

AELVNA

ASSOCIATION EVANGELIQUE DES LAÏCS POUR LES VILLAGES NON ATTEINTS

LAY EVANGELISM ASSOCIATION FOR UNREACHED
VILLAGES

THE SLAVE OF CHRIST AT WORK

PRESENTING THE MISSION



- Togo is a country of West Africa situated West of Benin, South of Burkina Faso, East of Ghana. In the south it is open on the Atlantic Ocean, more precisely on the Gulf of Benin. Togo is one of the smallest countries in Africa, with 56 785 km². It is 600 Km long (375 miles). Its width varies from 50 to 150 km (30 to 95 miles). The population of the country was estimated to 5.4 million in 2006. The density is of 95 people per km².
- The name Togo comes from Togodo which means on the other side of the river, and is today Togoville (a german colonial city which was the first capital of Togo and is situated east of Lomé).

Togo consists of about 50 different ethnic groups :

- The KWA group
 - The Ewe people (South) 22% of Togo population
 - The Ouatchi people 10%
- The Gur group
 - Kabiye (north and center) 13%
- The Guin group
- The Tem group
- The Betammaribe or Betanmariba group (north)
- The Moba-Gurma group (north)

In Togo, the economy mainly consists in survival food crops where 65% of the population is employed. The other workers cultivate cocoa, coffee, cotton but most of them work in phosphate extraction, which is a vital resource for Togo.

In Togo the official language is French. Ewe, Kabiye and Mina are the national languages the most used by the locals.

The different religions of the country are Animism (50% of the population), Catholicism (26%), Islam (15%), and Protestantism (9%).

NOTE : The total number of Assembly of God churches in Togo is 1025, including 255000 members and 680 pastors.

In 2008, The ecclesiastical region of the Gulf counted 108 churches



NADJOMBE

I – CALLING

- ✓ How it all started
- ✓ What is our calling?
- ✓ Obedience to the calling.

**Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?
(Isaiah 6:8, Isaiah 42:6-7)**



Akebou in the plateau region

People often believe that God's voice could only be heard when the Son of God was sent on the earth, but is it a mistake to think so? God continues to speak to us today, to men and women, and not just to angels.

From 1952 to 1992 this voice was pressing on the boy, the young man and the customs officer I became. "I cannot be a pastor or an evangelist!," did I reply. But the voice pressed on. To get rid of this calling I would organize a series of evangelistic and church activities, like frequent outings with the young people of my church, intense intercession times with churches in the capital city. Amazingly, the more I was thinking I had done enough to please God, the more the pressure intensified.

Photo Alati



1987 : 4 pastors and nearly 100 church members.

MY COMING TO THE LORD

- 1952 to 1964 family influence
- 1964 to 1972 studies and job searching
- 1972 to 1980 work in the customs. I was a Christian without knowing Christ
- 1980 to 1993 born again, seeking the Lord and personal encounter with Him
- 1993 to 1998 Calling (preaching in 95 in Aneho and in Bassar in 99)
- September 1998, open door into the mission.

In 1998, I understood that my actions needed to be more organized and planned, and possibly in a different structure:

The burden of love for the unreached became heavier on my heart. It became really necessary to go and tell them about what Christ had done for humanity. It was also necessary to create a lay organization for evangelism. Who with? How? I had to seek the Lord.

Recognizing God's calling

It is important to underline here, how difficult it is to recognize God's calling: sometimes, God is not calling us, but we might think He has said so, and we start running without knowing where we are going.

A different case concerns the great number whom God has called and who keep saying : “No God, I cannot do that,” or “I am not worthy of that ministry”, or “No God, I am too busy”, (just like the guests replied to Jesus' invitation to the wedding in

Matthew 22:1-14.) “No God, I will not go. I will not walk for you!” (just like the rebel child in the Gospel of Matthew 21:28.)

We can take time to pray, here, because the children of God are in danger, in either of these two situations.

The first difficulty is to recognize that God is interested in us. As when he says: “ Even before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you, and I had established you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:4-5). It is difficult for a man to recognize when to go. For me it took about 40 years including the years before my coming to the Lord, before, I became convinced and knew clearly about my calling.

II. SEEKING GOD



meeting times with God

Prayer retreat in Ghana and Togo

I sought God and said: “Lord, what do you want me to do? Where should I go?” Those were the main questions in my heart during my prayer retreat in Ghana, the neighboring country, in the village of OKANTO (Aposse). It was a 21 days' retreat to seek God's will ! We were in February 1990.

It did not take long before God started giving precise information about people around me, giving me a growing love for the souls of the remote villages. He also

gave me the name of some of these areas, in my spirit. So many things came to me during this retreat, so I would know where to go, who to work with, and how to start. God is wonderful !

