



Accelerating Community Transformation

Interchristian Fellowships' Evangelical Mission
Holy Living & Hard Work - Kenya

Newsletter from IcFEM-Mission (Europe) - Autumn 2005

IcFEM is described as ministering to a rural community – but what is a “rural community”? In this country, it conjures up a picture of a village consisting of a cluster of houses, a church, a few shops, perhaps even a school. There would be a few farms widely scattered, with some isolated farm- or estate-workers' cottages; and perhaps the big estate house, occupied by the family who own (or used to own) most of the land.

The rural community in Kimilili is something quite different, and is something we would never see in England. Driving along the dirt road, you glimpse houses from time to time behind the crops of maize. This is because every family has its own small-holding – between two and ten acres of land, the average being five acres. On this they grow their crops of maize, cassava, beans, sweet potatoes, bananas, coffee (if they have the space), which is the food they will live on for the whole year. They will have a few cows or goats, perhaps some sheep, which will probably be driven along the roads to graze as they can. They will also have some totally free-range chickens!

On this land, they will have their house. It will be built with clay walls in a wooden frame, with a corrugated iron roof and unglazed windows. Inside, it will be divided into two rooms with earth floor. There may be a separate small house used as a kitchen, or the three-stone, wood burning open hearth may be inside the house. The whole family will live here - that will be the parents, probably a widowed grandmother, perhaps five children of their own and maybe four or five orphaned children who are related – twelve or more people, all living off this small farm.

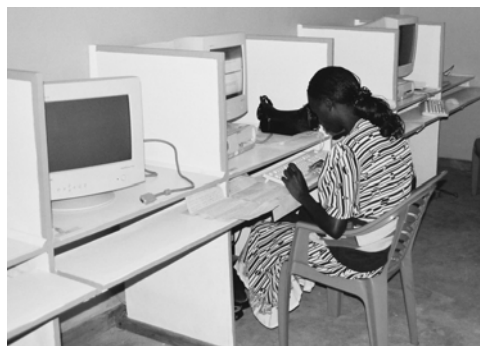


When your home is surrounded by five or more acres of land, you are some distance from your neighbours. I asked Robin, who works in the Nairobi office, but who grew up in Kimilili, how a “community” works in these circumstances. He told me that everyone meets at the spring when they go to collect water (a round trip of up to 2 kilometres) or at the shops. Everyone walks, or rides a bicycle, so there is time to talk on the way. The children walk to school – some for a considerable distance – and the schools have over 900 pupils (in 10 classes); but that is another story.

The comprehensive Annual Report from Kenya covers the many activities of the mission; highlighting the matters for praise and prayer:

Dreamland Education Centre: The school has received official registration and is enrolled as a KPCE examination centre. The 15 candidates from the school took 1st position in Kimilili West Zone and 3rd in the division. Revised fees for the next academic year go hand in hand with plans to expand the boarding section.

The **Cyber Café** is proving to be a popular service, the number of clients growing from 455 in April to over 1,000 in August. There are plans to expand the teaching programmes on Internet and Email literacy; more computers will be needed, and a standby generator to deal with power outages.



The **Newspaper** continues to be an effective means of communication, with a regular distribution of around 1800 copies a month. A cost sharing scheme has been introduced with those people needing coverage of their functions.

The **Bethesda Pool Programme**, reaching physically and mentally handicapped, has met the needs of 1258 people. Sensitization, mobilization and creation of awareness with the Provincial Administration were done in Bumula, Sirisia and Webuye Divisions.

The **Dreamland Medical Care Centre** has served over 7.700 patients including the highest entry of 2,455 children at the Child Welfare Clinics. An Orthopaedic Workshop has been set up and equipped following a survey of those needing treatment.

Over 200 invitations were taken up to **teach, preach and counsel**, from learning institutions, churches, homes, conferences and camps. Over 30,000 have been reached with the Gospel, leading to a wonderful deliverance for a demon-possessed man in Teso; and, following a Prayer Walk in Nasusi, where an Intercessory Centre was started, the revival of a village polytechnic, healing in the community and greater unity in the churches.



The **Mission Lorry** is back on the road after repairs, and the **Uniform and Clothes Production** is now producing a profit, providing employment as well as reaching people with the Gospel (as does every activity of the Mission!) The **Farm** has suffered both from adverse weather, which affected the short season crops, and from low market prices for the crops which did well.

The mission has also helped to construct classrooms at Kamusinga and Buko primary schools, and provided desks for ten schools in the division.

John 3.8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

This describes the work of the IcFEM; it is as if there was a lake to be crossed, and there was a choice of a power boat or a sailing dinghy. The power boat can set a course across the lake straight to its destination; a sailing boat will have to take account of the wind, its strength and direction. If the wind changes when it is half way across, it may have to change course. It may even have to land at a different point from the one it set out to reach.

Some things – like a new building, maintenance of vehicles etc, can be mapped out precisely. A strategy can be worked out, estimates drawn up, a budget approved, and the work set in hand with a target date for completion. That is the style of the motor boat; it is a cut and dried procedure which suits the business mind and practice.

The other style is the way of faith where the next stage can only be seen when the first is under way. It may be possible to complete as planned, or something may happen which completely changes it. Take the Community Service Offenders programme as an example. This began by two offenders being sent by the court to work at IcFEM headquarters. Not surprisingly, the staff did not treat them as criminals, but ministered to them. Their probation officers saw how offenders who went to IcFEM were helped, and other offenders asked to be sent there. Finally the supervisors asked for a combined meeting for offenders from the Division. This grew into a series of meetings covering such things as how to set up a business, repentance, the law, faith. Those who came were given lunch and tea; 100 people registered for the meetings. Those who completed the course were offered certificates, which give them a good name when seeking employment. Now the mission has been asked to start a similar ministry in another district.

There are many other occasions when a single contact has exploded unpredictably into a bigger work. This is how the Spirit works; what starts as something small may suddenly grow into something large. Suddenly there will be financial demands – it cost 15,000/= (about £120) to provide food for the CSO programme. Setting up a meeting in another District will involve travelling large distances, with the cost of fuel, vehicles etc. In the same way as Paul was called away from Troas to go to Macedonia, the Spirit will direct the work as it happens.

This means that instead of strategic planning, the mission operates on responsive planning. They can plan what to do to repair or replace vehicles; they cannot plan what they are going to do for God – they must follow His leading. That is the way of faith. It is something that is difficult to understand from a distance; in Europe we think of projects, for which we can raise specified sums of money which will be dedicated to that particular enterprise – and we can be glad to see when it is completed. A faith mission needs flexible giving which responds as the wind of the Spirit blows. It is a ministry to people, not of bricks and mortar; if funds are tied up by being connected specifically to projects, they cannot be used when a sudden need arises. Day by day living demands a spontaneous response.

An Assistant Director remarked that the river always reaches Lake Victoria, but the volume of the flow depends on the tributaries. The work of IcFEM always continues, but the volume of the work depends on its con-tributaries!

To be a contributor to God's work means accepting the way of faith and not of sight, to make all we have available to god so that we can respond when He calls. We can be "safe" and only support the strategically planned projects (which still need to be supported); or we can make ourselves open to the Spirit and respond when he calls. Both contributions are valued, but to be one that Jesus describes as "so is everyone that is born of the Spirit", who moves as the Spirit blows, is a new adventure.