

The Waramajanna Project Proposal

A Self-Sufficiency Agro-Pastoral Project

In our Missions work we have embraced, promoted, and implemented to the best of our abilities the missiological concept of the self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting indigenous church (or “Indigenous Church Principles” for short). After nearly a century of missionary work, we have experienced a great measure of success in seeing the development of self-governing and self-propagating churches, although we continue to encounter difficulty in seeing truly self-supporting churches in many poor countries, particularly in Africa.

I am convinced that two factors have played an important part in our difficulty in developing strong self-supporting churches.

One is the endemic generational cycle of poverty of many third-world countries. Wherever we have experienced relative success in planting self-supporting churches, the economic context has been one of increasing trade, increasing job creation, and a relative prosperity as a result of it (for example, in Nigeria, Ivory Coast, etc.). It has been easier to achieve the goal of self-supporting churches in such contexts than in areas such as Mali, Senegal, and Niger, to name a few.

The other factor has to do with our approach and method. We have taught and encouraged all three principles *equally*. But if we’ve had success in achieving self-governance and self-propagation it’s because we have added a key element to our method, an element which has generally been lacking when it came to the issue of self-support. It is the element of *demonstration*.

We haven’t just walked away from denominational colonialism and paternalism, and other *isms* that were roadblocks to self-governance and self-propagation; and we haven’t just taught these principles, but we have *modeled* and *demonstrated* them at every level of missionary work. Not so in the arena of self-support! Let’s take the situation in Mali as a case in point...

THE NEED IN MALI

We have successfully transitioned the National Church in Mali from dependence on missionary leadership to autonomy, and from dependence on foreign preachers and evangelists to sustained growth in numbers. However, even though we’ve taught the principle and necessity of becoming a self-supporting church for nearly two decades, the church continues to depend on foreign funds to survive. Even though we have insisted that “those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel,” that is, they should be supported by their own congregations, and even though some national pastors have come to understand the inherent evil of having Christian workers receive their salary from the outside, the leadership in general continues to seize every opportunity to receive such salaries and other financial aid from foreign sources.

Even for those Malian pastors who have embraced the biblical principle of developing self-supporting churches, the particular economic, cultural, social, and religious context of Mali has made it much harder to implement. For example, it is culturally assumed that the person who is at the top of a group (national leader, village chief, elder, pastor, etc.) functions as sage, guide, counselor, judge, and provider. He is expected to become “a river to his people.” So it is not

surprising in church circles to find that it is often assumed by members that the pastor is their rescuer in times of financial difficulty. It is hard for the church to become self-supporting and for the pastor to become self-sufficient when the members have been fashioned by the social and cultural order to be dependent on him!

Nowhere is it as hard to make givers out of takers than in the country of Mali! Especially when poverty is so prevalent and the entire country's economy continues to fail even with the influx of financial aid from developed countries. No matter how many seminars are held to teach believers that they should be tithing and supporting their pastor, the poverty factor continues to be part of the problem. In more prosperous countries where it takes about 20 wage earners who are faithful tithers (from a membership of about 70 people) to support a pastor, it would take about 60 such tithers to achieve the same thing in the context of Mali. Obviously, it is not easy to establish a church of about 150 to 200 believers in the particular religious context of Mali from which one would have a base of about 60 strong tithers.

Evangelism in the particular religious context of Mali is not only slow, but as happens often, many converts in such a context are cut off from family, lose their job, are ostracized and even physically persecuted. They end up being supported, to varying degrees, by the church and the pastor. This further exacerbates the self-sufficiency problem in the present, and sets up the conditions for continued dependency in the future, because those same converts who are now surviving in a context of dependency seldom break out of this pattern to achieve financial autonomy.

