

## Visit to the All African Conference of Churches Partners meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> at Nairobi, Kenya



### 1.1 AACC recent achievements

27 participants representing European, American and African organisations attended the Partner's meeting. AACC focuses on Peace, Healing and Reconciliation; Women's Empowerment, Theology, Advocacy, Interfaith, Migration and presented a snapshot of the effects of conflicts in Africa

- **25%** of African countries suffer **armed conflict**, **20%** of Africans live in countries severely disrupted by conflict and the number of African casualties is the highest of all regions e.g. WHO 2001 data reported **1,675,000 deaths** in Africa in 2000.
- About **15 million Africans** are internally displaced and **4.5 million** seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Wars and insecurity support migration, result in humanitarian disasters, epidemics etc.

### 1.2 AACC advocacy strategy

- AACC advocates for peace through influence of eminent persons such as **Dr Sam Kobia** (former Gen Sec of WCC) who acted as AACC's ecumenical special envoy to Sudan. The recent Sudan referendum was considered successful despite facing several challenges. The process is being reviewed to identify necessary follow up action plans and commend good practices for future reference.
- AACC is in a unique position to offer a 'helicopter view' of peaceful conditions in Africa recognising early signs of instability such as murmurings before or after elections. As a preventive approach, AACC delegates visited Nigeria in May 2010, Burundi in June 2010 and Madagascar in July 2010 to promote peaceful democratic transitions in these countries.
- AACC also engages in regional initiatives in support of peace e.g. two consultations held in September 2010 on Somalia Crisis and continued situation monitoring at Darfur.

### 1.3 Challenges

Often times Churches are not united or do not speak with a voice in many African nations, making it difficult for the Church to become a peace tool for the nation. Where Catholics and Protestants work closely together, the Church is stronger and more effective in its prophetic ministry to country leaders. Regrettably churches also split along tribal lines, denominations, regions echoing the political divisions in these countries. Therefore where multi-religions exist, interfaith talks should be encouraged much earlier before elections. The healing of the church must precede tackling socio-political conflicts. This frees citizens to center attention on party policies, leaders' characters and achievements rather than obvious differences such as tribes, religion, denomination etc.



Dr Sam Kobia speaking about Sudan



Ambassador Kiplagat speaking about conflicts in Africa

#### 1.4 An overview of Africa's recent conflicts

Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat – a very eminent Kenyan with over 40 years experience of foreign service spoke on Africa's political history. He mentioned that the situation in North Africa was predicted by a Moroccan female author who wrote about the 'fear of democracy among elites in the Arab world'. The current wave of revolution was surprising but very welcome as it shows the longing for peace and freedom for everyone. However intervention in Libya struggle should only follow invitation from Libyans and agreement of the Arab world.

Even though the African Union (AU) has its setbacks, its declaration on conflict resolutions since 1995 is commendable. Africa has witnessed a reduction in the number of countries forcefully taken over by the military regimes in recent years and fewer 'red conflict areas' now exist in comparison to **35** countries out of **52** in the sixties when Africa was ravaged by civil wars in the sixties.

#### 1.5 Challenges

- AACC has to deal with 'red conflict areas' until they turn into 'yellow conflict areas' by continued engagement and not quitting when things are tough
- AACC should continue to work closely with the AU to be a 'voice of the voiceless' on socio-economic injustices.
- Following the recent wave of revolution in Northern Africa, youths should be engaged to participate in politics in Africa despite issues of dictatorship, corruption etc. It is easier to be drawn to the economic sector however through determination, selflessness and integrity; the bedrock for good leadership is being laid and is much needed in Africa

#### 2.0 Empowerment and Migration issues

Coincidentally the centenary celebration of Women's day was celebrated on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March and partners along with AACC staff and guests had a wonderful service. The scriptural reading was Luke 10:38 – 42 and the female speaker mentioned the fact that Jesus referred to the home as that of Martha despite being a Jewess. Jesus disregarded tradition and saw Martha as the head of her household. She also said that Jesus commended Mary for choosing to be a student rather than working in the kitchen. This was a bold move on Mary's part since mostly men were disciples of Rabbis during that dispensation. She encouraged women to be bold in breaking stereotypes to make a difference for God and impact their societies.

