

REPORT OF THE OVERSEAS COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2019

INTRODUCTION

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” Romans 10:13-15

Encouraging, supporting and resourcing our partners who are seeking to bring the good news of Jesus in spiritual and practical ways is very much a focus of the committee’s work. In recent years the breadth of support we have been able to provide, particularly with regard to financial support has narrowed considerably but we give God thanks for the people and projects that have benefited from our support.

TEARFUND / CAMBODIA

Our three year partnership with Tearfund, supporting the work of International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) began in August 2016 when a team visited Cambodia, to learn about ICCs work in remote villages employing a Bible based resource called Umoja, to train and equip local church leaders and facilitators to use the resources they have to help fight poverty, build relationships with their community and re-establish trust which was destroyed during the Pol Pot Regime.

The team then visited a number of congregations to speak of the work of ICC and of their visits to rural churches where they met with local pastors, facilitators and Umoja members who were all at different stages in the Umoja process.

Updates, providing encouraging stories of lives, churches and communities that have been changed or have benefited from participating in Umoja, have been available on Tearfund’s ‘Connected Church’ webpage and can be accessed by going to either of the following: <http://connected.tearfund.org/en/partners/icc/> or <http://connected.tearfund.org/en/partners/icc/blog/>

An update posted in October 2018 said, ‘We are always thankful to God for your financial support and prayers. Sometimes we can get discouraged working in such tough settings, but your faithfulness reminds us not to give up.

The update mentioned a visit to Somrong Khan Kert Village. “We visited this small village near the Vietnamese border earlier this month to follow up with and strengthen their church action plan which we helped them write earlier in the year. They want the plan to strengthen and empower church and community members to engage with community development themselves, rather than rely on outside help alone. Whilst we were with them we also led a bible study on how we can be God’s salt and light in the world. We are so happy to share that 50 people became Christians as a result of this and 25 of them got baptised by the local pastor. Praise God indeed! The village pastor and Umoja facilitators now have a

clear and encouraging plan for how to help church members and new Christians to work together to improve their community.”

We will likely never meet the people whose lives are being changed through the faithful work of those whom we are supporting, but we can rejoice in what God is doing to build his kingdom throughout the world.

This year, Mission Sunday focused on our partnership with International Cooperation Cambodia. In addition to the material that congregations received, the February /March edition of Stedfast contained a biographical article on Kagna Sorn. Kagna works as the Community Practitioner Coordinator for the Village Integrated Development Project, and is involved in resourcing and training local church leaders and facilitators in running Umoja within their church and community. It is hoped that her story helped readers gain an insight into Kagna’s life, background, coming to faith and a flavour of her work with ICC which we have helped to support.

It has been a real encouragement to ICC during the past year to have been able to translate the Umoja community development resource from Tearfund into a Cambodian specific context, resulting in communities being transformed across the country.

Our commitment as a denomination has been to raise £10,000 annually in support of ICC and the committee would like to express its appreciation to all who have given prayerful and financial support during this time and encourage you to continue with your support.

Our partnership with Tearfund and ICC was launched at the Dunblane Day in 2016 and it is hoped to mark the conclusion of the partnership at Dunblane Day 2019.

REROTLHE

For many years now, we as a denomination have supported the work of the Rerotlhe Day Care Centre, which is a programme supported by Flying Mission’s Care Ministry. The Centre serves the community of Seherelela and its surrounding cattle posts located in one of the poorest areas of Botswana. Set up in 2004 to reach out to orphaned and vulnerable children and families, who have been affected mainly by HIV/Aids, the centre continues to provide vital care and support for around 50 pre-school children aged 3 to 6 years, providing them with opportunities for education, health and life skills development, and enabling them to reach their full potential. The children are supported in their holistic development and have a safe and healthy place where they can play, discover, sing songs, and learn the alphabet and numbers as well as some basic English which is a crucial precondition for a smooth integration into primary school.

Rerotlhe’s feeding programme of breakfast and lunch ensures that the children get at least one healthy and nutritious meal a day as the majority of the benefiting families live in poverty.