In Mark 10:28-30 Christ clearly taught that persecuted believers who have lost fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters (hence community), as well as homes and fields (shelter and means of earning a living) should be helped by the church to find a new community, and *means* ("fields") to support themselves, not just live from handouts! The problem is that the church itself has not achieved self-supporting status, let alone be able to provide "fields" to converts from Mali's particular religious context so they can support themselves. Instead, these converts develop a spirit of dependency as the pastor and church members struggle to give them some help. While such generosity from people who are themselves in dire straits is commendable, it not only fails to achieve a lasting solution (especially in the light of the adage that it is better to teach a man to fish than to give him fish), but it also defeats personal responsibility and stunts character development.

It has been my longstanding conviction that the first step in achieving self-sufficiency is to follow the biblical pattern of personal stewardship. Tithing, a practice that acknowledges one's place as a steward rather than owner of God's material blessings, that affirms His lordship in one's life, and that provides support to those whose life calling is to proclaim the Gospel, is the cornerstone of personal stewardship.

Poverty as such is not the *primary* problem behind our churches' inability to achieve self-sufficiency. Disobedience to biblical principles of Christian stewardship is a key factor behind the problem of personal poverty, both spiritual and material (cf. Malachi 3:7-12). Furthermore, there is no stipulation in the entire Bible that would exonerate even a materially poor believer from honoring the Lord with his/her tithe. For this very reason I have often encouraged the poor to tithe even their very poverty to the Lord, explaining that ten percent of a poor man's loaf of plain bread is equal, if not superior, to the ten percent of a rich man's truckload of fine pastries and

cakes!

I also believe that obedience in this area is an important step in achieving material emancipation. The Lord does clearly promise to open the windows of heaven and pour out his blessing upon the tither (Malachi 3:10). However, it should be noted that this blessing does not come *ex nihilo* from heaven, but is a blessing given within the context of work that generates material sustenance, for it says, "... 'I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,' says the LORD Almighty." (Malachi 3:11).

Since tithing and the hard work of generating income go hand in hand, it can be assumed that for Malachi 3:10-11 to become reality God's plan for self-sufficiency involves job creation or the means to generate income. Therefore, missionaries and church leaders must go beyond talk of tithing and address issues of job creation or how to generate income. Indeed, obedience in the area of tithing alone has not been enough to achieve self-sufficiency. Along with the proper biblical teaching on giving, the church needs to promote whatever is needed to break the generational cycle of poverty that is typical in far too many communities in Africa.

HOW CAN THIS BE DONE?

Whatever form those efforts may take will depend on the circumstances and needs of the church and the community it serves. For our situation in Mali, I believe that self-sufficiency *projects* are best suited to meet such needs, especially given the particular religious context of the country. Such projects:

1. Should address the *culture* of poverty by changing the mind-set of poor people. This mind-set is characteristically focused on surviving rather than thriving; it values receiving rather than giving; it is preoccupied with what is not available rather than what is at hand, and it is mostly aware of what is impossible rather than what can be achieved
2. Should bring about a paradigm shift by introducing new possibilities thinking (for example breaking out of the traditional subsistence-level farming which barely feeds one family and aim at producing enough for ten families; or again the idea of two harvests a year –wherever irrigation is possible– rather than the traditional single harvest which depends entirely on rainfall, etc.).
3. Should make use of what is locally available and relatively permanent (for example water from a river is fairly permanent, rain is not; trading local fish rather than setting up a commerce of imported sea foods, etc.).
4. Should create jobs for *both* the church members and the immediate community (which, in the particular religious context of Mali, allows for invaluable interaction between workers of different faiths, thus encouraging positive inter-faith relations).
5. Should *demonstrate* what can be achieved by actually achieving it.
6. Should be, as a project, completely indigenous –that is, autonomous (ultimately run by Malian believers), responsible for its own growth, and self-sufficient (using available resources in such a way as to not have to ask for continued foreign help – for example, if it

is an agricultural project, it would run its equipment using solar power or locally produced bio-diesel; it would use locally produced compost and fertilizer, etc., rather than depend on outside help to continue functioning).

