A Case Study In The Move Toward Self-Reliance:
The Democratic Republic Of Congo

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This paper was presented at the Philadelphia Consultation on Dependency and Self-Reliance held on November 19-20, 1999. The copyright belongs to the author who takes full responsibility for the content and issues dealt with in the paper.

INTRODUCTION

In 1987, the fiftieth anniversary celebration of our church held in Karawa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) popularized the idea of the "Cretinism of the Church." The phrase suggests that we must be grown up enough to do mission. The Evangelical Community in the Ubangi-Mongala (CEUM) emphasized that we should focus on our own regional church without going out cross-culturally to reach the unreached.

One missionary hotly contested a Congolese leader's suggestion that the church should always give assistance to the indigenous church: "When are you going to be mature enough to lead your own church instead of always depending on missionaries?" Although the challenge came as a shock, the leader finally saw that the missionary was urging him on taking responsibility in hand. Fifty years of evangelism and assistance by Covenant missionaries was enough to prepare mission for independent missionary work. A similar process must have taken place in the first century. For, the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:2 "take the teachings that you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, and entrust them to reliable people, who will be able to teach others also." People may see this as Paul urging Timothy in the "self-propagating" principle. That principle includes the three-self of Henry Venn's theory.
In my particular Church, the Evangelical Community in the Ubangi-Mongala (CEUM), located in the northwestern corner of the DRC has over 140,000 members representing fifteen different ethnic groups. The population of the Ubangi-Mongala region is 1,500,000 in which the CEUM itself has 872 Preaching Points. The total number of missionaries working in the CEUM in 1996 before evacuation was 47 career and 11 Short-term (Covenant World Mission: 1998).

The Church is located between two rivers: Ubangi and Mongala and covers 20,000 square miles. The DRC is the third largest country in Africa with 9 neighbouring countries and compares in size to the USA east of the Mississippi River. The Democratic Republic of Congo has potential wealth. The mining in Mbuji-Mayi and other places can produce 72 per cent of gold for the international market. Diamonds have a production of 400,000 tons for world consumption. The peasant population lives on agricultural products. They do better with coffee and some agricultural products because they can be harvested twice a year without compost. The soil is very rich and gives a good yield. Hydroelectric power of Inga could produce 80 per cent of what the continent of Africa needs. Because of the civil war there is no way people can spend much time thinking about the development of the country.

The CEUM has 8 departments: Evangelism and Church Planting, Biblical and Theological Education, Christian Education, Public Education, Christian Communication and Literacy, Women and Families, Medical Services, and Community Development. The ministries that are urging the CEUM to be more active are the medical department and the development work. In reg, we are going to regard to the subject of this papers I will reflect briefly on church history from 1922 - 1997. The focus is on the dependency of the Communaute Evangelique de 'Ubangi-Mongala (CEUM) that allowed the growth and the spread of the church in the Ubangi-Mongala. In addition, a case study of the self-reliance principle utilized in 1992 which came out of a specific circumstance: the political crisis of the country will be discussed. Some major issues related to Mission and church leaders must be briefly discussed for the missionaries were instrumental in all of the above work. In the term of "his paper the term "CEUM" will be coming often which means the Evangelical Community of the Ubangi-Mongala.

The reflection will demonstrate how the CEUM attempted to use some of the "self-reliance" theory in order to resolve some of the financial questions which were the major elements of misunderstanding between a missionary and the local leader as I mentioned earlier. I will make connections of several philosophical metaphors of local leaders and some theological issues with how the CEUM, struggled in handling the church ministries at the time missionaries were evacuated in 1991.

The first section will deal with the historical background of the church and the country as I summarized in the introduction. The second section will discuss the circumstances that urged the CEUM to use the "self-reliance" principle. This principle was utilized while the church was keeping better partnership with the "mother-church," the Evangelical Covenant Church. The third section will discuss the concrete case of the move from dependency to the "semi-dependency" or partnership. The fourth section will give some suggestions. The conclusion will summarize the learning.
The three-self theory of Henry Venn is not to be neglected nor ignored. It is hard to apply all three at the same time while the mission society is still present and at work. Otherwise the pride of the mission success can be missionary sin. It is difficult to jump from long standing dependency to the three self-principles if the strategy was not conceived from the beginning. Once people are aware of the richness of that strategy, some missionaries may look back and feel sorry for what has happened. They may not really try to change anything or not risk wanting to change at all. Evangelized as well as evangelist owe a great gratitude to Henry Venn.