During the last five years the building of a new pre-school facility funded by a grant of £19,000, from the US Embassy, has been underway. The construction of two classrooms and two storage rooms and toilet block was completed at the end of 2016 and by the end of 2018 the playground equipment had been relocated to the new site.

The next phase of construction includes the building of a kitchen and office. The foundations have been laid but no funds could be allocated so far for finishing the building. Thankfully, the delay in the construction of the Kitchen does not affect the classes or the feeding program since Rerotlhe is still allowed to use the kitchen at the Primary School which is close by.

After completing the construction and clearing the plot, Rerotlhe, started the licensing process as the new facility could not open until a licence was in place. Following this lengthy process to confirm that the pre-school facilities complied with current legislation, the licence was handed over to Rerotlhe on the 11th February 2019. Immediately after the licence was issued, 49 children were enrolled for two classes which they started attending on the 18th February 2019.

Due to the challenge of Donor funding, a meeting in January by members of the community together with the Village Development Committee and the Rerotlhe Trust agreed a small school fee should be introduced.

One of the ongoing challenges for Rerotlhe is their dependence on external donations. Flying Mission Care MC and the Rerotlhe trust are challenged to find ways to allocate local donors and supporters since donations from abroad are decreasing.

Flying Mission Care Ministries on behalf of Rerotlhe, has continually expressed their sincere gratitude to the United Free Church for being such a faithful supporter of this important project. There is a great need for a Day Care Centre in the remote area of Seherelela. It is the only opportunity for pre-school aged children to get basic education. The Head of the Primary School expressed his appreciation for Rerotlhe. He said that no one would prepare Seherelela's children for school if Rerotlhe would not do it.

BONGANI ORPHAN CARE PROGRAMME

The Bongani Orphan Care Programme started in 1998 as a response from the church in Zimbabwe to the devastating effect of HIV /AIDS, and their desire to show love and care to the growing numbers of orphaned and vulnerable children and elderly caregivers within the church and community who are orphaned by HIV and by other means.

The programme which began in Bulawayo, now runs in seven regions – Bulawayo, Hope Fountain, Dombodema, Lupane, Maphisa, Invathi and Zinvangeni, and has 1420 children in the programme which aims to care for and empower orphans in the church and community. Education and early childhood development are key to fulfilling their vision of caring, loving, training, and educating the children with whom they have contact.

The Committee has continued to provide funding for the post of Programme Co-ordinator Thelma Simela. In her latest update of the work Thelma mentioned some of the blessings and the challenges, they are currently facing.

The DAY CARE CENTRE serves children who are under five. The centre is non-profit making and helps children experience learning and play. Last year forty pupils graduated to formal school. This year, there are **nineteen children** attending the centre.

The PASS A GOAT PROJECT. The 'Pass a Goat Project', is a long term project where children are given a goat and when the goat has a kid the child passes it on to another family.

Bongani would like all families to have their own goats which would provide milk and could if necessary be sold to help with fees or whatever is needed. So far this project is going well with around four hundred goats involved in the project which will help to benefit the lives of the children.

The COMMUNITY BANKING PROJECT. Due to Zimbabwe's struggling economy where people are struggling to get basic goods, the community banking project has had to stop due to lack of money in the banks and caregivers having difficulty in re-stocking their stall. The little stock they are able to get, they continue to sell and make a small profit to help themselves.

A number of children have obtained certificates in various fields with several becoming teachers, nurses, accounts clerks and school receptionists, with many working continuing to support their families and the community at large.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING. Some children are sponsored by the Basic Educational Assistance Module (BEAM), and the goat, market garden and community banking projects have been helpful in meeting emergency needs. Achievements have included the forty day care pupils graduating to formal school; Vuyolwethu passing her second level at Monash University; and having two boys at Bulawayo Technical College doing an electrical course.

Children continue to receive Vocational training especially with the Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance Service, Bulawayo Technical College and West Gate Vocational Training Centre. The children are doing well in their training but while some are already working, others have migrated in search of work. Some of the other challenges they continue to face are; poverty, a lack of funding for some projects, the migration of young people to towns and other countries, and no rainfall for ploughing.