AACC promotes women's empowerment, advocates for migrants' rights, speaks out on gender violence and trafficking issues. There is an estimated two million Chinese in Africa. Though there are many positive impacts following Chinese presence in Africa, there appear to be increasing grievances about the negative impact of Chinese migrants in Africa too with no forum to discuss socio-economic injustices e.g. procurement of large hectares of land to grow farm products exported exclusively to China whilst residents have no land to grow their own food crops. It was

suggested that AACC discuss such problems with the Chinese Christian Council which might be more effective than through official Chinese government bodies.



Youths celebrating Women's day at AACC



Guests celebrating women's day at AACC

### 3.0 Youth

A youth pastor was recently appointed at AACC following several years post vacancy. The major responsibility is promoting **ecumenism** among African youths which is a difficult task. Youth camps are planned and the importance of good interchurch relations promoted. Inviting the youth pastor to the European festival in 2012 would be a good idea as it would offer exchange of ideas, information, networking opportunity plus cross-cultural exposure.

### Visited MCB Mission Partners based at Abia State, Nigeria 11 - 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011

#### 2.0 The Methodist Church of Nigeria Motherless Babies Home, Uzuakoli, Nigeria

Mary Van der Corput is a MCB mission partner and project director of the Home since 2006. There are twelve staff members, five support staff (cook, driver, gardener, laundry and administrator) and seven paediatric nurses that care for the twenty seven young residents - 14 boys and 13 girls. Often few days old babies were brought for admission by relatives or community members after death of the mother. Sometimes the community met and appointed guardians for orphaned children with no known relative close by.

These children are cared for by staff until a maximum of three years of age after which each child is released back to its relative or guardian. Guardians or relatives are encouraged to visit regularly and bond with their wards whilst in residence. Where possible financial support is welcome for the child's welfare because the Motherless babies home gets very little government assistance. It relies heavily on donations from individuals, groups and Christian Organisations. The bulk of its income is spent on staff support to ensure 24 hours care for the babies and children and to procure food plus other necessities.



Mary Van de Corput = MCB mission partner in charge of Motherless Babies Home



MC Nigeria Health Secretary – Deaconess Ronke Oworu carrying one of the babies at the home

In 2009 three orphans were adopted by court orders, three discharged due to illness and three died. Dr Hans Van der Corput attended to the sick children and offered free medical care as and when required.

## 2.1 Achievements

- Staff toilets were renovated and a water tank capacity of 2000 gallons was installed using donations from Wesley Guild UK and Uzuakoli Support Group UK
- Methodist Women's Fellowships, the Catholic Women's Organisation, groups and individual donations helped finance the running of this home. Supporters also contributed materials and food items and visited the children in addition to the financial support, for these Mary is most grateful



Children's play area



Children admitted are between few days old until 3 years

## 2.2 Challenges

- The water supply is still very insufficient at the Children's home particularly in the dry season. Digging a borehole and pumping the water in a water tank would improve the situation and ensure the source of drinking water. However until funding is secured for this project, water from water tankers is being purchased when supplies are running short and is then rationed due to cost.
- As we know, babies feed mostly on milk as infants. Infant milk is expensive and on some occasions milk is purchased on credit to ensure the babies are fed. The uncertain security situation in Eastern Nigeria has resulted in less visitations and donations to the home therefore any support for the children's welfare and feeding would be much appreciated
- A regular budget would assist in planning and running the home efficiently and improve staff morale due to better job security. Unfortunately some children cannot be admitted due to limited resources and financial uncertainty. The annual budget to run MBH is estimated as £21,000

