

A SHARE IN *THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF*

By Keith G. Balsler

“The brothers handing out the books were nearly run over!”

This is the exciting scene described by Dale Van Steenis, director of Leadership Strategies, who has partnered numerous times with World MAP to distribute copies of *The Shepherd's Staff* to church leaders in the most remote parts of the world.

“The reaction to the books was overwhelming,” Dale said when the Senegalese church leaders clamored to get their own copy of the sought-after volume. A total of 500 church leaders received *The Shepherd's Staff* at two leadership conferences – one on a primitive campground and the other in a mission compound tent – hosted by Dale and Leadership Strategies in Senegal. Many leaders from neighboring Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia joined their Senegalese brethren and received their own free copies of World MAP's “Bible School in a Book”.

Resources like *The Shepherd's Staff* are rare in this part of the Third World.

Senegal is home to nearly 11 million people, primarily French-speaking; more than 90% are Muslim.

The Gambia is a 30-mile-wide flood plain straddling the Gambia River (geographically within Senegal) with roughly 1.5 million people, more than a million of whom are Muslim.

Over a million people, primarily Portuguese-speaking, live in Guinea-Bissau. Half practice indigenous religions, nearly half are Muslim, and only 5% are Christian.

The fields are indeed ripe for harvest in this struggling enclave on Africa's Atlantic coast.

A Solid Core

Dale saw the lack of reliable training in this remote corner of the Third World and sought to rectify it with World MAP's “Bible School in a Book”. He has shared in the work of *Shepherd's Staff* distribution for a number of years. Leadership Strategies helped facilitate the distribution of the first 4,500 Russian-language *Shepherd's Staffs*.

“In French and Portuguese there are some materials available for leaders” in the tri-nation area, Dale explains, “but precious little of it has landed where it is needed. *The Shepherd's Staff* in French and Portuguese is laid out in such a way as to be immediately useful to any leader.”

Most of the leaders attending the two events are literate but some are not. “All instruction had to be very simple – and was warmly received.” *The Shepherd's Staff* was “a hit,” Dale reports. “People immediately began to read and talk to one another about what they read.”

We can safely assume that those conversations were enriching and challenging. *The Shepherd's Staff* supplies these pastors, teachers and evangelists what Dale considers their most urgent need: “a good core of solid theology teamed with a big dose of practical matters such as authority issues and conflict resolution.”

Each of the 500 attendees at these two events received a *Shepherd's Staff* in English, French or Portuguese. Nearly 50 have pledged to plant new churches this year.

World MAP is proud to partner with Dale Van Steenis and Leadership Strategies in equipping these leaders with a firm scriptural foundation. “Dale is always a joy to work with,” comments World MAP publications coordinator Gayla Dease. Gayla worked with Dale in coordinating the shipment of those 500 books and has worked extensively with him in getting this proven training resource to as many church leaders as possible in places where it is most sorely needed.

We are grateful to Dale Van Steenis of Leadership Strategies and for so many other ministries for sharing in the work – and rejoicing in the fruit – of World MAP’s *Shepherd’s Staff* ministry. World MAP welcomes opportunities to partner with reputable Christian organizations committed to equipping the saints with a solid core of scriptural teaching and practical training. All of us – World MAP, the ministries we partner with, the church leaders we train and the leaders they raise up and train – are privileged to have a share in being “fellow workers for the truth” (3John 8).