

## NIGERIA

### "FAITH AND FARM" : A COMMUNITY ORIENTATED RURAL TRAINING PROJECT

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#### Faith and Farm:

1. The "lingua franca" of the area in which Faith and Farm works is Hausa and in that language the slogan for the project is "Kyautata Zaman Kauye". This means: "Towards Village Improvement" and describes accurately what the Team is trying to accomplish. The objective is to meet needs as they are found; and when we go with an open mind we find a great variety of needs. True, there are, as we expect, spiritual needs, as men and women grope for a faith that will bring them security despite the breakdown of established patterns of order and authority. But there are also countless other needs: the need for greater production from the farm to feed growing families where more children survive than ever before; the need for youth to regain a respect for parents and elders despite all the new teaching they get at school; the need to control disease in an age when the hypodermic needle means so much more to people than soap and water; and, of course, many, many more. So many more that the Team does as much in the way of channeling requests for help to other sources as it does in meeting needs themselves or, better, showing people how they can solve their own problems.

2. Geographically, Faith and Farm works in two main areas; Jos and Maiduguri. Jos is the capital of Benue-Plateau State; Maiduguri of the North Eastern State. The Jos area is a rough rectangle with the capital towards the North, running some 200 miles south and about 100 miles wide. This is an area of very rapid growth of the Christian church and as a result there has been a fairly good response to some new ideas brought in from outside. The other area, based on Maiduguri, is much larger geographically but less heavily populated and less intensively covered by Faith and Farm. The project is controlled, through a Committee, by the Council of the Plateau Church of Christ in

the Sudan.

### Methods of Work:

3. Through a body known as Agricultural Missions in New York, I was, in 1957, able to meet with people from a number of developing countries who had come from various parts of the world to attend a six week seminar in Kentucky. From the many findings that emerged out of our studies and discussions together one fact seemed incontrovertible: the least successful way to train farmers in the less developed countries is through farm schools. Over and over again we heard and read of expensive institutions failing to get more than an infinitesimal proportion of students back on to the land as vocational farmers. When we came to start Faith & Farm the following year, we were determined to avoid a large institution. In the years that followed, our experience and observation has not led us to modify this conviction. Mind you, we have never been hampered either by zealous politicians demanding status symbols of supposed agricultural progress nor by an abundance of money with which to embark on a large building programme. Working on a shoestring budget can be a blessing in several ways.

4. The only methods of training people in new techniques, both as regards farming and home life, seemed to be:-

- a) Apprenticeship Schemes
- b) Working with people in their own situations
- c) Short Courses
- d) Rural Youth Clubs

and, to back up all these methods,

- e) The use of bulletins and visual aids.

5. The organisation of all this started off by being in the hands of one missionary on a part time basis with a Land Rover. Today there is a small Team, led by a Nigerian, with four or five other touring members, each responsible for various aspects of the project.

## Apprenticeship Scheme:

6. As a low cost means of getting the best value for your money I can think of nothing more effective than apprenticeship schemes. You need no buildings and no paid teachers; you have no boarding problems and no unrealistic theoretical attitudes. And, most important of all, you get a good percentage of trainees established as farmers practising at least some of the techniques they have learned.

7. You do need an attractive goal for the trainees to work towards, good, co-operative and trustworthy farmers to take the apprentices, trained personnel and reliable transport for regular supervision both during and after training, land for resettling the trainees and a loan fund to help set them up.

8. Over the first ten year period in which Faith and Farm ran such an apprenticeship scheme, we trained a total of 74 men. Most were in their late teens or early twenties, though the few older men we have taken have proved extremely satisfactory. Of these 74 men, 52 are farming today. Of the 22 drop-outs, 9 never got started on their own farms after finishing their training and 13 gave up, usually in their first or second year. Of those who are farming today 44, or 84% of those still farming, are using the innovation that was their goal during training, namely ploughing using bulls in contrast to doing all the farm work by hand. Some, though not as many as we would like, have also graduated to use other improved practices.

9. More significant than these figures, however, is an assessment of local acceptance of the innovation. An indication of this is the spontaneous growth in the numbers of farmers using the improved practices. In areas where our farmers have proved most successful this growth has been very rapid. It is never possible to give exact figures when people whom you have not trained or even consciously worked with change their techniques, but it seems that at least an equal number of farmers, at a conservative estimate, to the numbers we have trained, have taken up ploughing with bulls through the influence of the more successful of our farmers. From there, acceptance of the new methods mushrooms and this has happened in certain areas.