In appreciation of all the support given by the United Free Church, Thelma says, "Bongani will continue to serve the orphaned and vulnerable children even although we have challenges with our economy, we will still push until something happens. We appreciate the United Free Church of Scotland and its families for continuing to pray and support Bongani, and for the encouragement given to us throughout. May the good Lord continue to bless you all and may God bless the church."

PROJECT AND PARTNER FUNDING

The Committee greatly appreciates the thoughtfulness and commitment the Women's Home & Overseas Committee have given in their support once again of the wider work of our denomination. This year, their gifts of £3000 to the work of ICC's work in Cambodia; £3000 to the Bongani Orphan Care Programme in Zimbabwe; £500 to Flying Mission for the purchase of Bibles; and £100 as a Christmas Gift to each of our Mission Partners, have been an invaluable aid to the work carried out.

FUTURE WORK

Appreciative of the work being done by the Rerotle Day Care Centre and the Bongani Orphan Care Programme to improve the lives of children in Botswana and Zambia, the committee decided to maintain the support given to both projects to the end of 2019. Any future support for these projects can only be given with the help of our congregations.

With the limited resources available to the committee, prayerful consideration has been given as to where the focus of our support in the immediate future should be. Having met with representatives of two of our existing partner organisations, namely WEC and UFM, it became clear that we already have established links and relationships with partners whom we know and could support in both their existing and new mission work. These cover areas, such as care of children in rural settings, ministering to unreached people groups, immigrants, and refugees, and the work of Bible translation.

SCOTTISH CHURCHES' CHINA GROUP (SCCG)

The Committee receives regular updates on the work of the SCCG and continues to uphold in prayer Rev Patricia Johnston and the work of the SCCG. A summary of which follows.

'Scots in China' television documentary: In April 2018, the SCCG was selected to be part of a BBC-commissioned documentary that would look at the role of Scots in China's ongoing development.

The focus of the piece was the Palliative Care Ward and the development of a primary care (GP) system in Shengjing Hospital. Patricia Johnston was present and introduced the organisations work at the Hospital. Viewers will see a highly modern hospital but it is hoped that they will learn of the skills gap in the medical system with which the SCCG is helping. *[The Scots in China series was broadcast on BBC Two in January 2019.]*

International Conference in Tianjin: The SCCG was asked to provide an expert speaker who would address an international conference on end of life care for patients who have dementia. Dr Barbara Sharp, Policy & Research Advisor, Public Policy, Alzheimer Scotland, agreed to undertake this visit.

BTA 'Scoping Report': As partners request more staff capacity training, the SCCG has focussed its thinking around how to increase funding, both core and project based. Fundraising is not an easy task for any charity, however, there are additional issues faced by the SCCG as its work is based in China and it is faith based. Against this backdrop the Management Committee commissioned a 'Scoping Report' from BTA. The Report detailed a range of funders and grant makers who would, potentially, support many areas of our work.

Palliative Care Ward Spiritual Care Training: We facilitated Paul Graham's travel to Shengjing Hospital, Shenyang, in May, to run further Spiritual Care Training for staff working in the Palliative Care Ward.

Much of the work focused on how the staff can build resilience and ensure their own wellbeing. This is particularly important for staff working in a Chinese context where, for cultural reasons, a decision may have been taken by the family not to inform the patient of their prognosis. Doctors and nurses are then faced with trying to create an environment where the patient can have a 'good death' while colluding with the family silence. Processes such as Values Based Reflective Practice (VBRP) enable staff to discuss and work through the emotional impact of their role.

Rehabilitation Centre Training: This area of work requires much more development. Prof Zhang, Head of the Rehabilitation Centre, requested a Physiotherapist or Occupational

Therapist to spend up to a month at the Centre running some training workshops and case study sessions with Centre staff. Serious consideration was given to this but it was felt there was not the basic, foundational knowledge among Chinese staff to make this a productive placement. Currently, discussions are ongoing with Glasgow City College Occupational Therapy Department to try and identify an online training course.

GP Training Programme: The Chinese Government is encouraging hospitals to develop a primary care system to take some of the pressure off the acute care facilities. Currently, anyone requiring medical attention goes directly to hospital. In response to this directive, Shengjing Hospital asked the SCCG to help develop GP training services. The SCCG responded in two different ways:

- Marie Graham, a highly-experienced community-based specialist nurse, spent a week in Shenyang giving lectures and running a series of seminars for staff attached to the GP Training Unit.
- A Scholarship was offered to study for a Masters in Family Medicine at Edinburgh University.

