

# SELL CONNECT

December 2015

## SHARING EDUCATION & LEARNING FOR LIFE

A Peacebuilding Programme for Young Adults



### What is SELL?

The **Sharing Education and Learning for Life** programme is a participatory adult formation programme that aims at developing life building skills in young adults. It is rooted in a profound respect for the person and desires to see people cultivate a culture of peace within themselves and in community.

The SELL programme is participative and focuses on sharing experience, inviting participants to **THINK** and **CHOOSE** especially to choose to be **peace makers**.

Our vision for this programme is to engage young adults with life shaping issues and assist them to make conscious choices on how they will live their lives in **peace** and make a positive impact within their community.



### Hello from Fr Leo Traynor in Ghana

**W**elcome to the maiden edition of our SELL newsletter. Back in the year 2002, Fr. Noel Mc Geeney and I began to develop material that we felt would help young adults as they addressed key challenges in their lives. In doing so we leaned heavily on previous work by another St Patrick's Missionary Fr. Tommy Hayden. The result was the emergence of SELL. In more recent times due to feedback from participants and our own evaluations and reflections in the light of issues facing our world, we made peace building the central theme of the work.

As I write, it's Friday the 16th of October and I have spent just a week in the village of Logre in North Eastern Ghana. If you search *google earth*, I am not sure Logre is included yet, but you will find our neighbour Kongo. As with many communities and nations, borders are a contentious issue. Even

though I am just here a week, I know that these two distinct villages are strong in asserting their identities – I have a feeling the work of SELL may bear some fruit right here!

The hope is to roll out the SELL programme in this region but, by its nature, it will be a slow process. Beginning is always a challenge! I have received a great welcome from the Presentation Brothers who are now collaborators with St. Patrick's Missionaries in this work. The Brothers have offered us hospitality in their community here in Logre and have set up an Educational Resources Centre within which we will have our resource room. My present task is to get the resource room equipped and functional by 2016. You may wonder why it should take so long! The reality is that things take more time here. Travel by road can be challenging.

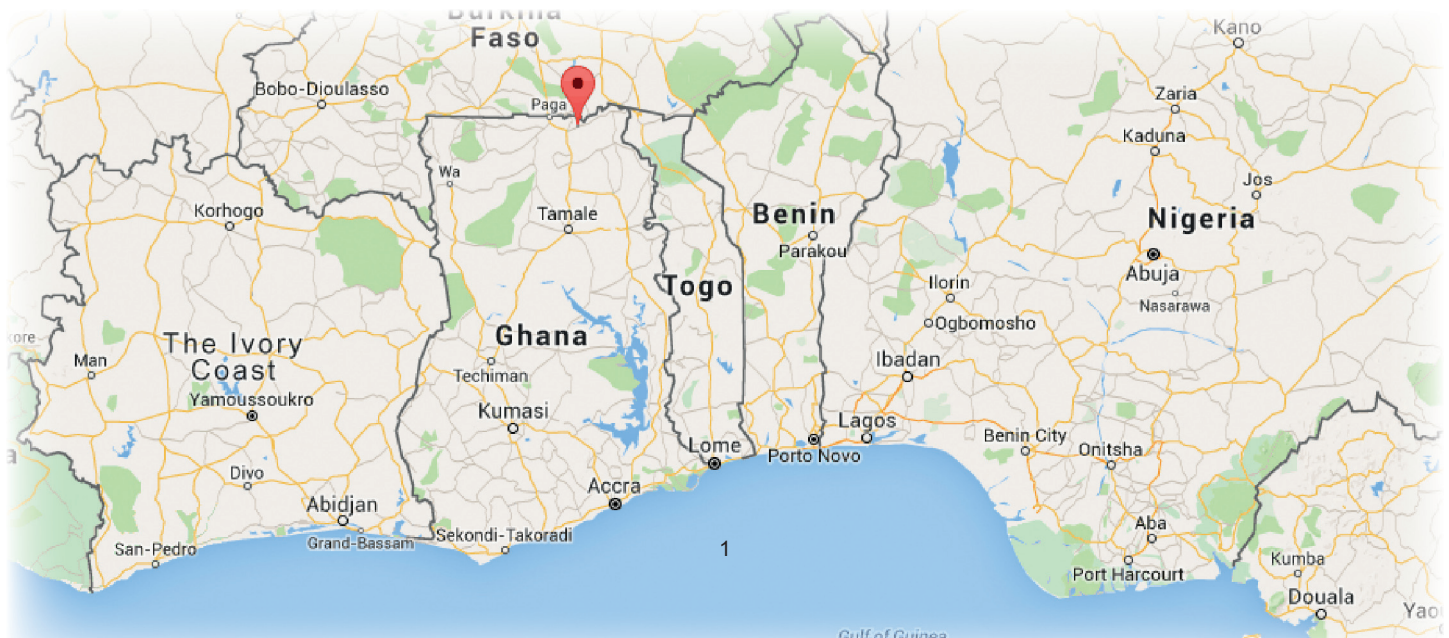


Fr Leo Traynor and Fr Tommy Hayden.  
Left: Noel McGeeney



Not everything needed is available in our local town of Bolgatanga so we have to travel further out to Tamale or beyond for certain materials. Power supply is an issue.

