

IMTN: A conversation of trainers that leads to action

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CASE STUDY #1: NIGERIA EVANGELICAL MISSIONARY INSTITUTE (NEMI)

Introduction

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Happy New Year to all in our network. I pray that 2019 is a fruitful year and that by God's grace, our training efforts will enable many men and women to be better equipped – and transformed – for serving in cross-cultural mission.

This year we hope to present a number of case studies from members of the IMTN. The IMTN spans the continents and members of the IMTN are involved in diverse contexts using a wide variety of training approaches. Currently there are also several initiatives to focus on, and strengthen, the outcomes of training. There is work going on to develop tools that seek to assure that teaching and learning is effective in achieving the desired outcomes. We hope to learn from one another and to be able to share some resources as they are made available.

Case studies are a powerful tool for teaching and learning as they help to connect us to real issues, and engage our emotion as well as cognition. I have heard from students testifying that the case studies they discussed during training remained instructional for them years later in ministry.

A case study presents a specific situation or issue. It provides a snap-shot of a real-life situation as it occurs. Exploring a case study helps to understand a complex situation with its particular challenges and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses. While each situation is unique a case study can throw light on issues and provide us with new thinking.

This Bulletin presents a current snap-shot of the Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute (NEMI) founded in 1986. We are introduced to the college and to Principal Samuel Olatunbi's own journey of development as a missionary trainer. We are grateful to NEMI's principal for his openness in presenting some of the highlights and challenges and for his active involvement in the IMTN. Although contexts vary greatly, challenges at NEMI such as the need for sustained funding and the recruitment of suitable trainers will find resonance with many mission training initiatives.

I warmly invite you to read Samuel Olatunbi's description of NEMI and also to consider how, as a fellow member of the IMTN, you may be able to connect with, encourage and support the ministry of NEMI. We can certainly be praying for a positive inaugural meeting of NEMI's new board on 9th February.

A CASE STUDY INTRODUCING THE NIGERIA EVANGELICAL MISSIONARY INSTITUTE (NEMI)

Samuel Olatunbi
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NEMI is the mission training arm of the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA), an organization that spearheads the mission thrust of the Nigeria church. NEMI is situated in Mista Ali, a serene location along Zaria road near Jos Plateau State north-central Nigeria. NEMI exists to prepare competent missionaries for the body of Christ in Nigeria and Africa. The aim of NEMI's training is to multiply manpower to complete the Great Commission, nurturing and growing men and women who are spiritually formed into the image of Christ and equipped with effective cross-cultural ministry skills, so that they will be able to plant viable indigenous churches among the unreached and/or unengaged peoples of Northern Nigeria, North Africa and the Middle East.

NEMI was established as a joint missionary training institute for NEMA member agencies/church denominations and has been preparing cross-cultural missionaries to bring in the harvest since 1986.

NEMI provides two main regular trainings, namely, a one-year certificate, **Foundation Training for Cross-Cultural Ministry**, and a **Bachelor of Arts in Intercultural Studies**, a three-year course with a recognized certificate).

NEMI's training programme is culturally relevant within the African context and it is made affordable compared to similar schools. NEMI also believes in the 5015 vision of the Nigeria Church and is a strategic part of it. This vision aims at recruiting, *training*, sending and supporting 50,000 Nigerian Christians as missionaries to the Muslim and Arab nations of the world within 15 years. (2005 – 2020).

Since inception, NEMI has trained more than five hundred missionaries from several mission agencies and denominations in Nigeria and its neighbouring countries who now serve in strategic capacities in several countries of Africa. NEMI currently enjoys the goodwill of Bethany Global University (BGU), Centre for Graduate Studies Minneapolis, USA, through provision of relevant books and trainers that enrich its training programmes. NEMI's faculty is drawn from a cream of highly experienced mission educators and practitioners across several mission agencies and denominations local and foreign. There is also a growing stock of mission resources in the library to aid the quality of learning.

My first encounter with NEMI was in May 2005 when I applied to be trained for cross-cultural ministry. I completed my training in April 2006 and two months later I joined NEMA as mobilization assistant. After four and a half years of serving in that capacity I was reposted to NEMI in February 2011 to coordinate its training programme. That was the beginning of my journey as a missionary trainer.

