

Federal Grant Supports Ghanaian Women Entrepreneurs

Rita VanderVen instructs participants in a Women's Business Development workshop session for women entrepreneurs at the University of Ghana in June 2005. VenderVen is executive director of GROW (Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women), one of the community organizations that joined MSU faculty and staff in the Entrepreneurship Training Program delegation to Ghana. GROW is a nonprofit economic development organization that provides women – many of whom may face social, educational, or economic barriers – with opportunities to develop the skills and acquire the knowledge needed to achieve economic independence through self-employment.



A year-long program has created a strong new partnership between MSU's School of Social Work and the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana. The partnership grew out of a one-year workforce development project titled the Entrepreneurship Training Program: A Ghana-U.S. Exchange funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to MSU's Center for Advanced Study of International Development and School of Social Work and the University of Ghana's Department of Social Work.

The goals of the one-year program were two-fold: to strengthen institutional linkages between Ghana and the United States and to enhance the capacities of Ghanaian institutions to promote and develop women's workforce participation by providing entrepreneurial training in Ghana. The program successfully facilitated an exchange between ten Ghanaian and ten U.S. trainers and professionals involved in women's workforce development in their respective countries.

In April 2005, a delegation from Ghana visited MSU to study effective U.S. models of women's entrepreneurial programs through seminars and professional development activities that included site visits to U.S. agencies and entrepreneurial train-

ing organizations that serve women in Michigan and Illinois. They also participated in professional affiliations in the Lansing area that exposed them to U.S. institutions that provide support for women-owned businesses.

In June 2005, a delegation from Michigan representing the Ann Arbor-based Center for Empowerment and Economic Development, Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women, the Lansing Community Micro-Enterprise Fund, and MSU's School of Social Work conducted a Women's Business Development Training program in Accra, Ghana for more than 60 participants from regions nationwide.

As a result of the Entrepreneurship Training Program, an on-going women's entrepreneurial program is in the planning stages at the University of Ghana, including strategies to secure necessary financial support. In addition, many of the Michigan organizations that were involved in the training in both countries are actively seeking ways to continue to support the Ghanaians as they attempt to institutionalize a training program for women entrepreneurs.

—Dan Hester

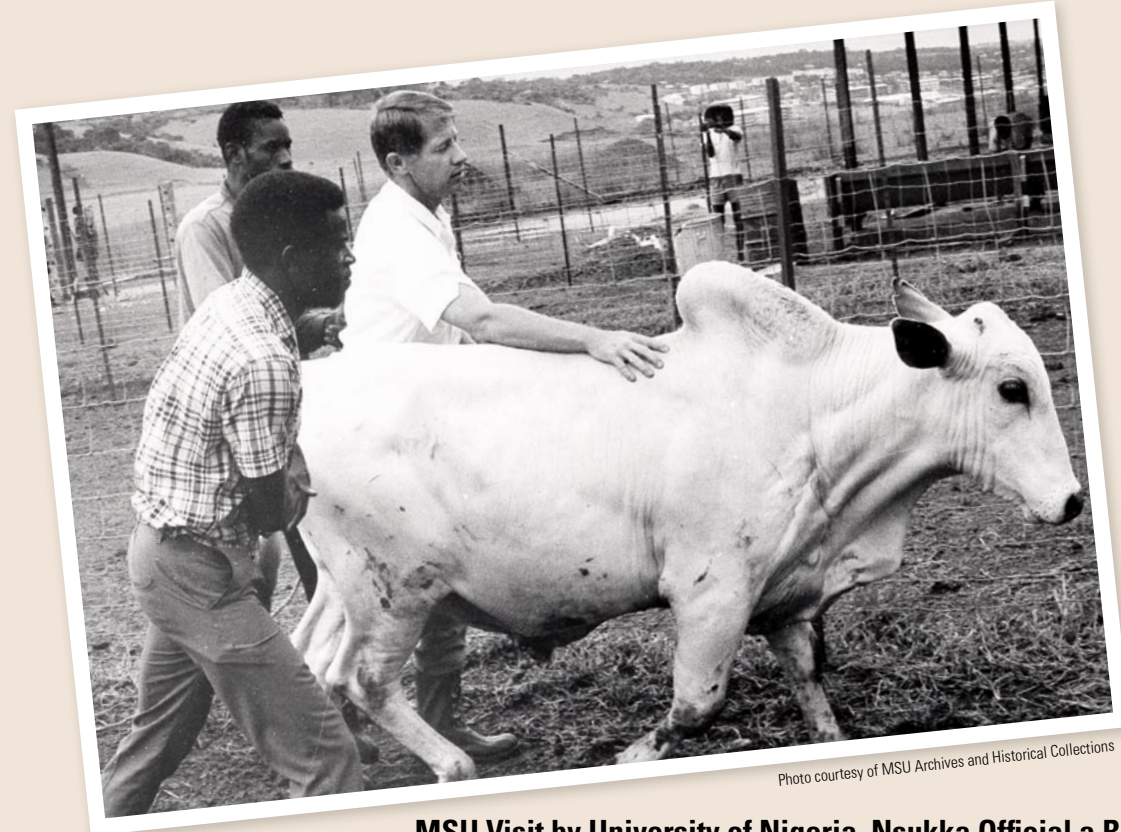


Photo courtesy of MSU Archives and Historical Collections

MSU Visit by University of Nigeria, Nsukka Official a Reminder of Shared Past

Several early MSU international involvements were "institution-building" projects in which faculty assisted in creating educational institutions in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. In the 1960s, MSU partnered with Nigerian colleagues to build the first land-grant model university in Africa. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) had a substantial agricultural component but functioned as a complete university with MSU faculty from most colleges. Two MSU faculty members, George Johnson and Glen Taggart, served as vice chancellors during the 1960s. MSU's presence at UNN was cut short by the Nigerian/Biafran civil war in the late 1960s, at which point more than 200 person-years of MSU faculty effort had been invested in the Nigerian partnership. The Nigerian experiences of the MSU faculty formed the foundation for much of MSU's future international work in Africa. A key cohort of MSU faculty and their families gained their first African experience at UNN and brought back to the campus a love of Nigeria and of their Nigerian colleagues. These included George and Nancy Axinn, Glenn Johnson, Carl Eicher, Carl Liedholm, John Henderson, Lewis Zerby, Glen Taggart, John Hanson, Richard Lewis, Ed Carlin, Mel Buschman, Jack Bain, and many others. This photo shows Robert Deans, now retired from the Department of Animal Science, and Nigerian student Paschal Osuji (foreground) at work in a cattle pen in about 1966. Osuji was in the first graduating class at the new institution and later earned a doctorate in animal nutrition, working at the International Livestock Research Institute in Addis Ababa and in reforestation projects.



In January 2006, MSU hosted current UNN Vice Chancellor Chinedu (Nedu) Ositadimma Nebo, who came to celebrate the old relationship and explore areas of future collaboration. In a presentation to Africanist faculty and staff, he discussed the historical relationship between MSU and UNN, gave an overview of UNN's current status, and suggested areas in which the two institutions might partner, including collaborative research, technical cooperation, faculty and staff development, and student exchange.

In this photo, Nebo (seated second from right) is shown meeting with MSU Provost Kim Wilcox (seated third from right). Also in attendance were African Studies Center Director David Wiley (seated right); two MSU faculty members originally from Nigeria, Nwando Achebe (Department of History) and Folu Ogundimu (School of Journalism); and two UNN graduates currently affiliated with MSU, Ike Iyioke and Chidozie Amuzie.