

Partnership visit to South Africa and Namibia from 9 – 19 January 2013

Purposes of visit

- To meet with Bishop Zipho Siwa – Presiding Bishop MC Southern Africa to understand his vision for MCSA and identify his mission priorities after one year in office
- To visit Namibia – a District of MCSA and offer a donation from the Methodist World Mission for the Rundu Project in Namibia. This would also enable me to meet with Rev Brian Mabone – a recipient of the National in Mission Scheme working with refugees from Angola

Meeting with Zipho and KK – MCSA Mission Director

I arrived at Johannesburg on the morning of Wednesday 9 January. Later in the afternoon I had a lunch meeting with Zipho and KK

Strengthening partnership

- Got details of my visit itinerary including my visit to Namibia from 11 – 17 January 2013
- MCSA expressed gratitude for the annual grants for Mozambique – a District of MCSA
- MCB and Action for Children jointly funds the MCSA Childcare desk for three years ending 2013-2014 and both organisations are supporting with the new Childcare programme initiative in Namibia for the next three Connexional years. MCSA is putting in place funding plans to support the MCSA Childcare post when MCB-AfC funding support runs out
- MWM gave a donation to the Rundu project in Namibia which I plan to visit and see one of our NMA grant recipient – Rev Brian Mabone co-ordinating the project. MCSA was grateful for the donation despite the delay in transferring the funds
- Zipho was grateful for Jo Hibbard's contribution as the Heritage Officer at their last Heritage conference in August 2012

Mission Personnel opportunities

- Zipho requested in June 2012 if MCB could send a mission partner to help manage Swaziland Methodist Schools? OO assured him that an advert was placed to attract interested professionals.
- There is a ministerial exchange opportunity in Johannesburg. A minister interested in leading a multi-national congregation is most because Germiston MC is a very diverse congregation with lots of non-indigenes worshipping at the church. An experience and participation of the 'Belonging Together' project would be advantageous
- The Mission office was grateful to have Shelley and Alison who worked alongside Victoria in 2012. Staff commented that the short stays were very benefiting to MCSA and welcome similar visits in future. A special request was made for Alison to revisit as part of an exchange programme so she could assist with the regional training on safeguarding issues scheduled for March 2013. Victoria could reciprocate by visiting the UK to share its excellent MCSA Sunday School programmes
- Volunteers and EPPs interested in short-term placements in Southern Africa are welcome e.g. working on justice issues and with orphans

Special funding requests

- MCSA mission office asked for the opportunity to sponsor the Presiding Bishop to visit MC Brazil to check their mission models and share experiences. This experience would benefit MC Mozambique and the Wesleyan Church, Angola (both Portuguese speaking district and mission station)
- Zipho asked if MCB could help support a holding place for 70 orphans in **Lesotho** – another MCSA district. The facility serves the community, has an ecumenical focus even though it is built on MCSA land. A proposal is due in for consideration.



Rebecca and Michelle – GBGM interns
with Bunmi



KK (Mission unit Director) with Joe
(Volunteers in Mission Coordinator) at
MCSA Connexional Office



Yuli and Brownen at a meeting at
MCSA Office

Met with MCSA Connectional Office staff

Met Rebecca and Michelle – GBGM interns from America volunteering in the Northern Province of South Africa for the next one year. Also met Bronwen (PA), Victoria – Childcare Coordinator, Pearl – HIV/Aids Coordinator, Jo – Finance Officer, John – VIM Coordinator and KK - Director.

Summary of discussions:

- OO to travel with VS to Namibia for the district visit and enquire about existing and potential Childcare programmes
- There is a need to employ a professional to handle justice work for MCSA due to prevailing issues. OO advised submitting a NMA grant consideration in May 2013 since one of the existing programme comes to an end this Connexional year
- The Mission office asked if the Refugee camp at Rundu could be supported. OO is expecting a proposal for financial assistance to support the Refugee camp near the Angola-Namibia border. However OO would discuss with GBGM colleague – CN as a co-funding initiative
- SALT queries for Namibia recipients discussed and KK to send me an update
- MCSA is dealing with cross-cultural placements within the Conference and KK asked how Belonging Together operates so it could be adapted contextually in MCSA
- Mozambique Church needs leadership training to encourage the synod to work as a country and promote consistent quality assurance of all its services
- MCSA Childcare desk in these three years has defined its framework, developed its safeguarding policies and is now ensuring compliance in its third year. The drafted documents were sent to each district/ country to ensure alignment with national legislations
- There was an existing partnership with the Wesleyan Church Angola as a mission station and with the knowledge of the UMC Methodist Angola. Request for support with leadership training was asked under SALT training
- A roundtable talk was proposed to be held in Malawi to discuss invitations by mission stations wishing to work with MCSA. UMC and MCB partnership co-ordinators to be invited



Members of Wesley Central Church,
Windhoek



Trinity Methodist Church,
Windhoek



Methodist Church, Wesley; Windhoek

Meeting with three churches in Windhoek, Namibia

VS and OO departed from Johannesburg on Friday 11 January and arrived in Windhoek that morning. We later had meetings with three different congregations at Wesley Central Church, Trinity Methodist Church and Methodist Church Wesley.

• Wesley Central Church

Has a thriving Early Childhood Development (ELD) programme run by a Head-teacher assisted by four teachers. There were four classes of 25 pupils of an age range of 3 – 5years. Due to its very convenient location and long opening hours of 7.00am – 5.15pm, there is a very long waiting list. The church sees this as one of its mission priority in its community. There were two young gap-year volunteers from Germany – Nora and Stephanie serving there. ELD challenges mentioned were - how to handle an ELD expansion strategy to meet increasing demand, manage volunteering with little disruption during the school calendar (for example when Nora and Stephanie leave soon), offer capacity building opportunities for teachers to ensure high quality childcare service delivery and make the play ground safe for the children. Since the Methodist Church considers the pre-school as one of its mission priorities, the pre-school currently support

eight orphans as part of its contribution to the community and the teachers were seeking ways of helping more disadvantaged children

- **Trinity Methodist Church**

Also has a preschool facility as well as a rural home for love babies by teenage mothers (choosing not to abort and those struggling to raise their children due to health or addictions problems). The church helps subsidise their feeding despite its own challenges (many of its members were elderly). Members requested Childcare training for caregivers. Challenges raised were dwindling male youth participation in church activities as well as rising teenage pregnancies

- **Methodist Church Wesley**

Met with its church leaders mostly women and few men. The church was vibrant with an ongoing building project. The Sunday school superintendent requested for resources, training of teachers as well as youth leaders. There was concern that children often left church after graduating Sunday school but yet to be confirmed because it is tasking to engage them. Since the last dynamic youth leader died, the church has struggled to maintain a youth group and different suggestions were raised on how to engage the youths and increase participation in the church. One of the women was passionate about evangelism and wondered how all women or churches could do this cohesively. Finally it was agreed that family breakdown affects church activities and there was the need for good Christian foundation at home, church and school.



Rehoboth Methodist Church members at our meeting



Nora and Stephanie – German volunteers at Windhoek Pre-school



Youth camp site at Rehoboth

Meeting at Methodist Church and Youth camp in Rehoboth

OO and VS travelled to Rehoboth, 100 kilometres from Windhoek on Saturday 12 January. We met with eleven of the church leaders including the youths and their leader. The German youth volunteers at Windhoek travelled with us. MC Rehoboth Church leaders were relatively much younger and very enthused. Rudolf Rittman is the Mission co-ordinator for Namibia though based at Rehoboth and few other church leaders offered their support despite having no resident minister or full time worker at Rehoboth MC. Here were few of the issues raised at our meeting

