

REPORT ON WORKSHOP ORGANISED IN THE TALI COMMUNITY HALL, MONDAY, 14TH APRIL, 2008

Submitted to the African University Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

I was contacted by telephone, at short notice, by the Governor of the African University Foundation (AUF) in Cameroon, His Excellency Enow Tanjong, to undertake the consultancy, understood as role of chief facilitator) at this workshop in Tali, my village of origin. Despite my fully-booked program I managed to squeeze in the offer within a fortnight because I very much share in the noble goals of such a laudable initiative: every good-thinking son or daughter of Tali or Upper Banyang can only be too glad to be associated with the AUF project. The trip was put up for the 2nd weekend of the month-April, 2008.

Due to the very bad state of the road from Kumba to Tali, we decided to leave early enough on Saturday, 12th April, 2008 and as such I had to spend Friday night in Buea since we were all to travel in Mr Tanjong's car, being a 4 Wheel Drive Jeep. Despite all the anticipation and all the precautions taken, we finally got to Tali only after midnight that day-after spending 4 hrs. in Nguti to mend an electrical fault that immobilised the car. Sunday was just ideal for reiterating the message earlier sent by the Co-ordinator, Mme Elie Tanyi. Both monitors and facilitators, including Mrs Tambi who accompanied me and volunteered her very laudable services being a college tutor, visited the 3 church houses (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Roman Catholic Mission & Apostolic Church in Cameroon) as well as in the Tali market which was holding that day- a very timely coincidence as this happens only once every 8 days (the native week of the Kenyang people). Later on, in the evening, we visited 'nchemti' and 'bechoko' (meeting) groups (most meet in the market) as well as the quarter heads in their homes with the same message and clarifications. They were briefed on the AUF and the impending workshop; their leaders and the literate population were invited to attend the all-day workshop at the village hall the next day, Monday, 14th as from 9am prompt.

Cognisant of the importance of this day of the week for such purely agricultural people we guaranteed them sufficient food and drink for the day. In the native calendar Monday is known as 'Betik bechewe ebhi', meaning 'working in the forest'.

Emissaries had earlier been sent to the neighbouring villages with the same mission.

The teachers were the first target group to be trained as interviewers-on how to use the questionnaires and it was but very timely they were all just returning from holidays. Interested literate people in their various villages of work would then assist them.

THE WORKSHOP PROPER

The turn out was impressive and most villages in the sub division were represented. One could read pride and determination on their faces. The 'Elie' team had adorned the hall with posters and banners, sufficient chairs and an electric generator in anticipation for working into the night, if need arose.

Work effectively began at 10 am with the Chief Monitor, the Upper Banyang sub divisional delegate of Nursery & Primary Education, getting the ball rolling as he, playing the role of MC, announced the program for the day as follows:

1. Prayer by Apostle Betang, also the Vice Governor of AUF
2. Singing of the National Anthem
3. Speech by His Excellency, Mr Enow Tanjong, Governor of AUF
4. Introduction of workshop by Mme Elie Tanyi
5. Facilitation expose by Dr. F T Tambi, Workshop Consultant
6. Workshop Proper- working in groups of 10 (during which snacks served)
 - working together in plenary session with group reports
 - questions & answers
7. Practical modalities for the field exercise starting next morning, Tuesday, 15th April.
8. Heavy refreshments & close of workshop.

BRIEF FACILITATION LECTURE

In my role as workshop consultant and thus chief facilitator I explained the 30-page questionnaire, simplifying it as much as possible, sometimes in the dialect, the Kenyang language which I master very well. I reiterated the importance of the AUF project for the inhabitants of the Upper Banyang subdivision as well as for Manyu division, Cameroon and the entire African continent. I called for honesty in the answers as well as in their recording so that a true reflection of the area under study could be seen at the end of the exercise. Although the questionnaire with its myriad of questions appeared cumbersome it was indeed a very appropriate and precise compendium on the subject and that nothing short of this could bring out the arguments the author has in mind, I added.

I then quickly went through the document, page by page, emphasizing the various instructions: '*enter code*' in Part A; '*circle code numbers*' in Parts B, H-O except L which with D-F require a '*check*' (here synonymous to 'tick'). Attention of participants was also drawn to the specificity of Part G where 3 members of a household were required to give information on their farm lands: the House Hold Head (HHH) alone or with only one House Hold Member (HHM) were not enough if another person owned farm land in that same household.

Then I dwelt on the subject of confidentiality, stressing it was important for all the answers that will be opted by the HHH, HHM, especially in the sections on Family Planning and HIV/AIDS. I had to be rather stern on this because of the 'frivolous' attitude of most village dwellers, adding it was legally binding to maintain confidentiality on this subjects where stigmatisation was still very strong.

I ended my lecture with field instructions as follows: the enumerator should:

- a. clearly identify the village, and preferably make a sketch of it, identifying the various streets, if any.
- b. number the habitable houses or compounds (Households) and proceed to work as per quantity of questionnaires available as in c below
- c. proceed as follows-for each street, do attend to 1st house on the right, 2nd house on the left, 3rd house on the right, and so on: odd numbers on the right and even numbers on the left.
- d. seek to have a good number of female HHHs as well-preferably in a ratio of 3males: 1 female. This should not be a problem in most of the villages today where women make up

most of the adult population. In fact, in most compounds there is no adult male-those who lived there have all died within the last 20 years!

After my speech, the chief monitor, Mme Elie Nyuketchen, gave the practical modalities for group work and proceeded to create 10 groups of 10: each voted an interviewer, a secretary, HHH while the rest were HHM. The groups worked on one questionnaire for 2 hours each, from which they presented their reports in a plenary session.

The groups worked with a high degree of enthusiasm and commitment during which we, facilitators, were frequently solicited in virtually all the groups: to give an answer and/or an explanation.

During the plenary session the group leaders presented their reports- mostly on answers obtained on the various sections of the questionnaire assigned them. This was followed by questions and /or reactions from the assembly while one or more of us, facilitators and monitors, concluded on the report. The interviewers were now set for the field exercise the next day. They were to sign out the number of questionnaires they needed, within the limit of the number in stock for the specific village.

We closed about 8 pm, satisfied the message had gone across and we could expect a good input.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Motorcycle transportation is now a lucrative activity in the area, as all over the national territory, and this should be added to the activities of the people.
2. One answering code, eg 'circle', could be adopted throughout the questionnaire and the rest ('check', 'circle code') eliminated in order to further facilitate the exercise for the interviewers.
3. The rest of it, after Part O: Childhood Immunization, could also be numbered for purposes of continuity and fluidity. For example, the portion on Family Planning would normally be Part P, HIV/AIDS becomes Part Q while the last portion on Sexually Transmitted Diseases is Part R.

I would normally have enforced some of these modifications during the workshop but feared that might trouble the computer programme in which the questionnaire was done and it could interfere in the data processing.

CONCLUSION

This workshop was a success, thanks to the physical presence as well as the speech from the AUF Chairman, His Excellency Enow Tanjong; the groundwork in Tali coordinated by Apostle Betang, Vice AUF Chairman; and the untiring Mme Elie Tanyi who handled the rest of the organisation with a lot of expertise and so superbly. I would have loved to be part of the compilation team as I better understand the area and the people: attributes that are necessary to best understand certain responses. I however thank the AUF Board for making me play a role, however small, in its giant vision for Africa. May the Almighty God bless your dream and make it a reality.