

Visit to Igreja Metodista Wesleyana, Mozambique on 9 – 11 August 2011

The aim of the visit was to strengthen relations with Igreja Metodista Wesleyana (IMW), Mozambique as a district of Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

Mozambique is a Portuguese speaking nation with its own cultures and local languages. The District is led by Bishop Brian Mabone and has seven circuits with the hope of having an eighth circuit soon. Methodism spread into Mozambique via South Africa and many past superintendents governed from South Africa and travelled to Mozambique for meetings until few years ago when a local Bishop was elected. Therefore unlike other major Christian denominations in Mozambique, IMW has no school buildings, church manses or hospitals. As a District it receives financial support from Methodist Churches in Southern Africa and Britain. On the other hand IMW is developing its self-sustaining and self-propagating strategies to become a strong national church in the 21st century.

Day 1: 9 August 2011

I arrived Maputo at 3.00pm having departed from Durban at 6.00am. I traveled via Durban and Johannesburg airports and was met at the airport by Bishop Mabone and Leeta his administrative assistant. I later booked into a hotel that evening.



Igreja Methodista staff members



Day 2: 10 August 2011

I visited Robert Marshall Methodist Church in Kwatel Circuit and met with staff and pupils of a lovely crèche operating on site. There were 37 preschool pupils each paying about \$20.00 per month and they were supervised by 8 supporting staff including a coordinator. Each child gets breakfast and lunch each day and school starts at 7.30am until 5pm. The crèche is partially self-supported with assistance from MCSA; it is a much needed church initiative in generating income. One of the children has special needs, he is said to have had complications with malaria at the neonatal stage. He has difficulty

with his speech and has little assistance available in terms of speech therapy. The staff offer as much support, care and attention as they can.

Later Bishop Mabone and I visited Marfarlan Circuit and I saw land purchased by the society with an almost completed church building. Bishop Mabone requested assistance to fence the church building to make it secure so that it could then be used for crèche during weekdays and the income received could be used to help finance staff and develop the property. The building is used for worship in the evenings and at weekends. Mrs Laura currently co-ordinates a crèche in Matola circuit but lives in Marfarlan circuit. She is eager to start another crèche making use of her seven years' experience gained through managing the other crèche.

We visited the crèche being managed by Mrs Laura and four other support staff. The crèche started with seven volunteers in 2004 and there are now 75 under fives at the crèche with paid staff. Children come from the neighbourhood including Muslims and non-members of the church. Revenue from the crèche also funds the Church manse for the minister. We also visited Rev Maria, a Circuit Superintendent doing a great job in managing a crèche with few support staff and using her own sewing machine to train other women. She is currently project managing a worship/ community centre for her community - a remarkable female minister.



Women leaders of Igreja Methodista, Mozambique



Children at the crèche managed by Mrs Laura

Women's Group

I was privileged to meet some of the women leaders who serve as church stewards and ministers. They prepared a lovely meal for us and shared their dreams and visions. Due to high illiteracy in Mozambique, many women seek to acquire practical skills that could generate income. The women asked for assistance in purchasing sewing machines to sew uniforms for crèche pupils and make batik materials for sale. They asked for seven sewing machines, one for each circuit. Skilled women tailors would be able to train others and revenue made would be ploughed in to purchase other machines. Having a

sewing machine in each circuit would be of help to young mothers who cannot travel far from home. A few women wished to be trained in making ministerial stoles and high quality ministerial tops as is the practice in South Africa.

Day 2: Met with Rev Dinis Matsolo – Bishop Elect as advised by MCSA

- **Vision**

Rev Matsolo's vision for IMW Mozambique is to make it more visible in Mozambique. He said his priority is for Methodists to make positive and tangible social, moral and spiritual impact in a country recovering from years of civil war and political instability. Rev Dinis is an active member of Mozambique Council of Churches with links in Government and denominational circles and currently the principal of a Theological College in Mozambique. He did his postgraduate training in South Africa and plans to bring relevant experiences and skills as the Bishop elect by building on current achievements of the IMW Mozambique. He confirmed that his term of office starts in January 2013 for a period of three years which can be extended if he is re-election.

- **Strategic plans**

1) Rev Matsolo asked for assistance with institutional capacity building to improve 'Evangelism' and 'Church planting' especially in Northern Mozambique.

Approach –

- Encourage lay members to start bible studies at home and consolidate a Methodist Community in new areas before sending a minister in response to request.
- Provide refresher theological training and resources to both clergy and laity using the 'Theological Education by Extension model' and Group training by Cross Cultural lecturers such as the Cliff College model in Nigeria and Sierra Leone
- Would appreciate personnel exchange especially ministers and lecturers who could spend sabbaticals at the Theological College

2) Church Staff training

- Offer SALT scholarship to train its Connexional staff in Project Management, application for funding, Book-keeping/ Accounting over the years
- Look at a request for theological books and resources for ministerial students, IMW Children and Youth ministries especially for use in crèches
- Ministers, Circuit Stewards, women leaders to shadow MCSA colleagues

3) Plans to set up income generating projects to promote self-sustainability e.g. purchase of land in Gaza for Cashew tree planting and building a guest house

4) Improving social impact of IMW Mozambique by setting up a literacy programme for adults using a tested model. Link up with other funders to provide necessary school infrastructure. Rev Matsolo is to submit a proposal on 'health delivery in Mozambique for co-funding with other partners.