### a) Master Farmers:

10. This is the name we give to the few carefully selected

farmers to whom we entrust men to be trained in better farming methods. There are nine Master Farmers at present, five of whom are former apprentices. Before a man can become a Master Farmer he must have proved himself to be above average not only in the special skill the apprentices will need to learn but in other aspects of farming. He must have a good character, have finished repaying any loan he got from Faith and Farm and have a happy home life, for the apprentices will be living as members of the family.

11. He receives no payment for taking apprentices nor for the time he spends teaching them; all he gets is £N6 towards the food the apprentice will eat during his nine month stay.

b) Apprentices:

12. As we interview applicants an attempt is made to find out whether they are mentally and physically suited to the challenge of breaking with tradition, being "odd man out" as still happens in some areas. Are they prepared to move away from their home areas, if necessary, in order to farm on completion of their training? If he is chosen (we can now take about sixteen apprentices a year) he has to find clothing, travel money and the £N6 food money to give to the farmer.

13. At first, conscious of the fact that boys who had been to primary school were not happy about returning to the kind of life lived by their farming parents, we restricted the choice of apprentices to those who had been to school. We got sufficient apprentices but the problem came with those (a majority) who had to be resettled away from their homes on completion of their training. We found we had created small communities of young men and as they began to get married, the lack of parents and grandparents brought about major social disturbances. In particular, the young wives, lacking trusted elder counsellors from their own tribes, became dissatisfied and got into various kinds of trouble.

14. Now we take late teenage boys and men with no top age limit and with no educational qualification beyond being able to read and write well in Hausa. In this way we get about 20% school leavers and a sprinkling of older men, too, resulting in much more stable communities.

c) Training:

15. The apprentice will live with the boys of the family and be treated just like any one else of his age in that family. In some respects he becomes the slave of the Master Farmer. He will be up early taking his turn at the household chores as often as he will be seeing to the cattle. We want the training to be tough; if there are going to be drop-outs let them take place before we invest money in them to get them set up, not after!

16. The trainees start in March and leave at the end of November, thus completing a full growing season. The classrooms are the fields and the huts where the men eat together.

d) Establishing the Apprentice:

17. Two bulls and a plough with a little fertiliser and good seed, cost between £N50 and £N60 in the part of Nigeria where we work. Faith and Farm has a loan fund and usually helps those who have finished their training successfully with one plough (about £N21 provided in kind) and one bull (about £N15). The other bull, seeds and fertiliser have to be found by the farmer with the help of relatives. We feel it is important to have others besides ourselves showing confidence in the man. Repayments come in pretty well if a member of the Team makes sure he is around to collect at the time the farmers are receiving money from the sale of their produce. Otherwise, it is amazing how quickly the money evaporates! Some of the farmers get behind-hand with repayments following crop failures or the disaster of a bull that has died.

18. In a few cases, the apprentices have land belonging to their family that is available and big enough for them to use with bulls. More often than not, we have to help them find land. Wherever possible we like to put the farmers in small groups - each with his own farm. Those in such communities have, on the average, done much better than the lone farmer, though there have been some grand exceptions.

19. Although the first year is so hard, we have deliberately avoided any kind of subsidy towards living expenses. We have seen where this has been done in other areas and the farmers feel very badly about withdrawals, or reductions, in the subsidy; living allowances take away from the need to be self reliant. It

is true, the men need to find help from others, but this is more in keeping with traditional African community life. As they are helped one year, they can in turn help others in a similar position in future years.

e) Other forms of Apprenticeship:

20. We feel that the scheme as developed over the past ten years has been a success. In particular, the trainees are not alienated from hard work on the land under conditions similar to those they will be experiencing when they work for themselves. The example of the Master Farmer's home farm does not present an unattainable goal. Building on what we have learned, Faith and Farm is now preparing to select Master Farmers who can teach other innovations than the use of bulls as draft animals. In some areas it is more relevant to teach poultry or rabbit-keeping, tree crop farming or vegetable gardening. With some of these skills it might be necessary to vary the length of the apprenticeship served.

Working with people in their own situations:

21. Our problem was that the Team was so small and the area and numbers of farmers needing help so large. We could not afford to add more paid extension workers to the Team so had to use existing material: lay pastors in charge of village congregations. This proved a happy choice. They are farmers, with wide contacts with people of all creeds through their Christian work. Out of some 700 of these lay pastors, groups of congregations have chosen 50 to be Faith and Farm agents. They are scattered so as to cover the whole of the area in which we work, and each has responsibility, as far as rural improvement work goes, in twenty to thirty villages, in addition to his own. Some may have received a little rural training if they attended a Bible School but for all of them we insist on a two week training course every February.