7. Should be church-led projects run according to biblical principles of business (integrity, legality, accountability, tithing, offerings to help fund Missions, etc.) and characterized by the ethics of God's Kingdom (Christ-like character, serving, compassion, etc.).
8. Should serve the needs of the particular religious community in which the project is undertaken, not just the needs of Christians involved in the project (for example, proceeds should one day help fund two critical needs in Mali: Education –an elementary school– and basic healthcare –a dispensary, safe water, etc.).
9. Should help fulfill the promise of Mark 10:28-30 by providing persecuted and ostracized converts from Mali's context the means to take care of themselves and develop into mature, responsible, and generous followers of Christ.
10. Be entirely replicable projects, preferably by having the initial project “mother” another one, just as a church often does in planting another church.

WHY AN AGRO-PASTORAL PROJECT?

For our situation in Mali I believe that an *agro-pastoral* project situated on the Niger river would be the starting place to accomplish the goal of self-sufficiency. Here are the reasons:

- A. It would make use of three of Mali's most abundant resources: Agriculture, cattle, and water from the Niger River.
- B. It would necessarily be situated in a rural setting, thus reaching the poorest of the poor in Mali.
- C. It would address the problem of hunger with compassion (helping the most destitute), dignity (a sense of ownership rather than just being at the end of a handout), and impacting efficacy (done successfully where it is most needed).
- D. It would visibly demonstrate self-sufficiency in measurable ways. Thus it would be a model for any observer who wishes to replicate it.
- E. Various studies have shown that if modern agro-pastoral projects were done on the banks of the Niger River, particularly if the “Niger buckle” were adequately farmed, this would feed not just Mali, but *all* of West Africa! The problem is that to this day 99% of agriculture done on the banks of the Niger is still subsistence-level farming, even as the farmer continues to depend solely on rainfall while sitting right next to an abundant supply of water that could irrigate his field. Someone has to *show* the way. Why not the Church?!
- F. The initial investments made in such a project are not volatile (unlike funds used to buy merchandise for trading or a service-oriented shop that goes bust, the waterfront property of such an agro-pastoral project is an asset that remains). Even if the project were to falter, the

land can be used by the church for other worthwhile purposes.

- G. It has the potential of creating jobs in a rural setting, thus helping to diminish the rural exodus of young people toward the cities.
- H. It doubles up as a school or training center in more effective methods of farming.
- I. It has the potential for diversification. For example, its environment (river nearby, high water table, slightly cooler zone, etc.) would facilitate setting up fruit orchards (a regular and easy cash crop of cashew nuts, mangos, papayas, and citrus fruit), and also beehives, fish-farming (catfish, Tilapia or Nile perch, carps, etc. thus providing an easy source of proteins and income).
- J. More than any other type of project, it has the potential of successfully incorporating the 10 points outlined earlier for what self-sufficiency projects should achieve.

BASIC METHODOLOGY

1. Acquire a piece of property along the Niger River that is big enough to facilitate:
 - a. Irrigation from a permanent water supply.
 - b. Substantial planting of corn, sorghum (millet), soybean, and rice (significantly beyond the traditional subsistence level farming of Mali).
 - c. Diversity:
 - i. Planting fruit trees as a semi-permanent cash crop (mangoes, cashews, citrus, and papayas).
 - ii. Jojoba-like bushes from which bio-diesel can be produced.
 - iii. Planting vegetable gardens, particularly onions, tomatoes, squash, and habaneras peppers.
 - iv. Fish farming (easy to raise catfish, carp, and Tilapia).
 - v. Develop sufficient pasture land for cattle that is bought lean, fattened over a period of 8 months, and then sold. This part of the project would allow us to acquire bio-fertilizers and a certain amount of cash profits to help in the development of hybrid cattle (crossing local cattle with heftier Netherlands or possibly even USA cattle).

It is hoped that the property will be about 1 kilometer of river frontage by 2 kilometers in length, thus a total of 200 hectares (approximately 500 acres). A piece of property with the above possibilities and dimensions has been proposed to us in Waramajanna (near Sélingué).