- This church has a very good church growth programme and Rudolf promised to send me its report for the WCR bulletin. It is particularly of interest because there are 110 different churches in Rehoboth serving a population of 55,000 residents –saturation is an understatement! The whole population of Namibia is under two million
- There was a very good pre-school programme but since the head-teacher enrolled for full time teacher training, the facility was closed. I encouraged continued enquiries for another leader as it offers potential employment to youths. MCSA will assist with succession planning for Childcare programmes
- Also it was indicated that many projects started by volunteers stopped when volunteers left. I suggested that the sustainability of projects and programmes must be discussed both by partners and donors from the onset and the partner church must be bold enough to refuse starting projects that would end up being a burden rather than a blessing. Donors ought to work on mission priorities identified by partners and to promote ownership
- The church has a former Methodist School premises as an asset however the revenue generated only helps maintain the school. I suggested that the church should ask members to help link up with property managers or consultants with local knowledge to help optimise revenue. The solutions to most problems are often nearby but sometime require, good professional advice or discernment
- It was reported that the population of the elderly is increasing and the church needed to care for its elderly. I suggested the leaders ask those affected how the church could help and seek assistance and contributions from the community as well as church members. The church should also tap into the skills and experiences of the elderly for the good of the church and the community

- Lastly the Methodist Church Rehoboth has a youth camp with great potentials but it is yet to unlock its potential. There is increasing challenges of drug abuse and occultism among youths often due to lack of employment. Rudolf asked for funding assistance to develop a youth skill acquisition programme on the youth camp-site using existing structure and gradually improve available infrastructure through on-the-job training for the Youths e.g. landscaping, masonry etc. The proposal is to be submitted to MCSA Connexional office.



Bishop Mothibi is in charge of Namibia as MCSA District



Central Hall Methodist Preschool Windhoek, Namibia



Rev Mabone is supported by the NMA and responsible for the Rundu Project

Meetings with Bishop Mothibi on 14 - 15 January 2013

Bishop Mothibi arrived from South Africa on Monday afternoon (14 January) by flight and immediately himself, VS and I all travelled by road on an eight hour journey to Rundu from Windhoek. We arrived at 9.15pm. The following morning we had a breakfast meeting and here was the summary of our discussions:

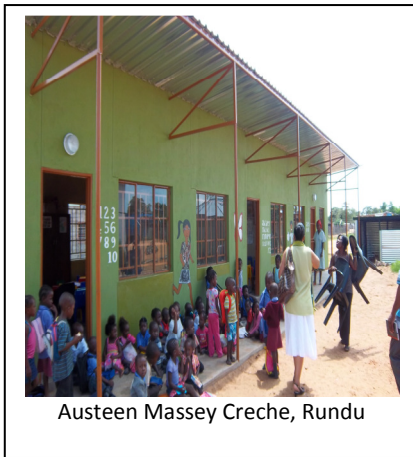
- The annual grant for Namibia would be paid through the MCSA Connexional Office. Both Action for Children and the British Methodist Church would support the Childcare work in Namibia for the next three connexional years
- The Methodist World Mission gave a donation to the Rundu project in Namibia in 2012 because the focus of the conference was on Africa. MCSA was to acknowledge receipt of the fund when the fund is successfully transferred
- I explained the criteria for offering the SALT grant i.e. for postgraduate and/or cross-cultural studies or leadership training etc. Forms are sent to the MCSA Presiding Bishop
- The Bishop needs to identify skills, knowledge and work experience for volunteers or mission partners expected to serve in Namibia. The Partner church however would be responsible for their accommodation
- I asked to meet with Rev Mabone as the recipient of a NMA grant and observe some of his activities

The Rundu mission project had five Pre-schools for Rundu children located within and outside the town. Rundu is a border town separated from Angola by River Kavango. Angola could be seen from Rundu and many refugees fled to Rundu in past years however one of the main challenges is that Angola is a Portuguese speaking country. Rev Mabone hails from Mozambique therefore he is able to effectively communicate with many of the immigrants. He conducts services, administers Holy Communion, performs baptismal services, works with youth and women leaders, carry out home visits of sick members and oversees the pre-schools operations. He is line managed by the Bishop Mothibi.

Meeting with Rev Mabone under the National in Mission Programme

- He started in May 2012 though his pre-visit was in March 2012. He enjoys his work which entails various mission activities such as
- Leads an early morning service at 5.30am on Wednesdays
- Conducts evening prayer meetings two evenings a month
- Holds a healing service twice a month
- Visits the women of Myanos
- Works with youths on Fridays
- Administers Holy Communion to the sick and the elderly as and when required
- Manages six societies. These societies were left without a minister for a long time due to far distance from the capital – Windhoek and they are located far apart Northern Namibia within the e.g. 160 km and 60 km from Rundu.