The general understanding, among medics and wider Chinese society, is that a good medical student will specialise in a particular field of work and will then go and work in a large hospital. As a GP is not seen as being a specialist, they are viewed as being second-class doctors who are not good enough to work in any other field. This attitude is a real barrier to anyone wanting to become a GP.

Caritas Social Service Centre (CSSC), Community-based Spiritual Care: This project is now in its second year. Between 1 Oct 2017 to 30 June 2018, many families received support. Among them were middle-aged and elderly patients with terminal cancer and 14 children with leukemia. The majority of these families came from rural areas; all live in poverty.

The Amity Foundation Social Services Division: Jasmine Miller and the SCCG Advisor travelled to Nanjing to carry out an evaluation of three main projects:

- Support for staff working in the Amity Children's Development Centre (ACDC), a small unit for preschool and primary age children with additional needs.
- Support for staff working in the Amity Home of Blessings, a training centre for adults with learning difficulties.
- Training for staff working with elderly people, especially those living with dementia.

In a Chinese context there is, currently, little understanding of the issues faced by a child with additional needs, and their families. There is a belief that the child needs 'rehabilitation' (to be cured) before they can be integrated into mainstream services. As a result, a child with additional needs is not allowed to attend a mainstream kindergarten and is not encouraged to go to primary school. If they do, they must be accompanied, at all times, by a parent.

If staff are to provide an environment in which every child can develop to their full potential, they need to be highly trained. Professional training would also place staff in a better position to be 'influencers' as they address some of the perceptions within wider society as to the value and potential in every child. The SCCG has offered to fund a Scholarship to study for a Masters in Special Education and Inclusion.

Leeds University Project: Exploratory meetings have taken place between Dr Caroline Fielder (Leeds University), Jasmine Miller (Jasmine Miller Coaching) and the SCCG Advisor to look at a joint project that will focus on research and training based around the Amity Children's Development Centre (ACDC).

Care of the Elderly Services: Mairi Houldsworth, Care Co-ordinator and Dementia Champions Lead, University Hospital Hairmyres, spent six days, in Nanjing, evaluating Amity's Dementia Friend's Programme, running training seminars and offering support sessions to carers. Plans are already in place for a follow-up visit.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

The Committee decided, once again, to give a Christmas Gift of £250 to Mission Partners associated with the Denomination. This is not a large amount of money but it is a visible sign of our appreciation for the work in which they have been involved.

MISSION SECRETARY

Our Mission Secretary, Mrs Famie Crawford continues to ensure that both the committee and our congregations regularly receive prayer letters and updates on the work in which our Mission Partners are involved. She also helps produce and collate material for Mission Sunday.

Mission Sunday gives us all an opportunity to support the work our Mission Partners are involved in, to pray for them personally and for the Lord's blessing on their work and witness, and to think about how we can partner with them throughout the year. Mission Sunday 2019 focused on our partnership with International Cooperation Cambodia.

The committee is indebted to Mrs Crawford for her faithfulness in all that she does on behalf of the committee. If anyone would like to receive updates from our Mission Partners, please contact Famie and she can have these forwarded by email.

STUART AND JEAN MOULDS

The committee was saddened to hear of the death of Stuart Moulds, who with his wife, Jean, served with Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ (WEC), mainly in Indonesia during the last thirty seven years. We continue to support Jean in prayer as she continues to serve the Lord in Indonesia carrying on the work of mobilising and equipping the Church to reach their non-Christian neighbours.

CONCLUSION

The committee is, as always, deeply indebted to our General Secretary Rev John Fulton, and to Mrs Helena Jarvis for all the work they carry out on its behalf throughout the year. Their input, guidance and contributions are invaluable and so very much appreciated. We will miss John's wisdom and guidance, but wish him well in his retirement.

In the name of the Committee:-

GARY BARCLAY	Convener
DUNCAN WHITTY	Vice Convener
COLIN C BROWN	Clerk