For those who have not yet started mission work, they have something to learn. Let me show you the frame work of this reflection as "self-reliance" has been a challenging thing for most missionaries as well as local leaders who were attempting to work hand in hand with their partners. Some have agreed to the discontinuity of the dependency (moratorium). Those who are radical and desire new direction want to cut short the dependency. Some who have done it already, are happy with the consequence whether bad or good. They also understand better their present situation.

For those in the midst of a dependency situation it is difficult to take into consideration the self-reliance theory. The continuation of dependency is the only option. They may find the partnership to be an irrelevant social game. They also understand where they are going and what will be the end of the game. My intention is not to encourage the radical change (or the discontinuity) of that dependency that we know, which is a great obstacle for the ministry of the gospel. I believe it is hard not to depend on anybody in the world. I am not encouraging people to be dependent either as we all understand the situation we are going through in the third world in this century. What I will do is to underline some of the positive elements that "self-reliance" gives, based on the third principle of the three-self theory of Henry Venn. I am referring to the fact that Venn suggested that churches are only free when they become self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting. This is what some theologians call decolonization, and others "church autonomy". Another group will talk about "indigenous church." My goal is to introduce my people to the positive side of the "self-reliance" which can lead to church autonomy. We must start somewhere and somehow.

CIRCUMSTANCES

The CEUM church in the DRC experienced for the fourth time what we call the "Evacuation" of missionaries. This occurs when a missionary must leave his cross-cultural ministry because of security issues of the country usually based on mission policy. The Congolese called it "Missionary fleeing the war". Yet Catholic priests always stayed with the believers until the end of the hostilities. The case of the CEUM is very special. A missionary must leave the country fearing not to experience death as it happened to Dr. Paul Carlson in the rebellion of 1964. The first evacuation happened in 1960 at the country's independence event. In 1964-65, missionaries had to be evacuated (second evacuation) because the rebellion threatened their lives and led to the martyrdom of a medical missionary. The first and second looting of 1991 happened in Kinshasa. Even though the trouble was far away from the CEUM, missionaries were evacuated. The evacuation was forced by the memory of the 1964 rebellion (third evacuation). The last
and fourth evacuation in 1997 occurred shortly before the late president Mobutu was toppled by the new democratic movement of Laurent Desire Kabila.

We need to look back to the beginning of the mission work stated in 1922 through the colonial regime until 1960, or 28 years after the first missionary arrived in the Ubangi region. Nobody could even think of training national leaders to take over the ministry. Even it was not completely that, but the training of local leaders had to happen slowly until 33 years later. The evacuation that I am talking about was in 1991 where missionaries had to leave quickly without planning. Office keys were turned over to pastors, the Cooks (Cuisinier), or Yard-guards, whoever was near. Some keys were forgotten in hidden places unknown by us yet we needed them to help in the missionary absence. It was really hard on the local leaders seeing 24 trucks full of missionaries lined up going to cross the border. Bangui was the only secure place. That finally turned out not to be secure because of the mass of people evacuated to the little city of Bangui. The most painful experience was that we were used to depending on the money coming from overseas and three months went by without receiving any. We didn't know what to do. Finances had to be arranged in the US, sent to Central African Republic and brought across the border to us. We had to hand carry messages for a particular project to Bangui instead of solving the problem locally.

The pastors we sent to Kinshasa were our first test of mission experience. We could not get the money if it came from overseas. The cry for help by Pastors, lay ministers and leaders in Kinshasa and those where we lived urged me to devise an urgent assistance system, which I called "ethique de situation." I started thinking of where to get money to help people in need and to help the office function. Being a poor chief of staff responsible for the church administration, I had no staff to help me in the Headquarters.