2. Stick to methods that require the least possible reliance on imported machinery. For example, although a tractor, moldboard plow, finisher plow, planter, and sprayer, as well as a diesel water pump are necessary to break out of traditional subsistence level farming, harvesting will rely on manual work (thus creating jobs), and irrigation methods will include the use of movable pipes that are locally available and/or the use of irrigation ditches, rather than industrial sprinklers that are used by farmers in western countries.
3. As soon as the property is secured (whether with a 50 year free lease or outright purchase), implement the project in small increments:

- a. Fencing the property.
 - b. Planting of eucalyptus trees and jojoba-like bushes all around the perimeter.
 - c. Build a basic storage facility for the farming equipment and a small house (local standards) for a security guard.
 - d. Basic shelter for a small herd of cattle (using inexpensive local standards).
 - e. Acquire cattle (as cash on hand permits) during the dry season when cheap.
 - f. Soil preparation and planting at the beginning of the rainy season – starting with just 25 acres.
 - g. Only one harvest the first year.
4. After the initial year:
 - a. Increase planting area by 25 acres each year.
 - b. Implement crop rotation in a repeated grass-legume-grass – corn or millet (grass type) to soybean (legume type) to corn and millet again – pattern.
 - c. Go to two harvests a year, one in the rainy season for corn/millet (no irrigation needed), and one during the dry season for “nerica” rice (which requires irrigation, but no industrial sprinkling machinery).
 - d. Sell fattened cattle before margin of profit erodes, and purchase new and increased stock.
 5. Implement year by year other aspects of the project such as bio-diesel production for our machinery needs, vegetable gardens, fish farming, etc., as cash assets permit.
 6. Implement and develop the training aspect of the project (it doubles up as a school for innovative and effective farming).
 7. Always focus on the issue of repeatability or replication. Any part of the project that cannot be easily replicated elsewhere without substantial help from the outside should be abandoned.
 8. Evaluate constantly, shedding ineffective practices or unproductive aspects of the project – adapt, improve, and innovate.
 9. Empower community folks by hiring them as seasonal workers, by involving them in the development of community vegetable gardens, and by giving them priority as middle-people (especially the women) for the marketing of crops.
 10. Use the profits to help the church in fulfilling its mission, for project improvement, for community services (funding of a school and basic healthcare), and mothering a similar project along the Niger River.

OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important that this self-sufficiency project be owned by the rural community, the National Church (NC), and the Mission. While the level of ownership is different among these three entities, all three must *equally* embrace its vision and shoulder clearly understood responsibilities:

A. The villagers:

1. Would provide land in compliance with government regulations and other legal parameters (whether for a free lease or a purchase) – thus they would stand with us in negotiations with local government authorities.
2. Would provide property for the agro-pastoral portion of the project along the Niger River.
3. Would provide property within the village for an elementary school/basic healthcare center (this center would double up as a dispensary for the school).
4. Would *not* own or control the project or its proceeds.
5. Would serve as counselors in improving relationships between the community and the project.
6. Would facilitate the replication of the project elsewhere.

B. The National Church:

1. Would own the property (thus “nationalizing” the project’s real estate), but with a contract stipulating that the Mission would freely utilize the land for the described project over a period of no less than 20 years (preferably 30).
2. Would serve as consultant and recommend key Malian personnel.
3. Would facilitate job creation among church members, persecuted believers, and local villagers.
4. Would supervise and run the school/basic healthcare center.
5. Would conduct timely evangelism and plant a church.
6. Would facilitate the replication of the project elsewhere.

C. The Mission:

1. Would retain ownership of all equipment purchased with its own funds, as is the case already in other arenas of partnership with the National Church.
2. Would initially manage the project for a period of time agreed upon with the National Church (cf. B, 1 above), both in terms of the work done and the proceeds in goods or cash obtained.
3. Would develop the property as needed from the project proceeds or occasional donations.
4. Would implement the training program so that others can someday replicate the project.
5. Would promote self-governance (autonomy), self-propagation (replication), and self-

support (reinvestment ability and sustainability) of the project itself.