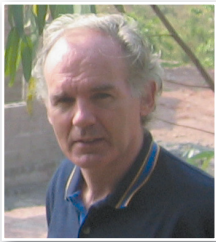
So, as little drama after little drama emerges, we learn to roll with the rhythm of life around us. Living in Africa invites me to live in the present moment - no bad thing. ■



## John's Story

I was introduced to the Sharing Education and Learning for Life (SELL) Programme in 2007 when Rev. Fr Leo and two brothers (Jonathan and Mosses) visited our parish (St Paul's catholic church) Adukrom –Ksi This was during an important stage of my life. It was time of transition from a teenager to young adult and a progression from SHS to university so the programme couldn't have come at a better time. The first two units of the programme; Personal Growth and Leadership really had a profound impact on my life. For the first time, I went on a mental journey of self-reflection into my past, to the present and what I am still called to be.

The various sessions of these units were all about a deeper introspection of my journey of life: being aware of myself, interactions with others in the community and an invitation to make a choice of the kind of person I want to be. This was fascinating and an eye opener for me. It has in fact, helped me as young person in my education, the decisions I make and my social worldview. The SELL programme has equipped me with skills such as communication, presentation, knowledge of group dynamics and team work, which is essential for personal and career development. ■



### Sharing Education and Learning for Life

## An integrated Peace Building programme for young adults in Nigeria and Ghana.

Fr. Kevin O'Hara, District Leader West Africa, St. Patrick's Missionary Society

The world needs peace builders at this time. Last week a young eleven year old girl walked into a market place in Kano, Northern Nigeria. Her suicide vest exploded and killed those around her. This is becoming a regular feature of life in Northern Nigeria. And that is why there is an urgent need to have peace builders to go out and meet young people and win their hearts and minds. This is the work of SELL Nigeria and SELL Ghana. St. Patrick's Missionaries pioneered this work for over two decades in very complex and difficult circumstances. The emergence of SELL with its aim of empowering young people to become leaders who would work for a more just, equitable and inclusive society is welcomed and supported by St. Patrick's Missionary Society. Their work is juxtaposed with the work of Boko Haram who denounce western education and learning for life. They recruit young people and radicalize them as extremists to hate and kill their own people.

Northern Nigeria is a complex place as the Sahara desert encroaches year by year. Poverty is cruel. The population is huge. Politics is bitter. Islam is dominant and the new Muslim President of Nigeria is from the region. He is on a crusade against corruption. He is also determined to crush Boko Haram. If he succeeds there is a great need to embrace the traumatized youths and share education and learning for their new lives with them. The SELL integrated programme will help them to make sense of their lives in their traumatized world. The SELL team will help them to develop self-awareness and recognize how their life stories and experiences affect their ability to build peace in this conflict region.

A crucial learning for the youths is to explore the wisdom of their traditions and to see and understand how the wisdom of their traditions rejects extremism and violence. It will rather show how their wisdom and traditions contribute to human rights and peace building. They will come to realize that this recent phenomenon of violence and suicide

bombing is alien to their sacred wisdom and traditions and that they must seek what brought joy, peace and unity in the past. The SELL team will help the young people to be more aware of how we perceive those we live with within our communities, to acknowledge where our values and beliefs come from, to explore the role of women in our communities and understand gender issues, and to invite young people to choose the type of community they want to build for themselves and future generations.

Fr. Tommy Hayden and Fr. Leo Traynor, two pioneers of SELL, are bringing the SELL programme to the youths in Northern Ghana. The youths of Mali and Northern Ghana are vulnerable to those who are inviting them to share their ideology of extremism. What happened in Bamako, the capital of Mali is evidence of this. Tommy and Leo, in collaboration with the Presentation Brothers will reach out with a different message that will help young African people to emerge as leaders promoting justice, sustainable development, right relationships and care of the earth. One of the important characteristics of SELL is its openness to all people of goodwill, irrespective of their religion, nation or tribe. We wish Tommy and Leo every success in this courageous project and we sincerely thank all who support them in their work. ■





## SELL travels to Ghana

**Berlyn Boniface, SELL Resource Team Member**

It was adventurous crossing from one country border to another; the sight of the Atlantic Ocean was an unusual travel companion we met from the border of Nigeria to Ghana. The coconut trees were beautifully arranged on the Ocean beach, people were going about their businesses on the beach, and all I could hear myself saying was, “Africa is beautiful”.

Beji, Mary and I embarked on a road journey to Ghana from Nigeria, in the month of July 2014. From Nigeria, we passed the first border, which was the Seme Border; Seme Border is a settlement in Nigeria side, bordering Benin Republic. There are two further borders between Nigeria and Ghana: Hilla Condji border connecting Benin Republic and Togo Republic and they Aflao border that links Togo Republic to Ghana. Each of the 3 border



posts has their own peculiarities but common to each is the fastidious checks on people and their baggage by the security agencies.