DEVELOPING AND CONNECTING AS A MISSIONARY TRAINER

Since February 2011 until now I have coordinated NEMI's training programme. These years have also been a journey of personal development. In 2015 a scholarship was given to join the En Route programme at All Nations Christian College (UK.) En Route is a ten-week programme of essential training that covers the basics of cross-cultural mission. It is aimed at those who are considering cross-cultural work but have little or no previous training. The course afforded me opportunity to explore a wide range of topics such as developing a full understanding of culture and its implications for one's life and work, the Biblical basis for mission, current trends and contemporary approaches in mission, exploring the spiritual disciplines, understanding poverty and development, keeping healthy, working as a team, and a whole range of practical issues from friend-raising to practical and creative skills workshops.

I was introduced to the International Missionary Training Network (IMTN) by Dr Ruth Wall, the then programme leader of En Route. At ANCC my view of mission training was greatly challenged and enhanced. I met people from different parts of the world learning *together* in an atmosphere of sharing and love. Besides these, what stood out to me the most at the college was immersion in a programme that intentionally sought to equip the **WHOLE** person. This was written up in Dr Wall's IMTN Bulletin #1 (Feb 2015) titled: *Equipping the whole person*.

Reading that IMTN Bulletin article and some parts of her doctoral (PhD) thesis struck a chord within me. That article woke up a sleeping giant in me and also informed the focus for my Master thesis with the Bethany Global University USA (online) a year later. More than that, equipping the whole person became my slogan for mission training in Nigeria and wherever I go. My vision for mission training has been further sharpened and enhanced with subsequent bulletins of the IMTN since 2015 till date. Indeed, the IMTN is a great resource for mission trainers around the world.

In November 2017, NEMA put together a National Mission Trainers' Summit in the south-western part of Nigeria for those involved in training missionaries across the country with a few representatives from neighbouring Ghana. The summit witnessed a great turn-out of mission trainers with two key facilitators; Dr. Paul Strand and Dr. John Kayser both from the Bethany International USA in attendance. The theme of the summit was: *Achieving Competence in Mission Training*.

Towards the end of the summit, the Executive Secretary of NEMA who was also the overall coordinator of the summit presented IMTN and almost all participants in attendant expressed great interest to join the network. One of the highpoints of the Nigeria mission trainers' summit was the suggestion to immediately form the Nigeria Mission Trainers' Network (NMTN). Many of the mission trainers felt that forming the NMTN was long overdue. Meanwhile, the Executive Secretary was of the opinion that there ought to be an advisory board for the NMTN to coordinate the activities of the group. The process of forming the advisory board has been slow and the NMTN is yet to see the light of day.

SOME CRITICAL CHALLENGES CONFRONTING NEMI

As a small, residential community we face a number of challenges. I would like to use this medium to bring to the notice of the IMTN family the following critical challenges confronting NEMI, namely:

1. The condition of the facility; trainers' accommodation, guests' accommodation, students' accommodation, etc. are all in a critical state of dilapidation needing renovation.
2. In recent years God has been gracious to us and there are more missionary candidates admitted than the facility could contain. The ladies are currently accommodated in one of the flats in the staff quarters. NEMI urgently needs an additional students' dormitory of about ten rooms as additional accommodation for trainees.
3. Most of the missionary trainees observe that the facility is a far-cry from what they expected before their admission. The poor state of the facility demoralizes and affects their concentration. They strongly believe that NEMI, being the missionary training school of NEMA, needs more attention of the Church and missions than what it's currently getting. At the beginning of every training session, it takes lots of orientation and encouragement by trainers before trainees can settle down to learn.
4. Most of the agencies that patronize NEMI depend on the Gospel Bankers Warri Delta State South-South Nigeria for the payment of their candidates' school fees. These agencies are not even able to provide enough monthly allowances for their candidates' support needs. After few months of being admitted this scenario often results in anger against the trainers and their sending agencies.
5. The monthly staff support need for seven persons is put at ₦150,000 (US\$416.7) The budget for staff support for one year is put at ₦800,000 (US\$5,000). In past years, sometimes for four to five months in a roll, there wasn't any money in the account to meet this need and therefore many qualified trainers have withdrawn their services.
6. Currently we are short-staffed. Recently, an advert was released ad few persons applied. However, none could be appointed as they had no previous mission exposure or training.
7. In the last six to seven years the Governing Board has not been effective to raise funds and candidates for the training institute. Towards the end of last year, the existing board was dissolved and new persons appointed to work with the Principal and management. The inauguration of this new board is scheduled for Saturday 9th February 2019. Please pray for a fruitful inaugural meeting and that this new board will be unprecedented in its involvement with and commitment to NEMI.

In meeting these challenges, it is also my hope that NEMA leaders will actively engage in assessing and developing the NEMI facility and promote the ministry of NEMI within NEMA's network of churches.

Thank you for reading this article and for standing with us in prayer. I hope this may spark new 'conversations that lead to action'.

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