I reflected on the fiftieth anniversary of the CEUM in 1937-1987 regarding the hot discussion that took place. So I decided to take a new direction. Some missionaries tried to convince the Congolese that Ray Dahlberg had pledged only to multiply immediate Sunday offerings for the mission, but not the total income. This was an issue of what pool of money they would offer to the mission project. My second reflection was on my colleague’s issue of the maturity of the church. As a result this urged me to take another direction in leadership. This was very tough, because I knew that my venture would look like dropping one drop of water in the ocean. What I would see is only the ocean movement, which could not make any difference.

FROM DEPENDENCY TO SELF-RELIANCE: PARTNERSHIP

My position in the church permitted me to begin a project based on the "Self-reliance" principle. I had read about it in 1991 in an article given to me from a missionary before the evacuation time. I clearly explained the situation to the President of the CEUM, who was in charge of all church finances to discuss it in the Council. I knew that the Lord wanted me to do something that could somehow help at this critical moment of crisis.

My first study was to review the church budget to see the income sources. I realized that with the dependency character set earlier in the colonial era, for years our church never
raise more than 2% of its budget locally. The church was functioning according to the projects set by the church council and missionary field representative. There were problems if the missionary representative didn't accept the project of the local leaders.

This issue became clear as some of the old pastors launched the metaphor of "Makpanza." I personally decided to encourage the church to move from the total dependency to semi-dependency. I explored all the approved projects of the Church. I taught tithing and good stewardship in the church. I encouraged really giving a 10 per cent tithe of yearly income.

Second I instructed all the workers and leaders to consider tithing their quarterly salary for the support of ministry. Third, I instructed the superintendent of the ecclesiastical region to encourage the Christian farmers to consider this stewardship principal. I instructed them to collect some of the garden products such as manioc, coffee, peanuts, maize, pumpkin seeds, plantains and anything they could donate to the church.

Fourth, the mobilization of what we call "Salela" or big Sunday offering which includes a form of competition between people. This included an African type of worship, dancing, singing, clapping hands, thanking those who won and encouraging those who did not for the next competition. Some missionaries encouraged this mobilization and were more willing to teach people to understand the future of the church. I encouraged the church to invite all Christians working in private or government positions to tithe to the church. A letter was sent to some of them and the result of their giving was a surprising thing to the Church. Even the State dignitaries who used to give freely to Catholic churches, were able to give some money for our ministry. The president of the CEUM and I toured together preaching to all members of the church on "the work." The assumption was that even though God loves us so that he sent his son to save us, it does not mean that we need to wait for God to do everything for us. One evangelist with his sense of humor said, "You can try living with your wife but never engage in intimacy, rather only committing yourself in prayer to God in order to have a baby, God will not give you any baby. God helped Mary that way at Jesus' birth but He will not do such a thing any more. Thus biological physical work must be engaged in to have a baby." The Old Testament teaching allowed us to challenge members to work hard and get money for their own benefit, and then give for the work of God. This evangelization campaign from 1992-94 really contributed to our vision. Unfortunately, the project was interrupted by the 1996 civil war.

Bishop Stephen Neill rightly observes that renewal does not happen automatically. It comes only as the fruit of deliberate penitence, self-dedication, and hope. The starting point is ruthless realism as to the situation in which the church actually finds itself.

In the CEUM case, we saw many lay people committing themselves with great desire to the church. Papa Ndombe, Sakofio, and Mambo were the key lay people who deeply understood the concern and decided to tithe out of their wealth to send out missionaries. These people are fruit of Bob Thornbloom who had a vision of helping individual Christians be financially stable. He was hoping that they in turn would support the church instead of depending on the overseas funds. I do not know when he started this project
with the people. What I do know is that when I started mobilizing Christians, they were the first to respond positively along with Christians working in the government. Ndombe Zubete donated US$2,000 to the church. Sakofio declared that he would contribute his knowledge for the sending of missionaries. Mambo in his turn committed his annual tithe of US$400 to help send missionaries.

The local income for the second year of the venture grew to 65%. We paid some of the workers' salaries. Pastors in Kinshasa got gifts from us out of the collection of the garden products. David Voetman helped us fly some sacks of products by his MAF plane down to Kinshasa. We did not plan this but God really helped by sending this pilot to us. David Voetman flew to Gemena to check on believers and to help carry needed mail. I asked him to help bring things to Kinshasa. "Salela" offering was initiated in a special way to mobilize people for stewardship. We were encouraged by David Stockamp's teaching of "Mapa mitano mpe Mbisi mibale" - five pieces of bread and two fish - which fed 5,000 people in Jesus time. A theological message that contradicted the colonial missionary message is that the rich will barely inherit the kingdom of heaven. The poor are people who will be saved. Money was seen in the earlier time as being sinful. For that reason, local leaders could not be trained to manage money. People thought that it was good to give worthless money to the church. The money rejected by the population was given to the church.

