

MMS and “Development” in Rhodesia

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In Rhodesia/Zimbabwe the major means by which the Methodist Missionary Society shared in development was through the preaching of the gospel, the growth of the Church and the provision of education. But there were also two special projects which are worthy of note, and are probably examples of similar Methodist projects in other parts of the world. They were projects in which young men were equipped with practical skills which enabled them to help others develop their own resources and so enrich the life of the community as a whole

I shall also refer briefly to a scheme to develop Mission Farms, a scheme that was never fully implemented.

MMS work began in 1891 in Zimbabwe, in both Mashonaland and Matabeleland, and in each of these parts of the country, at an early stage, a boarding school was established as part of the Church's educational work. Nenguwo Training Institution was set up in Mashonaland (the name was later changed to Waddilove Training Institution), and Tegwani (now Thekwane) Training Institution in Matabeleland. Both were started to train evangelists, and each in time provided basic education in general subjects, and each in time developed its own special course more closely related to training students in practical skills, which would enable them to help others develop more fully their own resources.

Agricultural Course at Waddilove Training Institution

The farm at Nenguwo was one of the farms given to the Methodist Church by the British South Africa Company when Methodist missionaries first entered the country. Methodist work at Nenguwo was started by an evangelist from South Africa, Modumedi Moleli, but sadly he was killed during the Mashona rebellion of 1896. Three years later a missionary was stationed at Nenguwo. and he set up a boarding school for training evangelists and teachers, with six students, three married and three single. In 1914 income from the Centenary Fund enabled the building of a hall, four classrooms, hostels for girls and boys and a schoolmaster's house and gifts of £1500 and £1200 from Mr Josiah Waddilove in Britain enabled further expansion, and the resultant Institution was named after him.

Industrial and agricultural subjects were taught as part of the general training, just as in each primary school throughout the country there was a small garden where vegetables were grown. A Government report in 1919 speaks of the boys being trained to do wood-work, working from simple drawings on the black-board. It also says that the minister's wife trained girls in domestic work, taking 3 or 4 at a time into her home for that purpose.

A report in the District Handbook of 1930 states that “Extension work in the form of advice to people in the Reserves is being given. Trees have been grown from seed and while the home plantations are being well-maintained and extended, it is the intention to send out supplies of trees with the teachers who are taking up posts in the Reserve schools.”

In the early 1940s it was decided to develop this work more systematically. 150 acres were set apart for the development of a special post-Std 6 Agricultural Training Programme, with the aim of having approximately 12 students in each of two years. George Braithwaite, an Agriculturalist from South Africa was appointed (first as a Direct Appointment and later as a lay missionary) to run the course. A model farm was planned for the students to run, arable lands were prepared, a well was dug, a cow byre and cattle kraals built, and the ground was cleared for houses and other necessary farm buildings.

The Report to Synod 1946 (on 1945) states that the first group of 10 students to sit their final examinations were all successful. “Of the 10, 3 were going to teach agriculture in Methodist schools, 2 wished to enter the Training School to get their teaching certificates and 5 had been accepted for demonstrator training.”

George Braithwaite died in 1947 and another South African Agriculturalist, Mr Schmolke M Sc took up the post of Instructor in Agriculture. In 1950 an African member of staff, Fred Hatendi was appointed to assist Mr Schmolke, and in 1951 Edward Garland, a missionary from Britain took over the course.

In 1953 it became a 3-year course and in 1955 Emory Alvord, an ex-Govt Minister of Agriculture (who had been a member of the committee supervising the work at Waddilove from 1931 to 1945) became Head of the Agricultural Department. He was joined by mission-partners Bob Garner and Keith Horton. Emory Alvord died in May 1959 and was buried at Waddilove. Bob Garner took his place and continued as Head until 1965. David Kemp (1959–1963), Nelson Pasipanodya and others were on the staff under Bob’s leadership.

Until 1958 the farm had been run by the Agricultural Department but it was realised that a separate Farm Manger was needed if the farm was to be developed to its full potential and David Rogers, a missionary from England, was appointed Farm Manager. He shared fully in the training of the students. Val Davies became Farm Manager in 1964.

In 1957 it had become a 4-year course with about 30 students in each year and included:

- . • how to grow better crops (the use of fertilisers etc) and the introduction of new crops (including new vegetables) which would be of benefit to the people in the reserves.
- . • the care of poultry and the value of eggs as food

- . • better care of sheep, cattle and pigs, including dosing sheep against worms, dipping cattle against ticks, the feeding, housing and breeding of pigs
- . • forestry, tree plantation and harvesting
- . • protection against soil erosion: contour ridging, filling in gullies
- . • the use of tools, including tractors; simple repairs to tractors
- . • fencing

Some of the students who completed the course were employed as government demonstrators, to go and live with people in the reserves and farming areas, demonstrating through the way themselves farmed how to improve crops and the care of animals. They also visited people round about, advising and encouraging them with their crops and animals.

