

## **Title - Evolution of indigenous missions in Africa: the CAPRO experience**

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### **1. General**

Missionary activities in Africa dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Church Missionary Society was one of the earliest pioneers of Missions in Africa. Their work in Nigeria started in 1846. Many other missionary groups including the Catholics, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians came in after them. In West Africa, their labours were mostly around the coastal regions because they were more readily accessible.

Non denominational Missionary agencies joined at the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Notable of such Mission agencies included the Sudan Interior Missions (SIM), African Inland Mission (AIM), Qua Iboe Mission (QIM), Sudan United Mission (SUM – a conglomerate of Mission agencies). In Nigeria CMS efforts to penetrate the Muslim north was met with strong resistance by the strong Islamic governments of the North backed by the Colonial Administrators. Later the SIM was able to penetrate the hinterland and planted Churches amongst the few animistic tribes that had not embraced Islam. For a long time, the dominant Hausa and Fulani tribes of Nigeria and the Francophone countries of West Africa were largely un-evangelised.

There was a notable revival and a great move of the Holy Spirit in Nigeria and some other countries of Africa in the late 60s and early 70s. The University campuses were the centre of these revivals. Many students of these universities caught the evangelistic fervour and went with that into their new careers after graduation. However the Francophone countries did not experience this same move of the Holy Spirit as the Anglophones. This revival experience and evangelistic zeal was what set the stage for the evolution of a new breed of Missions endeavours on the continent, i.e. the rise of indigenous Missions.

Missions had as at this time been regarded, and is still regarded in some places, as the exclusive activity of the “Oyibos” (in Nigeria) or “Wazungus” (in Swahili), i.e. the white man. This was partly so because Missionary converts of the “Oyibo” planted Churches were not trained and prepared for cross cultural Missions. When indigenous Mission agencies and Missionaries arrived on the scene, it sounded strange. This was the exact scenario when Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) came into being.

### **2. History and Vision**

Started precisely 30years ago, Calvary Ministries or CAPRO was born out of a costly and suicidal evangelistic effort carried out in the Islamic city of Zaria in northern Nigeria. The founders of the Ministries (youths all below 29 years of age then) were seeking the Lord’s face for a direction after the botched crusade in front of the Emir’s palace in Zaria city, when the Lord spoke clearly to them to start a movement that will seek to reach the Muslim dominated region of Northern Nigeria and the Islamic/animists Francophone West African countries. Moved by this conviction the vision holders called a meeting of other like minded youths and the first meeting of the pioneer members of Calvary Productions (CAPRO) as it was then known], was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1975. As the Ministries grew and its function became clearer the name was changed from Calvary Productions to Calvary Ministries to reflect its exact vision and activities, which is principally evangelism in the targeted area of vision. With the unfolding of some significant events in the life of the ministries, the Lord thereby expanded the vision

to include Africa and by extension the whole world. CAPRO presently has staff strength of about 450 Missionaries from 23 different countries. The Ministries has Missionaries placed in 20 countries of Africa and the Middle East. It is registered in the U.S.A. and plans have been concluded to open an office in the U.K. The Ministries seeks to focus its efforts in the 10/40 window.

CAPRO's vision can be summarized as: taking the gospel to peoples that have not been reached with the gospel and the planting of self governing and self propagating indigenous Churches amongst these unreached people groups. Unreached People groups are regarded as a people without a witnessing Church or sufficient number of believers amongst them to be able to evangelize themselves. CAPRO targets such people groups for ministry. The approach is through the following ways:

### 3. **MINISTRIES**

#### 3.1. **Research**

This is the finding of where the unreached peoples are located. Information and data on the various ethnic groups is useful for strategic planning on missions outreach to needy peoples. CAPRO initiated the Research of the entire peoples of Northern Nigeria and francophone African Countries. The information gathered were published in books and also made available to the Church and Mission agencies that are interested in using them to adopt and engage people groups for Church Planting.

#### 3.2 **Mobilization and Awareness**

This is aimed at getting the Churches aware of the need for Missions and their supposed role in Missions and to mobilize human and material resources for the course of missions.

This is achieved through the development, production and distribution of media resources, formation of CAPRO Chapters in cities; arrangement of short term mission visits and engagements, and organising Missions and Discipleship conferences.

#### 3.3 **Training**

This is one of the most important aspects of CAPRO, i.e. the preparation of Missionaries for service. CAPRO runs three types of Schools: a) Schools of Mission b) Discipleship Training Schools c) Schools of Leadership.