Two suitcases full of this money given to the church at the Big Sunday festivity could not even pay 50 preachers US$4.00 US each for their three months' salaries. Let us say the whole denomination had a budget of US$42,000, and with the contribution of national leaders, just 3 people made the budget up to 65%. I was able to count $5,000 cash from the tithing of one person that could pay at least 6 month's salary of 25 workers! The thing that was really hard to remove from the local Christian mentality was giving worthless money to the church rather than giving what was significant to the Lord.

Regarding the church struggle for self-reliance, let me give you two events where church responsibility (finance) should have been handled by the local leaders. First, Rev. Babese Nguya Philip, born in Bobakutu in 1916, was superintendent of the Bokonzo region for several years. He was church evangelist for thirty years. He served in the mission stations with many Covenant Missionaries until the 1997 evacuation. He urged church autonomy and expected missionaries to give authority to local leaders. He also worked toward getting the legal papers for church approval by the government.

Depicting the barrier erected by missionaries who did not want to support the national leader's initiative, Babese came up with the illustration of "Makpanza." He prophetically urged that missionaries examine their faithfulness. Training leaders on church administration and finances was required but nobody allowed it. Missionaries wanted to have their hands on everything in the church and did not want local leaders to lead the church in the way God was directing them. By analogy, he argued that missionaries always saw the local church as a plant to make wine to use only for themselves.

Second, another metaphorical principle arose as the church continued to raise the question of church autonomy. Rev. Duale Lengena was the president of the CEUM from
1984-1992. He was at the church renewal of the mission movement and revival and at the third missionary evacuation. Duale had a heart for evangelism and mission. He made his vision known to everybody, and many people followed his teaching. He focused on what he called the "imperial commission of mission." According to him, it was something necessary for every Christian. He decided to plant cross-cultural churches, but he encountered the money question because all projects needed approval by the Mission board overseas. He could not move forward, but encouraged me on what I was doing during the evacuation period. He reminded me of his argument of the "mangola." He encouraged many church members to take up mission work, and yet, getting cuts in financial support, he saw missionaries' resistance as of benefit to his vision. He advanced the philosophy of "mangola." Mangola is a kind of play between two people. One must be wise and know how to count well in order to beat his adversary. He stood up in one church council meeting and said that now the church is playing mangola with missionaries. We do not have to quarrel with them, but play our hand cleverly in order to win. We need to do so in love, with patience, and gratefully realize that because of missionaries, we have had the chance to know Jesus Christ. Although we may have had only a few misunderstandings, now we as national leaders need to "figure the odds carefully and roll the dice" because we are playing mangola with them.

Duale's strategy was different. His assumption is well supported by the word of Charles Van Engen when he says: "Evangelism is to be done in teams and the teams go out, they don't wait for people to come to them, the teams go into a great harvest, into spiritual battle, and depending on God's provision (Luke 10:1-4)." Duale saw the work of mission as team work. "If the missionaries did not want to help, okay," he said. We would not bargain at all, but we would wait until they needed us for certain reasons, then we would say no to them. We had to wait for our turn to say no. Mangola in the church was all about winning in the autonomy issue in the third world. His view is supported in the way Charles Mellis talks of commitment as "a key factor that separates two kinds of structures that make up the Church. For on the one hand, every Christian believer, no matter how weak or lightly committed, has a right to the fellowship and caring concern of his brethren."

The mangola posturing of the missionaries set up a barrier, according to Duale. Yet his persistence and his mangola metaphor helped to plant many churches in Mombesa, Lisala, Kinshasa, and pygmies' evangelizations.