This same journey would have been an hours experience if we had chosen to fly from Lagos, Nigeria, to Accra, Ghana. The journey by road was 18 hours, where, when one left the major cities, the terrain became very rutted and jarring. Sleep escaped me between the bumps and the desire to see every beautiful sight.

Lest I forget, our expedition journey to Ghana was to facilitate a training of the Sharing Education and Learning for Life (SELL) Facilitators.

*SELL started in Kabba, Kogi State, Nigeria and later moved to Bauchi State, Nigeria in 2007; training of facilitators in Ghana began in 2013.*



Annual General Reflection of SELL in Nigeria 2015.

## Fr Leo Traynor and St Ciaran's College Peregrini

**F**r. Leo Traynor has been with the SELL programme from its inception. He hails from Ballygawley, Co. Tyrone and is always keen to mention his town land of Tirnaskea, just a few miles from the town of Ballygawley.

His primary and secondary education took place at Tirnaskea Primary and then later at St Mary's Primary school and St Ciaran's High School both in Ballygawley in the parish of Errigal Ciaran. Fr. Leo has continued to foster the relationship with his former schools and his home parish of Errigal Ciaran and is thankful of their ongoing support for his missionary work.

In the mid-eighties he, along with the support to the Religious Education Department, set up a 'Mission Aid' group within St. Ciaran's. The idea was born out of Bob Geldof's 'Live Aid' concert in Wembley to help with the famine in Ethiopia. St Ciaran's has always had an ethos of raising the student's awareness of the wider world and its needs by community and social action projects. They have further empowered their mission outreach ethos by adopting the name Peregrini. The term Peregrini derives from Celtic history and was a term used for saints who were 'travellers for Christ'. How happy then, for Fr Leo, an early St. Ciaran's 'Peregrin', to be warmly received on his return journey to the school to talk about his work with SELL and to be presented with a cheque to help continue his SELL voyage to Ghana where he is now based!

*Leo joined St. Patrick's Missionary Society to study towards the Missionary Priesthood. He was ordained in 1988 and posted to Nigeria. He has worked there until this year and is now settling in Ghana for what he hopes will be the remaining years of his work in West Africa.*



Fr Leo's nieces and nephews, together with Pascal Canavan and Maura McStay, present Leo with the cheque from St. Ciaran's College Peregrini.



## Freedom through SELL

**Beji Jibe, SELL Resource Team Member**

**W**hen you hear people talk about gaining freedom and liberation, it may not necessarily mean the freedom of a nation but of an individual. Recently I was facilitating a programme of the Sharing Education and Learning for Life (SELL) Foundation in Ogun State, Western Nigeria. During the programme, a participant narrated how she was constantly beaten by her boyfriend.

The SELL Programme is a participatory young adult peace building and formation programme, the programme is facilitated in an interactive way which enables discussion with each other within an atmosphere of trust and friendship. Through the workshop, we explored how we can be appropriately assertive in our dealings with others. At that point, the young lady who had shared her problems about her relationship said she would try to use this approach. She said she had always wanted to define her needs and obligations in the relationship but didn't know how to go about it.

Weeks after that experience, we were fortunate to meet some of the participants from the previous programme in

another SELL gathering. The same young lady was among the gathering and she exclaimed to me that she had gained her freedom. She narrated that the SELL processes helped her to know herself and identify her needs in the relationship.

She felt that she was now more informed and empowered to make decisions about what was best for her, and in this case she ended the relationship. I asked her what she had learnt from her relationship experience that will guide her in future; she answered that she will set boundaries and that the relationship should be built upon mutual respect and love from both parties. ■



*Beji holds a Diploma in Law from the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. He is a trained facilitator of the Alternative to Violence Project (AVP). He is a member Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (EPRT) and a co-chairman*

*Muslim/Christian youth dialogue initiative forum in Plateau state with over 10 years of experience in inter religious dialogue. Beji also has skills in Emergency Management in terms of Assessment, Logistics, Finance and Distribution. He is a trained basic Mediator and a member of the Damietta Peace Initiative. He is the Finance Desk Officer in the SELL Foundation.*



**SELL Resource Team Members.**  
Left to right: Moses, Maria, John, Mary, Beji, Berlyn and Fr. Pat.



### SELL Contact Information

**Facebook:** Sell Programme **Twitter:** @SELLFoundation

**Website:** [www.sharingeducationlearningforlife.org](http://www.sharingeducationlearningforlife.org)

**Email:** [sellconnectireland@gmail.com](mailto:sellconnectireland@gmail.com)

**Support:** [www.spms.org](http://www.spms.org). (Select SELL under 'Purpose of Donation')

### Irish Editorial Team:

Kevin Vaughan, Maureen Sheehy, Fr Tomás O'Connor SPS, Orla Heffernan

***It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.***