



## Creating Multiple Paths to Success

By Don Ghostlaw, President, AEP

AEP is proud to announce that in addition to our construction and scholarship initiatives, we are working with our partners in Nigeria to provide an alternative path to success for the people we serve. And we could really use your help moving forward with this new project!

While the students that AEP supports receive a quality education and are prepared for college, AEP and our partners recognize that not every student will elect, or qualify for, a college education. Moreover, the educational needs within northern Nigeria have changed considerably over the past ten years. While a formal education, including college-level training, remains a top priority, the Nigerian economy has suffered greatly due to ongoing pressures related to extremist violence and a declining demand for Nigeria's oil. Many young people, including those who may have been previously involved with an extremist group against their will and have since escaped, are now looking for ways to rebuild their lives. This need is highlighted in a recent UNICEF article found here:

<https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/stories/pathway-better-future-through-skills-acquisition>



Above: Students learn to make hygienic soap for sale; Barbering class

Above: Leathercrafting class; satellite dish installation



Above: Adult class for weaving. Participants learn to knit the sweaters students wear as part of their school uniform. The items will be sold in the storefront. These classes, once held on school grounds after hours and on weekends, can now be moved to a permanent site in the Skills Acquisition Center.

Nigeria is also in desperate need of people with training in practical trade skills. To prepare our students and those in the community for different career paths, AEP has joined forces with our partners to provide targeted skills training. This training is available not only for our students, but also for women and men within the communities of different faiths and tribes. Training will take place at a newly outfitted Empowerment Center in Kafanchan, as well as in Gusau, which already has a facility. (Please see the articles and photos on page 2 of this newsletter.) Each participant will have a choice of skills training in areas such as sewing, leathercrafting, barbering, baking, soap making, knitting, and more as funding becomes available. Storefronts at the center will showcase these products for sale, ensuring an income and sustainability.

But all of this requires seed money to begin, as well as money to build and expand the empowerment centers as needs arise.

We also hope to expand the skills offerings over time. **Please consider donating to the new Empowerment Center program!**



## Empowerment Efforts in Kafanchan

by Fr. Shaw Mudge, AEP board member

An exciting prospect is awaiting us in Nigeria: the Kafanchan Empowerment Center, a way for AEP to reach out into the community. This coordinated outreach of peace and skill acquisition opportunities for both Christians and Muslims in Kafanchan will focus especially on the unemployed and under-employed, with an emphasis on training women, widows, and young people.

In September of this year, Bp. Markus of Kafanchan Diocese forwarded photos of the finished lodging and skill acquisition center, some of which are shown below. He also expressed his gratitude for the completed building.

Through the donation of a special gift, it made possible the completion of the empowerment center building, started more than 12 years ago by the diocese but never able to be finished until now.

AEP has now created the Empowerment Fund and will be looking to raise monies to provide materials, resources, and possible scholarships for the courses. Projected skills training includes satellite dish installation, sewing, leather working, soap making, computer skills, and more. Acquiring skills such as these can help students earn a living amid challenging economic times in Nigeria.

The Kafanchan Empowerment Center is an outreach effort in which you can join with me by praying and contributing financially. We can help make a difference in the lives of students by providing hope for a better future.

May God bless you.



*Double occupancy rooms with mosquito netting, fans, and bathrooms with showers.*



*Exterior; courtyard. There are also storefronts to sell products made by class participants.*

## Finding Mission in Community Conversation

by Wendy Bellmore

Traveling in Nigeria brought me to Gusau, the capital city of 400,000 people located in Zamfara State in the northwest portion of the country. I personally deeply appreciated the opportunity to hear the lived experience of women, to hear their passion, their real life concerns, and their hopes.

Out of one of those opportunities came a vision for embracing a need with a risk, leading me on a path to a new kind of mission work empowering marginal populations in skill development in areas of vocational interest, to include basics in economy, language and marketing to best achieve independence.

In 2018, with Sustainable Development funding of \$15,000, that earlier conversation with Mrs. Helen Danbinta and the Mother's Union of Gusau became a reality in the Gusau Women's Vocational Center. Despite the difficulties associated with Covid-19, this 2,000 square foot facility was constructed and the basics of plumbing and electricity brought to the site. With what funding was left we started purchasing sewing machines and looms. And the women came.

In 2023, I again had the opportunity to seek funding and was awarded \$13,000 which was purposed to complete an indoor toilet and kitchen with appliances and supplies. Additional occupational equipment such as bead pressors and design and weaving machines were procured. And then young men came, interested in learning machine work that could lead to an occupation in tailoring. I have only recently disbursed the final installment of funding and hope to hear more in the reports of the value of this endeavor.

The reality of need was recognized, and I embarked on a different path, one developed in conversation fueled by passion and vision. For that relationship I am grateful for the opportunity to work together with AEP in building this mission.



*Dedication of the center; tailoring and sewing classes.*



To donate, scan the code:



For questions or to arrange a presentation for your church, school, or group, please contact Elaine Chagnon, Project Manager or Don Ghostlaw, President, directly at

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