22. One of the things needed in villages if people are to improve their standards of farming and living is the availability of budded fruit trees, good breeding poultry, chicken wire, insecticides, vegetable seeds and fertilisers. With the co-operation of two large firms manufacturing agricultural chemicals and domestic insecticides, each of the agents was set up as salesman as well as extension worker.

23. This revolutionised their effectiveness. Instead of their

having to say: "The only thing that will get rid of the termites from your house and grain store is dieldrin but the nearest place you can get it is 200 miles away" which doesn't help anybody, the agent has the termiticide on hand himself and can show the people how to use it. This is real extension work, and because the chemicals used are effective, farmers have come to trust the agents when they give advice on other matters. Chickens, fruit trees, wire, seeds and other necessities are also distributed through the agents.

24. These agents get no pay: they are voluntary workers supporting themselves by farming. But they are given  $7\frac{1}{2}\%$  on the value of the sales they make. For some this can give them £10 to £15 a year. For others, with less push or poorer markets, under £1.

25. Whenever possible a member of the Team stays overnight with the agent he is visiting. The use of motorised cycles, carried in the kit-car until needed, helps to achieve this. It is then, after supper with the family, that deeper needs are discussed and problems solved. And the lucky village that has the kit-car that night may be entertained to a show of colour transparencies, teaching something new or maybe attempting to drive home an old health lesson that still has not caught on.

26. Some agents do excellent work, getting out on bicycles or on foot to the villages around, holding meetings, short courses and discussions, and really helping farm families with some of their worries. One has been responsible for a group of hill farmers moving down to more fertile, accessible plains, to the delight of the Administration. Others of the agents are less active and a few confine their activities to a little selling at the weekly market. Not exactly their "raison d'être" but certainly meeting a need!

27. By correspondence with the Team they share problems and ask for advice. Newsletters from the Team to the agents keep them in touch with one another and remind them of seasonal operations they should be thinking about.

28. It is a very low cost method of working with people in their own situation; its weakness lies in the range in ability and drive of the voluntary agents; its strength in the fact that great numbers of farm families are being reached and helped. Over the last ten years, the number of Government extension workers in agriculture has increased rapidly, and there are now

also a few in home economics. Frequent meetings with officials and workers at all levels ensure a uniform policy and excellent relationships.

#### Short Courses, Visual Aids and Youth Clubs:

29. Some of the courses last just for one day: others for a weekend or a full week. The course for agents is for two weeks. They cover a range of agricultural and health subjects and are often for specific sections of the community. With every subject we aim to have a duplicated bulletin to hand out.

30. These bulletins and the newsletters, the transparencies and the posters mean a lot to the farmers. They are not only teaching aids, but they help to identify the source of the teaching; this in turn generates the confidence that comes from familiarity. Some of the bulletins and visual aids the Faith and Farm Team writes and produces: others come from Government, research centres, commercial firms and from a rural work co-ordinating body in the northern states of Nigeria known as the Christian Rural Advisory Council. We have found that transparencies taken locally not only serve more exactly the purpose for which we intend them but are more popular with the viewers.

31. Young Farmers' Clubs, despite their tremendous potential, have really been successful only in the schools in the areas we serve. "Open" clubs, run in a few cases by Faith and Farm agents, are all too rare and need much more supervision and help than the Faith and Farm Team has been able to give. The few that have survived, usually because of good leadership, have had practical projects that teach members new farming skills.

#### Is Faith and Farm Relevant Elsewhere?

32. There is no doubt that Faith and Farm has made a big contribution, both directly and indirectly, to the rural people in the areas served. The question is whether such a project could be introduced in other areas or other countries. So much depends on voluntary service in this project; the Master Farmers are not paid, so it is possible to train apprentices without giving them a living allowance; the Agents are not paid so there are many of them, covering a wide area. Such a programme is possible since the workers are already committed to the principle of helping others for no material reward because of their religious principles. In a church programme, work



similar to Faith and Farm can be introduced and is in fact being carried out successfully in several areas. In a Governmental set-up, could deep patriotism or loyalty to some other ideology produce a similar commitment? Could the idea of voluntary help be modified, say by having part-time extension agents and paying honoraria to the Master Farmers? In an age where every developing country sees the urgent need to help its rural communities and where, inevitably, the money to do this is in short supply, some form of low cost agricultural training is essential.