Other students were from families who already owned farms, and besides improving what was done on these farms they helped people living nearby.

Other students went on to train as teachers of agriculture in primary and secondary schools.

The course continued until 1965 when the government decided it would no longer support it financially at that level, and that students would have to pass the Junior Certificate examination before they could be admitted to such courses in future.

Scheme to Develop the Mission Farms

Besides Nenguwo, the Methodist Church in Rhodesia was given several other farms, each of which had a church and a school, and all but Nenguwo had tenants who paid rent and farmed their own plots of land.

The Church did not have all the resources to develop these other farms satisfactorily and in 1962 Oxfam offered to support the development of them, if the Church would suggest how it could be done. A scheme was worked out for two of the farms, Marshall Hartley and Pakame, and although the MMS at first intended to send out an agriculturalist to implement the development, no one was sent. David Rogers was transferred from Waddilove to Marshall Hartley in 1964 to try to help with development there, and then he was transferred to Epworth in 1969 when there were conservation and other problems.

The Government was becoming increasingly concerned about the standards of farming by tenants on Mission Farms and in 1971 representatives of Agricultural Missions Inc, New York, called a meeting of representatives of all Mission Farms to share information, experience and ideas on common problems, look at the possibility of help with rural development in the Tribal Trust Lands and work out a common Church Land policy in the light of Government policy and legislation. Two further

consultations were held in 1972 and 1975/6, and two sets of reports (each about 30 pages long) were produced, outlining progress already made and planning future development. Independence brought an end to these activities.

Tegwani Industrial Training Courses

In Matabeleland in the South, the Church had been working at Tegwani, near Plumtree. Tegwani Industrial and Training Institution was started in May 1924 to provide further educational facilities and training in useful occupations for the boys of the Methodist village day schools in Matabeleland, and for any others who wished to come. Some of the first pupils came from Bechuanaland and Northern Rhodesia, as well as Matabeleland.

The school was first housed in the village which had been occupied by an African minister. The buildings available were one two-roomed cottage and three round huts. The staff consisted of the minister of the circuit and the evangelist stationed at Tegwani. Farming and carpentry were added to reading, writing and arithmetic, and in an early report the school was graded by the Government Inspector as "first class".

The students then made their own bricks, and working under an African bricklayer put up new and more substantial buildings, including an industrial carpenter's shop. By this time there was an African carpenter on the staff and together with him the students did all the woodwork for the new buildings. The report in the 1929 District Handbook stated that in two years they had done all the carpentry for 2 new classrooms, 4 dormitories, 2 houses for married teachers, one for a single teacher and they had made for themselves and for sale doors, windows, blackboards, tables, cupboards, desks, seats and imphala boxes. (for keeping their clothes, books etc in).

A trained African Agricultural Instructor was employed in 1928 and the students cultivated between 40 and 50 acres of land. The report for that year said that "It is very necessary to teach farming so that we may help the native people to get the best possible results from their lands. Lectures are given in school on this subject and boys who are interested will find the notes valuable in later life".

In 1931 Mr T Carter (the brother of the missionary who first started the school) went from England to be in charge of the industrial courses, specialising in agriculture and tree-planting..

In 1932 buildings were put up for girls to join the Institution to do courses in homemaking, cookery, needlework, laundry work, home nursing and Miss Elise Lince was appointed from England to help with the training of the girls.

Reports for the 1930s to the 1960s tell of 12 to 15 students on the building course each year. I have not been able to discover just when it finished, but it was probably 1970-72.

In the early 1970's the Central Primary School also ran a simple building course and one on gardening as part of the curriculum for Std 5.

Jonathan Hill who is now at Thekwane tells me that the nearest there is now to an industrial or agricultural training course is within traditional O-level and A-level courses. In addition to general academic and commercial subjects, Thekwane now offers Technical Graphics, Fashion and Fabric, Agriculture, Woodwork and Building Studies at O-level, and of these Technical Graphics and Agriculture are taught at A-level.

The courses at Waddilove and Tegwani may have not made massive contributions to the development of the life of people in Zimbabwe, but they helped to train people there to go out and help others to develop the use of the resources that they had and in this way they enriched their own lives and the lives of others. And no doubt similar contributions were made by the Methodist Church in other parts of the world.

Ndabaningi Sithole in Obed Mutezo the biography of a Methodist Rhodesian African Nationalist shows how life in the church enabled Obed to gain administrative skills that were useful in the nationalist movement. They were also useful to people engaged in development.

“Apart from being a Sunday School teacher, Obed Mutezo also had vital experience in the “Fishermen” movement whose object was to recruit more young people into the church. Obed Mutezo became the treasurer of his local branch, and from 1950 – 1963 he was the chairman. From this movement he learned practical organisation of public programmes, chairing meetings, handling men, sensing conflicting motives among people who had only one expressed aim in coming together, and many other useful things.”