Dr. Paul Pierson's reflections about revival seem relevant. He suggests that it always starts with an individual who has a spiritual concern and draws close to God. The preconditions of renewal, as Dr. Pierson outlines them, are seeing the depth of our sin, knowing God and knowing ourselves and discovering our conformity to the world. At this time, the nationals were seeing themselves in the light of their recent biblical illumination on the mission mandate. Although they did not dwell on their own sin, they did see their call and their right to be sending missionaries overseas. They prayed to God to renew their strength and remold them to be mature enough for the mission work. There is nothing that happens through the power of the Holy Spirit that turns up bad fruit. Although the revival did not last long enough, it has born significant spiritual fruit.
The move from dependency to self-reliance for the CEUM is a long journey as the field of the dependency is greater than that of self-reliance. The speed limit can be illustrated as 25 MPH. There are more things to be done as the historical context shows and the church owns it already. One great field of dependency is the hospital management. The major hospitals established by the Evangelical Covenant Church in the DRC are facing great needs from the outsiders. Three local medical doctors for the work is almost impossible and now with the crisis, people are referring to traditional medicine to make their healing possible.

Last March 99 my missionary friend ironically asked me if the CEUM would soon split because everything missionaries did was destroyed. For him, what holds the unity of the church was what was developed such as buildings, technical tools, trucks, cars and many more thing we cannot count. This idea indirectly implied to me was that these things still make us dependent. The church needs to find ways of self-reliance according to its historical context by moving from dependency to partnership which is half way toward self-reliance. Speeding up from 25 to 75 mph will cause accidents and the consequences will be overwhelming (Cf. World Mission Associate, 1996:8 on Characteristics of the syndrome of dependency). For the CEUM, the move is slow (perhaps 25mph) and is so because of the history of its context.

My other friend, a local leader, during the church council said: "Missionaries got out through the church's door at the evacuation period. When they returned, we were surprised that they used the office windows to get in and they are back to their same authoritative seat." When we talk about this story, we realize that the field of dependency is reciprocal both for the dependants as well as for those who cause the dependency. The working conscience must be taken in both directions. Local people must understand the need to move toward self-reliance as well as missionaries. My friend said that in order to express the misunderstanding of the partnership by some of missionaries.

The CEUM is now half way to self-reliance or at the stage I call semi-dependency or partnership. We need also to understand why the speed slows down to 25 mph, because there is a traffic jam, or significant events on the way as civil wars. It is obvious that the CEUM move toward self-reliance in the first place was caused by political, economic, spiritual and cultural circumstances.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to summarize my experience on the self-reliance principle as follows:

1. I believe that the three-self's of Henry Venn are perfectly right. The process, including the methodology, depends on each context of the mission strategy. It depends on people, both from the local church as well as missionary side to choose what will help the kingdom of God to come.

2. The question of continuity and discontinuity does not matter if we know our goal, means, purpose, agents, and purpose of the missio dei. We prefer for those who had created the huge field of dependency to go with the "partnership" system knowing that
they also have a long way to go as the field problem still to be resolved is very great.

3. Believe it or not, the Lord is in control of history. Therefore, things might happen to allow God's plan to be fulfilled, even though some missiological strategies were already set since the beginning of the mission mandate.

4. The move toward self-reliance must take place in the mind of the local leaders who in turn must set a long vision for the future of the church. The church must be indigenous by fulfilling the self-propagating principle that long ago did not have that opportunity. Hopefully we have all learned from our mistakes.

5. Local people must find the way to move from the consciousness of receiving "manna" from heaven to use any creative action that would lead people to find their way to self-reliance. It also will free them to avoid some of the obstacles which the CEUM faced in the past. We also acknowledge that civil war, looting, and hostilities that took place in the CEUM, would be hard on any church's ministry and require specific assistance in terms of social action. However, that should not be the formal dependency it used to be long ago. Local people do not need to cross their legs, waiting for the outside but they need to do something that will allow the outsider to show what needs to be done. "Aides-toi et le ciel kaidera."

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Case Note: Ahmadou Sadio Diallo CONTENTS. A shareholder who has invested in a foreign company could not, in the circumstances of that case, diplomatically protect the company’s shareholders. This was because, if the company possessed its own separate legal personality, although two separate entities may have suffered from the same wrong, it is only one entity whose rights have been infringed; an act directed against and infringing only the company’s rights does not involve responsibility towards the shareholders, even if their interests are affected.