The church has doubled in size since his arrival and the people really appreciate his presence.



Austeen Massey Creche, Rundu



Children at John Wesley Preschool,
Kehemu, Rundu



Newly constructed Sarukwe
Preschool/ Church building at Rundu

Rundu Mission Childcare activities

We all visited the three of the five pre-schools run by the Methodist Church Namibia in Rundu,

- **John Wesley Pre-school, Kehemu**

The church building is being used for crèche until the newly constructed church building started by Rev Mabone is completed. The current church building is not child friendly, however it is the best they have. There were appropriate chairs, tables and a blackboard for the children but no playground, no toys, no perimeter fence or storage facilities. There were two classes and a trained teacher. So far in 2012, 60 children have enrolled of which 27 are orphans and 20 vulnerable ones. Only 20% could afford fees and the children are being fed once a day. (Death certificates of the orphans' parents are produced as evidence). Some parents donate raw food stuff to cut down on running costs. The age range is from age three to six. Sick and absent children are visited by the teacher or helper. The school fee was *N\$ 60 per term. Fees realised do not cover the teacher's salaries.

- **Austeen Mercy Pre-school, Rundu**

This was one of the best renovated pre-schools in Rundu constructed by donations from France. As at our visit, 62 children have registered however 125 children registered in 2012 out of which 75 were orphans. Opening hours were 8.00am – 12.00 noon. The children got a meal each day though some come to school with their lunchboxes. In the past VSO funded the supply of school meals but that ended in 2012 when VSO pulled out of Namibia. The school fee is N\$ 30 per month though only 20% were said to make payments last year. There was an enrolment register as well as a record of fees collected that is sent to Windhoek office (HQ). Parents meet thrice a year however the income generated does not cover the teachers' salaries. There were two trained teachers and two cooks on the payroll.



Veronica is one of the preschool
teachers at Sarukwe



State of Sarukwe Preschool building



Maize from farm are sold to fund the
school/ church building

- **Sarukwe Pre-school, Rundu**

It is a rural community school with the young and the elderly working together to support the preschool. The brick-walled church was built around the mud-house preschool with the intention of pulling down the mud-building when the new building construction is completed. The building project has been ongoing for four years and the very small community is doing a great job. The pre-school teachers were Secondary school leavers and asked for further training. The young men were responsible for the building church programme whereas the elderly farm the church grounds and the proceeds from the sale of maize funds the church building. The roof is in a very bad state and schooling is disrupted by rain. On good days when it is very hot, the children meet under the tree in the church yard. Thirty five children had enrolled for 2013 academic year, eight of which were orphans. The school fee is N\$10.00 per month per child but only ten out of the thirty five children had paid. The monies realised are not sufficient and the

children are given a meal each day. Therefore one teacher manages the children and the other cooks and this is swapped to cut down staffing cost. MCSA is investigating issues of unifying teachers' salaries. MCSA will look into resourcing, training and the quality assurance of the Childcare programmes

Challenges of indiscriminate funding without working with Partner Church leaders

As indicated in my findings in Namibia, few of the Childcare projects were being subsidised by foreign mission partners serving in Namibia. They raised funds, subsidised projects and operated independently without consulting the MCSA Mission unit. Unfortunately when such mission partners leave abruptly, there were no plans in place to review the situation therefore staff have unpaid salaries for up to five months and such projects have inadequate resources and lack of consistent approach due to lack of strategy. During my visit community leaders and unpaid staff voiced their discouragement and MCSA has to pick up the pieces and do a lot of work to regain their trusts. It highlights the importance of working with Partner Churches rather than donors selecting 'sexy projects' and funding indiscriminately as personal projects. Our European and American colleagues should be made aware of this.

Thank you.

*N\$ - Namibian Dollars

Dr Bunmi Olayisade
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