6. Would facilitate the replication of the project elsewhere.

FINANCES

A. Other than the initial investment for land acquisition (either a lease or outright purchase) and basic structure development, funds will not be sought from sources outside the project itself. Other than non-cash donations such as farm equipment, the initial financial help needed from donors in the USA and elsewhere is tentatively as follow:

1. \$15,000 for land acquisition (actually this could be between \$7,000 and \$15,000 because an exact amount has not yet been reached, as we are still negotiating for a particular property in Waramajanna).
2. \$9,000 for shipping of the container with the farm equipment.
3. \$10,000 for customs fees (about \$9,000) and customs clearance agent's fees (about \$1,000).
4. \$10,000 for fencing the property (required by law).
5. \$5,000 for first storage facility.
6. \$5,000 for security guard housing.
7. \$5,000 for management personnel housing.
8. \$4,000 for seeds.
9. \$10,000 for the initial running of the project up to the first harvest.
10. \$5,000 as emergency funds.

B. Accountability:

1. The project will be accountable to the Mission and to the donors, as well as to the National Church for all financial matters:
 - a. Books will be kept by the project's treasurer and adjunct-treasurer.
 - b. A report will be given on a quarterly basis.
 - c. An annual audit will be done by a bona fide independent auditor, and an annual report will be shared.
2. The treasurership of the project will remain in the hands of the Mission until it can be eventually transferred to local leaders by mutual agreement (cf. "Ownership and Responsibilities," C, 2).

3. No debt of any kind shall ever be incurred. This will be strictly a “pay-as-you-go” enterprise.
- C. Distribution of *net profits* (by “net profits” is meant funds remaining after all expenses, including replenishment expenses – for example, what must be spent to replenish the herd after cattle has been sold for a profit):
1. After the initial harvest, 10% of the *net profits* will be given as tithes to the National Church. 20% will be set aside as contingency funds for various emergencies or unforeseen needs. 20% will be invested in cattle purchase. 50% will be invested into the next planting season and project development and diversification.
 2. The above pattern will be repeated after the second harvest.
 3. After the third harvest, 20% of the *net profits* will be given as tithes to the National Church. 10% will be set aside as contingency funds for various emergencies or unforeseen needs. 20% will be set aside for community needs (elementary school, dispensary, water purification, etc.). 20% will be invested in cattle purchase. 30% will be invested into the next planting season and project development and diversification.
 4. From the fourth harvest and on, 30% of the *net profits* will be given as tithes to the National Church. 10% will be set aside as contingency funds for various emergencies or unforeseen needs. 30% will be set aside for community needs (elementary school, dispensary, water purification, etc.). 10% will be invested in cattle purchase. 20% will be contributed to a central fund to create a similar self-sufficiency project in another venue.
- D. All new self-sufficiency projects once started must sign a contract to adhere to the above rules of financial management, accountability, and profits distribution.

THE BLESSINGS OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

1. Material, moral, and spiritual needs are met:
 - a. Personal financial/material emancipation is achieved.
 - b. There is dignity and self-assurance.
 - c. God is honored as the biblical goals of providing for one’s family is achieved (1 Tim. 5:8).
2. The work of the of the Kingdom is furthered because:
 - a. Self-sufficient people are able to give more to the work of God, particularly Missions.
 - b. Compassion ministries are more easily carried out (1 Tim. 6:18).
 - c. Personal eternal reward is promised for those who use their self-sufficiency to help others (1 Tim. 6:19).
 - d. Persecuted believers in the particular religious context of Mali are properly and biblically cared for as they learn to supply for their own needs and the needs of the weak.
 - e. It is a witness that glorifies God (Malachi 3:12, the nations will notice!).
3. Sets the National Church free from the cycle of dependency on foreign help. Furthermore, it

has been shown by various studies that once a paradigm shift occurs in this arena, all other areas of the church's life and work benefit from a "possibilities thinking," a new perspective on what can be achieved.