**The DTS:** DTS was the first to start at the beginning of the Ministries in 1975 and was aimed primarily at Character formation which, the Ministries felt the Churches and the theological colleges were not sufficiently doing. The DTS programmes now run in 3 forms:

- a) ***Regular DTS:*** 6 months training which includes Christian Life and Ministries and selected missiological courses
- b) ***Dry Season DTS:*** 3 months training programme in Christian Life and Church ministries for indigenous converts who are or will be leading the Churches planted
- c) ***Discipleship and Missions Exposure Programme (DIMEP):*** This is a flexible, non residential 48hours, 12weeks training programme in Discipleship and Missions aimed at sensitizing the working class people in the cities to Christian Life and Missions.

**SOM:** The CAPRO School of Missions (SOM) grew out of the DTS. When the Ministry changed its name from Calvary Productions to Calvary Ministries, its missions mandate became clearer and better defined. To engage un-reached people groups meant that those to be sent needed to be trained in Cross Cultural Ministry. It was evident that DTS was not sufficient to

achieve that objective. It was considered at that time that what a cross cultural Missionary really needed was not a Bible College or University Theological Education but pure Discipleship and practical approach to Church planting in difficult terrains and hostile people groups. As at this time there was no known School in Nigeria that was geared to fulfil this objective. The CAPRO School of Missions was started in 1981 to play this role. CAPRO now has 5 Schools of Missions. 2 are English speaking SOM in Nigeria and Kenya, 2 are French speaking in Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, and one is Hausa speaking and located in Nigeria.

**SOL:** This is an in house training programme for the development of Leadership in the ministries and to train Church Planting pioneers. It is a packed 6-8weeks. The Mercy Ministries Department also runs a School of Basic Health Care which provides specialised training for non Medical Field Missionaries in the area of preventive Health Care.

### **3.4 Mercy Ministries**

Like mentioned earlier most of the peoples CAPRO work amongst, are found in less developed areas where there are no amenities like Schools, clinics, good drinking water, etc. The economic state of the people is poor. The Missions approach of the Ministries is therefore holistic. CAPRO has had to establish literacy programmes both for adults and children. Primary Schools have been established in some cases. There are 9 of such schools in Nigeria, Togo, Botswana and Kenya. These Schools are non profit making. Basic Health Care services and in some cases a full fleshed clinic are also established.

### **4. The Fields**

The word Field is taken from John 4:35 referring to a people group. Different peoples that CAPRO engages for Church Planting and ministry are named as Fields, e.g. "the Mandika Field", the Yao Field, etc. Every activity, including Research, Mobilization, Training, Administration, Mercy Ministries, etc. are all aimed at enhancing Field operations. The reaching of the peoples with the gospel is the principal reason why the Ministries exist. The most crucial part of the Missionary's work in the Field as CAPRO sees it, is not just the making of converts but the discipleship process necessary to establish them in the faith and make them living witnesses of the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. This is in obedience to the commands of Christ in Matthew 28: 19-20 "...teaching them to observe all things I have taught you". This takes time and is so done until Christian workers emerge from the Church.

### **5. Problems**

CAPRO Problems include:

- i) **Inadequate manpower:** The numbers of people that respond to full time Missionary service are fewer than targeted.
- ii) **Gaining Acceptance:** The Suspicion of Churches towards non denominational Missions agencies continues to be a limiting factor to what an agency like CAPRO can achieve in many countries where they work. Getting necessary support and mobilizing of manpower for Missions becomes a problem.
- iii) **The Image Factor:** CAPRO'S problem of acceptance in countries outside Nigeria is complicated by the Nigerian image factor. The image of Nigeria abroad has been badly battered over the years so CAPRO Missionaries have had to patiently toil to repair this image first before ministry. This has been a big set back creating delays in progressing with the Master's task.

- iv) **Immigration Barriers:** Getting work permit is becoming a tough task in some countries these days. The only way of entry into a closed country is through some other cover and never as Missionaries.
- v) **Finances:** God has been very faithful to CAPRO supplying the needs of the Ministries in miraculous ways. With a cumulative budget that runs to almost \$1million a year, excluding individual staff support which, is more or less privately sourced, the Lord has continued to supply as necessary enabling the Ministries to meet at least 40% of its budget. The funding of the Ministries and the support of individual Missionaries has not been easy neither has the Ministries found a way round this problem.

## **6. Conclusion**

Missions movement in Africa is gradually gaining grounds. A country like Nigeria has over 100 Mission Agencies registered with the Apex Nigerian Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA). Many African Countries are gradually joining the Missions train. Some countries would have matured as Missions sending countries by now but for wars and political instability that has ravaged most of Africa. It seems however that for now God has placed Nigeria in a strategic position to take the lead in Evangelising Africa, if not the rest of the world. CAPRO had been used of God also to strengthen and position many agencies to achieve God's plan for the continent. One critical area that still need to be studied and carefully worked on is the most effective and efficient approach to Missionary Training and the place of Theological Education in furthering the growth of Missions in Africa.

### References:

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