Face to face with the pioneers

In July 1998, Pastor Ben Tipton visited Togo as part of his evangelistic missions. As a messenger of the Lord, he mentioned the need for laymen to go and evangelize in the remote areas of the country. The second time I met him, I went with one of my spiritual children, Samuel Agbalenyo. We went up to WAAST to meet the missionary Ben Tipton and Pastor Dr. York was also present. On a later occasion I went with another brother named Aziato. We also went to WASST and spoke with the same group of people. On these two occasions I shared about my burden: encouraging lay workers to join with pastors in fishing souls. Without hesitation, they shared some useful advice about the process to start the mission and we received promises for some support: AELVNA was born with the help of other brothers and sisters !

The necessity of seeking God

Seeking God! Yet another difficult task for us humans! It is much easier when we feel God's calling for a given task, to call to our friends rather than to God! We can share about our knowledge and skills and just rub our hands thinking: this is it, with all that, surely I can do something meaningful for God! With the financial and material means I have, surely I can succeed for the glory of God! God, here I am! While, even before we have the means to do what God is asking, this is when we should say "send me, I am ready!" And when our hearts are burning like Jeremiah's. Only after we have obeyed is when the Master starts providing for our needs.

So, the first thing we need to do is seek God! He knows what is still secret to us and he has the means to accomplish His will!

My soul pouring out tears in the presence of the Lord

The calling of God is a grace which nonetheless requires that we demonstrate our love to our Creator. In this sense, the verse "as the deer..." (Psalm 42:2-3) has attracted my attention. It has lead me to a series of fasting and praying sessions: Five times 21 days, one 14 days, one 7 days and twice 3 days from 1980 to 1993, before I could receive the clear message of His calling. Glory to God!

My first co-workers and how they came

In 1998, the door of the great commission opened up. I had to get in. On my own?

That would have been impossible! Nothing is impossible to God, but in this case it was impossible to do the task on my own. But who with and how many of us should work together?

I had to go with lay people just like me. All my tries to rally people failed as in Luke 14:18 (all were busy!). I had to apply Luke 14:21-22 (take people who did not have any occupation). Another problem was that people kept asking me how much they would be paid. Probably, the seats that remained empty at the end of verse 22 were the ones of people who wanted a different menu to the one that was served!

We thought about gathering 15 people. With this number we could work in teams of 5 in order to initiate the locals to the wonderful mission.

I had Timothys and Barnabases with me



Some of the Timothys and Barnabases

The mission started well. We thought things were launched. But some bitter dissensions came up as in Acts 15:36-40 between Paul, Barnabas and John-Mark. Without being pessimistic, we must not let ourselves be taken by surprise.

III. PREPARATION

Now that the structure of AELVNA was up, we needed to act.

1. Spiritual preparation

Once we had defined which village was to be evangelized, the evangelism team

committed to the necessary prayer and fasting time. At the end of the fasting, the President of AELVNA goes on site for the first physical preparations.

2. Physical preparation



Negotiations with the village authorities

When the president of the association first goes to the village, his intention is to make first contacts with the local authorities, be friendly and encourage the people to establish a relationship so the Gospel can be preached later.

It is important to go where God has guided you. When God says to go right or left, we should not let our own will interfere and lead us to a different place.

Are you accepting the target God is giving you?

We might sometimes be tempted to refuse the target God has set for us. It might be that we despise the people God is sending us to: “Oh, God, you have called me, I know. You have given me instructions, but this people... I cannot minister to them. They are too barbarous, too bad, too much of sinners, too primitive. God, you had better find someone like them, of their social rank, of their culture.” Or, for one reason or another, we behave like Jonas with the Ninevites (Jonah 1:2-3).

We might also see ourselves as inferior than the people we are called to witness to and say: “Lord, I am not the right person to speak to this civilized, developed and rich people: I am so poor, primitive and so much less educated than them... Lord, please

find someone like them, of their rank, of their intellectual level, from their culture!”

Obeying God without discussion

In each of these cases, it is difficult to accept God's goal. Let us not discuss the target God has set for us. Let us not consider it too high or too low for us. Let us just obey him and be faithful servants.

IV. Obeying God's calling



Leaving to the villages



Evangelism time

- How to reach the unreached who live in places far from roads and are only accessible on foot?
- Should we accept the welcome drink of water people traditionally offer (often non-drinkable water)? (We can suggest primary health care seminars to the village people.)
- How should we react to the food offered to us, as strangers from the cities or from foreign countries, in these strange remote places?
- How to stay with these people who are so poor?
- The question of bathroom/hygiene.

So many questions and challenges!

Only one possible answer: loving the people by the grace of our Father!

