn’t joined on as a microcredit client. One client in particular said that she would rather be dead than live the life she used to, and that her children would be stealing for food instead of in school as they are now. It was highly beneficial spending time in the community of Nyariga helping to build the community bathroom….especially working alongside the villagers. Everyone came together for the same goal.”

**JULIA**

“We got to meet with a few microcredit clients which was a great experience because you got to see these people turn something they love to do into a business. The staff members of Grameen Ghana were great I thought it was amazing how they were so personal with all the clients. They really cared about their success.”
Welcome to Nyariga! Community members led the team’s bus from outside of Bolgatanga into the village of Nyariga.