5) Request for NMA grant support for a Childcare coordinator to ensure high quality childcare and design project briefs on expansion/ feasibility studies.

Day 3: 11 August –Met with IMW staff at the District Office

They requested assistance with staff training and asked for a minister for the English Speaking Service at the City Centre Church. Promised to raise issues with MCSA Connexional senior staff.



Rede Crista in Maputo



Staff members of Rede Crista

Met with Carlos A Fumo at Rede Crista in Maputo

Rede Crista is an ecumenical organization that addresses HIV-TB-Malaria problems by developing awareness and promoting preventive and curative measures. It is unique due to its ecumenical links. The organization is still small and struggling with a lack of funds for its HIV programme. In the past it received a small grant from the WCR Office and would appreciate any support to continue this great work in Mozambique.

Carlos confirmed that according to their statistics (produced in Portuguese), HIV infection is still increasing and the worst problem is hunger followed by unavailable drugs for treatment. Infection is currently about 16% and a probable cause for increasing infection is the movement of students from provinces to the city. Earlier assistance concentrated on city dwellers therefore incoming students from provinces are less informed. Targeting this mobile and active population group within the society is challenging.

Carlos says that the Church still has a role to play by intervening early. It is more difficult to break the habits of 18 year olds, so information and raising awareness should be targeted at younger teenagers before habits are formed. Also a strategy to manage infected students and young people should be a priority since Mozambique has a high population of youths. He commented that these are the leaders, pastors and professionals of the future who are needed to take charge of the country in ten years' time – what will happen then? How healthy will the work force be?

Recommendations

- Bishop Mabone requested a mission partner couple, a minister to lead the English speaking service, and his wife to help with adult education or crèche administration. This could be considered at the next Overseas Service Panel
- Assistance with fencing the church property to become income generating and serve the community with a much needed crèche
- MCSA to offer Connexional support to IMW women's group and OO to submit a grant application
- IMW strategic plans should be stated in its next annual grant application for consideration
- Advised IMW and MCSA about IMW applying for a Creche Coordinator under the NMA programme
- Pursue partnership between UMC Brazil and IMW Mozambique
- Submit a small grant application for Rene Crista doing a great job with an ecumenical approach
- MCSA to consider IMW Mozambique's major investment plans and advise MCB on co-funding possibilities

Departed back to Johannesburg by 5.00pm

Visit to Johannesburg, South Africa 11 – 15 August



One of the programmes co-funded by MCBand MCSA



Centre director, Thoko with Ruth Pickles – MCB vice president at the gymnasium

Day 5 – 12 August 2011

Along with Ruth and David Pickles we visited **John Wesley Community Centre**, Etwatwa located by one of the townships. The premises were handed over by a 'Women's Action' group to serve the community. There is a gymnasium there which is very popular with the facility users and many children trained there have progressed in sports winning

several medals. There is also an art class and a computer suite for training. Church members and supporters have donated items such as two sewing machines. Children receive breakfast and lunch there, and an after school club offers only lunches. There is a library provided by Rotary to encourage group reading with books and a comfortable reading place for the users. The facilities are used by children up to young adults.

Children are also visited at home to identify those in need of assistance e.g. orphans, or homes where with a child-head or a grandparent is head of the family. Many are affected by HIV-AIDs and are visited regularly by social workers, pastors, care givers etc. All support staff meet once a month to debrief, share experiences and learn best practice. Donated containers had been converted into counseling rooms for people from the community and a place to store records. This remarkable and successful programme is led by Thoko, a 50 year old nurse who is committed to professionalism and compassion for the underprivileged.



A preschool class pupils and teacher at the centre



Computer class at the centre

On the same premises were four classes for preschool children, a total of more than one hundred pupils, and there were plans for expansion due to popular demand. Space was used optimally and classrooms were very clean and hygienic.

We later visited the **Akani project** at Diepsloot. This project was headed by Dawn, the School Manager. This is situated by another township at the other end of Johannesburg. It is a refurbished warehouse tastefully converted into a child-friendly infrastructure. There are larger fenced outdoor play areas and a new school just completed for the preschoolers ready to start school in September 2011. The Bryanston Methodist Church supports this programme and church members donate their time, resources, and skills and establish links with supermarkets to subsidise food costs and limit food wastage. This scheme also encourages links and relations between both communities.

Meeting with the Connexional staff – Rev Zipho, Vido and KK

I gave feedback on my visit to Mozambique and we discussed follow-up actions. We discussed MCB co-funding of the Childcare Coordinator's post with ACF. An official visit from MCSA to the UK has been scheduled for 10 – 13 October 2011. Other requests made included assistance for Botswana and Swaziland. I advised that the annual grant application for Namibia should be submitted soon.



Akani project staff with Ruth and David Pickles of MCB



Akani project for children

Day 6: 13 August – rest/ sight seeing

Day 7: 14 August - worshipped at Central Methodist Church, Johannesburg

Day 8: Departed back to the UK

Recommendations

- Continue support for the Childcare desk at MCSA
- Request for MP in Swaziland as a District Schools Coordinator to assist Superintendent
- MCSA to submit annual grant applications for Botswana, Swaziland and Namibia