V. Activities of AELVNA



Presents to the prisoners



The joy of teaching children

September 7 to 13, 1998, The AELVNA team launched their first outreach in Bolougan on the seaside area of Togo. (21 adult souls not counting children)



Bolougan, first planted church



Bolougan

A simple strategy

1. **Going to every house in the village** and greeting people after praying for the water they offer us; sharing about the Gospel, distributing Bible tracts and inviting the population to an open air outreach.

2. Open air outreach

Short preaching followed by the projection of a film and a call to accept Jesus: the main movies we show are JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE SOLUTION, DANSOU (the last two are about the reality of beliefs before coming to Jesus).

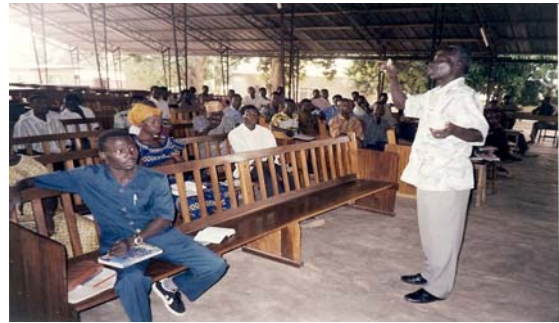
3. **Celebration of the first church meeting** in a temporary place, in agreement with the village people, or building of a straw structure in agreement with the chief of the village.



A worship place

4. Organizing the follow up of the souls

- Assigning a local team for temporary follow up.
- Organizing a seminar to train local teams in church activities (training children evangelism workers)
- Building a place for worship with local materials.



Seminar at Atakpame

The student workers receive a certificate at the end of the seminar

5. Caring for people

AELVNA is a holistic missionary organization. We keep our eyes open to the needs of people in the three dimensions of body, soul and spirit. So, once we have shared the message of the Gospel for the salvation of souls, we particularly take care of the sick, the hungry, the poor, and needy people in every aspect.

5.1 Medical care

With God's grace AELVNA has brought help and relief to a lot of desperate people. The joy of the restored families is indescribable.



A sick lady abandoned by her family in the village of Djon-kotora (Akebou). She is only expecting death shortly, when I received the message to go and visit her.

THE MIRACLES



A young 11 year old sick girl



Two miracles in Azafi and Tchapkali Akebou

A baby girl who came back to life after 30 months of prayer
Three years and 10 months in his mother's womb

5.2 Project of opening pharmacy shops in villages (July 14, 2007)

Finding primary health care medicine at the right time is extremely difficult in villages. AELVNA shared this need while evangelizing and set up a small pharmacy in the village of Kougnohou, in the plateau area of the country. It provides for medicine to dozens of villages around. Before that people had to travel more than 80 km by bike or when possible by motorbike to get medicine from Atakpame (main town in the area) for urgent cases.



Our first pharmacy

5.3 Well digging

As we were walking around for evangelism, we soon realized how serious the problem of drinking water is in the places we evangelize. In fact we even had to “evangelize” the water we were offered when we arrived in a village. What could we do? Bring a solution to make life safer. This is where the idea of digging wells came from. With the help of a partner, we have been able to dig two wells in two different villages, for a cost of \$1,700 per well.



5.4 Food distribution to children suffering from hunger

What would AELVNA be doing if we were just preaching to dozens of children visibly dying of hunger ? We were not able to withhold our emotions in front of such misery of these children who were following us wherever we went, listening carefully to what we were saying and spreading the news of our coming to the neighbor villages.

“Let us find food for them” is what Jesus would have said to his disciples and “do not send them away to their villages” (Luke 9:12-13). This is what encouraged us to put up a “feed the poorest children” project. So far this project has been financed by a partner who gives us \$300 a month. However the money has not come regularly because of inflation.



Food distribution to the orphans in Bolougan et Tchokpali

HARDSHIPS AND TEMPTATIONS

Is our work in the villages easy? Not at all! We suffer many attacks and temptations. My personal attack was the loss of my only son (aged 8).



Hardship in ministry

III. RESULTS



Souls coming to the Lord



After the church meeting

Confessing Christ in public



Children are coming to the Lord

Two important time periods since AELVNA has existed:

1. From 1998 to 2006, we have planted 154 churches with a total of 4817 saved souls, adults and children.

Picture of an evangelism crusade



2. From 2006 we had to set up a different structure and assign regional representatives. Because our mission field was wider and wider, we had to decentralize and delegate responsibilities.

Picture of representatives



Representatives of AELVNA over 7 church districts in Togo (ASB).
On January 3, 2008

3. From 2006 to 2008, after the decentralized structure, 116 churches were planted and there was a total of 4781 saved souls, children and adult.