## 2.3 Conclusion

*James 1 verse 27 - Religion God accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress. Mary on behalf of staff and children of MBH, is grateful for the continued support from friends of the **Motherless Babies Home**. She said 'it is always wonderful to see the beautiful smiles of our babies and children oblivious of their situations and God remains faithful through thick and thin'. Therefore we are grateful for His mercies and pray that this year shall be better than the last.*

## Visit to Royal Cross Methodist Hospital Ugwuèkè, Abia State, Nigeria



Dr Hans Van der Corput – MCB mission partner  
at Royal Cross Hospital

**3.1** The Royal Cross Methodist Hospital is managed by the Methodist Church of Nigeria and supported by the Wesley Guild UK under its Nigerian Health Care Project. Since 2002 Dr Hans Van Corput a MCB mission partner has been working tirelessly at this Mission Hospital as patients travel from around the country and neighbouring West Africa countries for medical examination.

**3.2** Royal Cross Hospital is one of the few Mission Hospitals that breaks even despite its many challenges, this can be attributed to the very hardworking Chief Paul Okorie the Hospital Administrator. He is responsible for staff recruitment, service delivery and financial management. RCH provides detailed annual financial report for its supporters and the 2010 report reveals that the hospital is able to fund its running cost but requires support with infrastructural development projects such as expansion of wards, the purchase of a larger generator for the surgical theater etc and MCN has requested support from MCB.

**3.3** There are 63 employees excluding an Optometrist plus seven medical doctors three of which were posted by the government to work in the hospital. There is a high staff turnover due to heavy work load and lower remuneration in comparison with private clinics. Presentations of findings have been sent to the medical board for consideration. In 2010, 21 student nurses worked at the hospital for a month and short term placements for medical personnel are available at RCH. However providing accommodation for the 21 student nurses is a big challenge until funding is secured to build a few accommodation units on the premises.

**3.4** The Royal Cross was previously visited by the Wesley Guild team, Uzuakoli Support group UK, the Federal Minister for health, the Prelate of MC Nigeria and Ms Pat Griffiths a practicing theatre nurse in the UK who spent her sabbatical leave at the hospital and donated funds for the supply and installation of 13 wash hand basins in the thirteen wards.

**3.5** The annual report showed a very busy year with 30,355 out patients and 5495 in patients attended to in 2010. Child mortality rate was 18.28% however the medical team is working diligently to provide an affordable excellent service in the rural area. 311 gynaecological cases, 769 surgical cases and 121 urological cases were handled in the theatre in 2010.

**3.6** MC Nigeria requested for a medical doctor as a MCB mission partner who can work for at least 3 years whilst Dr Okoyi complete his surgical training. This would ease the workload for Hans since patients at the Beautiful Gate Hospital and Item Hospitals would not have to travel to RCH. Other doctors visit on part time basis as they are based in nearby towns and are paid by the government.]



Bunmi with Ros at Umuahia



Ward expansion at RCH – more funding needed

**4.0** Met with the Prelate of the Methodist Church Nigeria and other church officials in the Lagos Connexional office on Thursday 10 March 2011 and these points were raised at the meeting:

- The ongoing interfaith crises, situation update, activities of MCN and the possible role of MCB in preventing future flare ups
- Supporting other African Partner Churches in need of ministerial support e.g. MC Equatorial Guinea, MC Southern Africa etc
- Requested for fixed term MP medical practitioner whilst resident doctor - Dr Okoyi completes his 3 years in-service training in surgery
- MCN asked for continued funding support for Zonkwa Theological College located in Northern Nigeria (near the flashpoint area – Jos) to help train ministers from Northern Nigeria
- Appealed for the continuation of the SALT programme to train MCN leaders and ministers

Thank you.

*Great is our Lord and mighty in power, His understanding has no limit. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds....Psalms 147 verses 5 and 3*

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Africa Partnership Coordinator

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