

KAY WILLIAMSON EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION (KWEF)

Report to Trustees, Garsington, October 3rd 2007

Roger Blench

1. Since our previous meeting the situation has changed a great deal and we need to consider some possible revisions to our strategy in the light of recent events. The main issues are;

- a. The security situation in Rivers State is making further work on the completion of Kay's own work impossible
- b. By contrast, the situation with local groups in Northern Nigeria is comparatively lively and we can make an impact through institutional support
- c. There are far more unpublished manuscripts than I originally envisaged and I think we should devote more resources to editing these up for publication

I'll deal with these in more detail one by one.

A. Security situation in Rivers State

This has deteriorated badly since the beginning of 2007. Apart from the kidnapping of expatriates and Nigerians, there have been pitched battles on the University of Port Harcourt campus between student cultists and government forces and a curfew is now in operation. On 19th September the militants in the Delta announced that a temporary truce with Government was 'over'. Most companies have now pulled out the majority of their staff. While in Nigeria I was intending to go to Port Harcourt, but decided the situation was too unstable and changed my plan. I was unable to contact many of our potential collaborators by phone and I believe some have fled the city. I now regard it as very fortunate that key materials were packed up and shipped as there is a high risk of the house being looted.

The original concept of asking Kay's collaborators to collect the relevant data has failed completely. No data has been forthcoming in the last two years. Bruce Connell, with whom we have signed a contract, went to Port Harcourt before the most recent troubles but even so was unable to move around and found it difficult to bring informants to campus. He has been able to do some work on the analytic side, but is in agreement that we are limited by the situation.

So there seems to be little we can do until the security situation changes. I have now placed my edited versions of Kay's mss. on the website, so that scholars can have access to the data until something more can be done.

B. Northern Nigeria

By contrast, the situation in Northern Nigeria has perked up remarkably. There is a new liveliness about many groups and a great enthusiasm for developing literacy and dictionaries. This is in part due to the revival of the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) which has at last ceased factional fighting and is trying to work with communities. I presently see working with such groups (local literacy committees etc.) as the best way forward I achieving the goals of KWEF. To this end I propose that we sign an agreement with the NBTT to subsidise their fieldwork goals. A draft MoU is separately attached. I also propose to try and spend at least six weeks a year working with groups directly, to draw out possible publications. I would also like to be able to disburse flexible small sums to subsidise primers, workshops etc.

C. Publications

I see that trying to bring to press unpublished manuscripts is an important goal for KWEF. I append a list of mss. that I have been working on. This is a long-term objective as many will take considerable work to bring to press. So part of my work for the future will be to encouraging ms. production, editing and formatting.

I also would like to support a series of local publications in Nigeria. This would be relatively 'quick and dirty' and would bring out books that are not suitable for international publication. I worked quite intensively on the first volume of such a series while in Nigeria and the cover is appended.

Other issues

1. **Typing and graphics.** I have been trying to get a substantial body of material typed into the computer. This was started by Martin Walsh but he turned out to be not very motivated and we have ceased our contract by mutual agreement. Although I have tried other typists this is apparently not something people are very interested in doing these days. I had more luck with the graphics and have found an excellent mapmaker and will be working further with him.

2. **Website.** The website is not ideal as I have had great difficulty in finding the right programmer to do everything I want. However it is functional and explains the goals of KWEF, enables to potential applicants to download a form and provides links to all the work being carried out under KWEF. I have also created a page showing the proposed format of the publications. Your comments are very welcome.

<http://www.rogerblench.info/KWEF/KW%20opening%20page.htm>

3. **Flyer.** A flyer is being printed and will be carried to Nigeria for distribution at the next Linguistic Association of Nigeria meeting. I have already carried B & W versions and handed them out at meetings I attended under the KWEF banner.

4. **Assistant.** Finding a person to manage the website, deal with applications, do document formatting and basic typing is apparently not so easy. I have in mind another colleague, Dr. Carole Pegg, who is currently on a grant that finishes in December. I'd like to take her on, on the same basis as Martin Walsh, and see how it works out. But I see that we just to have to try people and see if they work out.

5. **My own work.** Our agreement has been for me to work on KWEF affairs for a year and see how things pan out. Although I was originally working mainly on Kay's materials, the need for further fieldwork has slowed down this side of things. However, the volume of correspondence concerning potential manuscripts, reading the said manuscripts and fieldwork in Nigeria contacting literacy groups has been considerably more than anticipated. I would therefore propose to continue on the present basis indefinitely, in order to be proactive in furthering the goals of the trust.

6. **Presentation of the work of KWEF at conferences.** We haven't really discussed this, but I have used some KWEF funds to support my attendance at conferences where I have presented papers derived from the work I have been doing for KWEF. The Powerpoint presentations associated with these are on the KWEF website.

7. **Support to Linguistic Association of Nigeria (LAN).** We have talked about this and if LAN is still functioning I'd like to make a £1000 annual subvention. However, I have not been able to contact Mekuri recently, so this is in abeyance.

8. **Accounts.** Presented separately.

Publications in progress

* Marks those likely to appear in the next calendar year.

International series

1. Kuteb grammar*
2. Mofu Dictionary*
3. Limbum Dictionary*
4. Tarok Dictionary*
5. Gbari grammar
6. Mada dictionary
7. The Rigwe language
8. Atlas of mammals of the Niger Delta
9. Berom dictionary

Further in the future

1. Kuteb dictionary
2. Tyap grammar
3. Kirya dictionary

Nigerian series

1. The Tarok language