Until today, at the end of 2008, AELVNA has opened 270 churches with a total of 9598 souls coming to the Lord, children and adults.

By God's grace, we have been able to provide for a chapel for 17 villages



VII. Considering high figures with caution

When God is doing things, very often men fall into pride and steal God's glory.

But when men respond to God's calling, when they have inquired about the right time, when they have accepted to go wherever God calls them, then all conditions are gathered for God to act in amazing ways.

However temptations will come :

- Making you feel you are a great personality
- Boasting about the obtained results
- Forgetting about the real maker of the events
- Refusing God's new instructions and getting stuck in formalism
- Entering a routine, believing that if we do things in the same way, we will obtain the same results.

To avoid these mistakes, we must always, always give the glory back to God and remain attached to his directions: it is like a safety belt to us.

TODAY'S THE GREAT CHALLENGES OF AELVNA

1. Strengthening the head structure of AELVNA.

Why ?

- a) AELVNA has grown and needs a more permanent leadership, not just part time.
- b) The leadership of AELVNA is weaker and weaker, with the pioneers being very busy, or leaving to other occupations, and because of the lack of resources.

2. AELVNA, a helper without permanent financial resources

Why ?

- a) No systematic support from the national church (\$35 per month).
- b) No financial support from the local church, still in an attitude of dependence on foreign support.
- c) No economical activities associated to evangelistic activities.

3. The training of leaders is becoming a necessity

- a) Training representatives for the different districts
- b) Training local leaders

Why ?

What do the representatives preach about? What are their objectives? How to do it?

4. Thinking and putting together technical documents

- A missionary strategy for the regional representatives
- A leadership and preaching guide for local leaders.

5. The challenge of an unfinished task

10 years ago AELVNA started evangelism in the unreached villages of Togo. Thanks to God's grace and almighty power, the results are here and real. However, what if the task cannot be finished?

We have been able to reach 270 villages, but there are another 300 that are still unreached. How can we accomplish this challenge ?

a) Strategy and action plan from 2009 to 2015

- ✓ Because of the great number of villages that have not been reached yet, and because of the need for trained and committed disciples, we are thinking of creating a "Discipleship Training School". The students will be recruited from all areas of the country according to the criteria of emergency of the places they come from.
- ✓ To start with they will receive foundational training on the fundamental truths of the Holy Scriptures, and on evangelism techniques.
- ✓ After their training they will receive further ongoing training.

b. Objectives

- ✓ Once they have received training, the disciples will be able to effectively join the evangelism work to the most remote villages.

- ✓ AELVNA will support them as much as they can in their task. In order to be able to provide for their needs, we would like to encourage the people who have a heart for the unreached people groups to join us in this challenge.

c) Action program from 2010 to 2015

- ✓ Putting together technical training manuals : January to June 2010.
- ✓ First training sessions: August to October 2010.
- ✓ Two month internships in unreached people group.

From 2010 to 2015 :

During this time, intense activities of evangelism and church planting will take place. First training and on-going training will continue every year. The newly trained disciples will regularly be sent to unreached villages to start evangelizing. At the end of each financial year, a report will be put together and presented to the Association Council (Assemblée Générale).

d) Short and long term actions

In order to accomplish this project we will need funds for :

- Putting together training manuals.
- Organizing training sessions (providing for the disciples on training).
- Putting together a basic office structure for AELVNA.
- Church building projects in the newly evangelized remote villages.

We are asking the Togolese churches to get involved in this program and to support us so the Gospel of the Kingdom of God reaches all of our country by the year 2015.

6. The challenge of poverty in unreached areas.

- The peoples that are unreached by the Gospel, are also unreached in other areas of life. They live in extreme poverty and suffer from various debilitating health conditions.
- The lack of drinking water brings diseases that physically weaken the population.
- Illiteracy prevents people from effectively fighting poverty.
- Need for primary health care structures to reduce child mortality and the death of many mothers while they are birthing their babies.
- “A healthy soul in a healthy body!” We believe it is time to implement the Gospel in social actions as we evangelize people groups: helping the population to have access to drinking water; initiating projects to give

dignity and hope back to the poor, and give them opportunities for positive development in their environment.

7. The challenge of the translation of the Scriptures in local languages

In 2001, AELVNA started an alphabetization or literacy programs for the local people, so they can get to read the Bible. After three months training, three women can now read the Scriptures in the Ewe language. AELVNA also trained two people in translation and literacy training for the AKEBOU local language. The translation is now being done, with the support of the WYCLIFFE and SIL (Société Internationale de Linguistique).



Two men trained in literacy teaching and Bible translation in Akebon language.

MINISTRY FRUIT



Positive influence

