

Makeni Ecumenical Centre 2020 News

The year 2020 has ended and 2021 has come. Everyone is aware that 2020 was a difficult year, with many challenges that are in a way still with us. The major challenge has been and is the coronavirus pandemic. The disease has affected every country in the world and has created difficulties in our social, spiritual, and economic spheres.

As an institution, we have areas of our operations that have been affected badly, just like many other organizations. It has been difficult to operate as normal because of the restrictions necessitated by the advent of the coronavirus in March 2020.

School

Our school, like many other schools, was affected in the sense that schools were closed, and no pupil was allowed to attend. For private schools like ours this meant that no income was received in terms of school fees. Only those in Examination classes were allowed to attend. For Makeni Centre School, this meant a very reduced income since the number of pupils in Examination classes was lower than those in non-examination classes.



We tried to encourage parents to send their children who were in non-examination classes to school for learning, but it did not help. Many parents were scared their children would catch the disease. We then resorted to giving the pupils printed lessons to do at home and asked them to pay fees according to the number of days they received the lessons. This arrangement helped a bit receiving a bit of money for our operations. Here we thank the Friends of Makeni in the Netherlands for their financial help. They donated funds to Makeni Centre to purchase a new Canon photocopying machine which has been working very well. We were able to photocopy lessons for pupils, which they carried home to study. Those in the examination classes paid school fees in full and in September 2020, the government allowed schools to reopen.

The resumption of classes did not change our financial situation much, as most pupils could not afford to pay their school fees due to economic challenges their parents were experiencing, as most of them had lost employment.

As you may be aware, Makeni Centre school is an Examination Centre for Grade 7, 9 and 12. We have a number of schools that are using our school for their final examinations. Using Makeni Centre School as an examination centre has helped us in advertising the school. We are confident that some of the pupils that sat for their examination here may want to continue their education at our school.

During the period of the examinations, we had to adhere to the restrictions which the Ministry of Education put in place, which meant that we needed more space. Every classroom and building was used during lessons and examinations and we had to find extra seating for the children. The school managed to conduct the end of year examinations for all classes very well.

We are happy that government has decided to reopen schools. This is not only because we need income but, by not opening the schools, Zambia would have a generation of uneducated children and a confused school calendar. We also feel that children are safer at school than at home, where most parents are absent most times.



We are grateful to the Busy Lizzies of Flanders for the donation they made of the School bus. Since the school acquired the bus, we have seen our pupils motivated and eager to come to school to learn. The parents have also appreciated the arrangement because the children are picked up and dropped near their homes and they are safe and fresh. The challenge we have now is that the number of

the children wanting to use the school bus has increased to 72 and the capacity of the bus is only 30. If they are small children, the bus can take up to 45 per trip. The distances being covered are also long for one bus to cover.

The solution to this challenge is either limit the number of those to use the bus or acquire another bus. We are engaging the parents to see if we can come up with a plan to raise K295,000 (about £10,000) for another bus. We would appreciate if partners and donors can come in to help in this matter.



Meanwhile we also said a fond farewell to Mrs Dil, who has relocated to England, although we are sure she will be back to visit again. The centre held a day of celebration that was very well attended. Here you can see pupils singing during the occasion.

St Nicholas Orphanage

For the SNO, life for the children did not change much except for their learning, which was interrupted in the same way as for other children. They stayed in the orphanage and managed to do their schedules according to the programme that was set by those in charge.

The children in non-examination classes sat the end of year examinations in the last week of November 2020 and received their results on 4th December 2020. The academic performance of the SNO children for term 2 (September -December 2020) was averagely good. As term one begins again, the orphanage will have only twelve children. This is because four children – Maybin, Esnart, Gift and Brenda – have completed their Grade 12 and are waiting for their results before they go to tertiary education. Life for the SNO children is usually difficult when they leave the orphanage and even when they complete tertiary education. It is difficult for them to get a job. Currently we have Adam here with us, who is doing piece work to earn some money for himself. Some of those who completed their tertiary education have not found employment yet.

Workshop attendance

From 18th to 20th November 2020, two members of staff, Ms Julian Mumba and Mrs Catherine Oreta, from SNO attended a workshop at Mika Convention Centre organized by an organization called [Alliance for Children Everywhere in Zambia](#). The three-day workshop was on Trauma and Reintegration. The topics covered were “Understanding trauma and how it impacts different age groups in different ways”, and “Family reunification”. The Zambian government is now keen to have children in Children’s Facilities reunited with their families. Makeni Centre is cooperating with the

Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare in this task. Nevertheless, we want to continue helping the most vulnerable children in our society, especially the orphans, since this is our mission.



We are also working hard to see that the children we look after here at SNO are groomed to be leaders in society in one way or the other. This is the reason we sent four children from the orphanage and two children from the school to attend a four-day workshop on Adaptive Leadership from 8th to 11th December 2020. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Health and the children from the SNO who attended were Maybin Hachipito, Esnart Tembo, Blessing Banda and Robert Tembo.

From the school we had Dimitra Makota and Emmanuel Musaba. They were accompanied by Ms Julian Mumba (Matron) and Mr Joseph Longwani (Headteacher). The purpose of the workshop was to hear views of both young people and parents on why there is so much increase in the HIV prevalence among the adolescents. The workshop identified the following causes for so much increase in HIV prevalence among adolescents:

- peer pressure or group influence,
- parents not having quality time to talk with their children on matters of HIV and sexuality,
- poor parenting skills,
- bad dressing.

But who is to blame? Children do not listen to their parents' advice and parents don't have time for their children. And what should be the parents' role? Parents should make time for their children and correct their bad behaviours always.

The recommendation of the workshop was that parents and elders in society should always be responsible for educating children about HIV and its dangers.

Settlement Villages

In the last three years, Makeni Ecumenical Centre has done very little work in the settlement villages. The reason is that the people are no longer dependent on the Centre for their living. Nearly every settler is now independent. The only major task MEC has now is to help the settlers get important social amenities such as clean water, health posts and good schools. We work on this with other like-minded organizations. Right now, we are working with the Ministry of Lands, Environment and Natural Resources to see if the settlers can be given Title Deeds. It is a mammoth task and requires financial resources. The land or villages must be resurveyed and verified, and maps must be made. These tasks have to be paid for. As of 2020 each settler was supposed to have paid a minimum of K13,000 (£425) to get a Title Deed, which is money they do not have. We are engaging the Ministry to see if there is a cheaper way of getting deeds for the settlers.

Most settlers are doing well in that they are utilizing the land and producing crops for food and for sale. This year most settlers have cultivated big pieces of their lands and have received agricultural inputs early from government, which they have used so that they get a better yield. I visited some settlement villages, and this is what I saw.



Momboshi Health Post



The construction of Momboshi Health Post is almost complete. The Ministry of Health has even identified medical staff to be stationed at the Health Post by March 2021.

The Ministry of Health through the Provincial Medical Officer is working with the local health committee at Momboshi to see that all the necessary items are in place. The contractor is constantly at the site to make sure that nothing is damaged before the handover.

The photographs to the left show the complete clinic building and its reception area. Below is the incinerator, and one of the three toilets under construction last year.



Below you can see a staff house at Momboshi Clinic, with solar panels on the roof, and a water tank that will supply the clinic.



Administration

From March 2020 until now we have had a challenge in terms of fulfilling our programmes. We have been unable to meet as a full Board of the Makeni Centre due to COVID-19. This means that many things had to be done in a different way, what they are calling a 'new normal'. We had planned to start a fish-farming project to generate income, but we have had to halt this until after the rainy season, always hoping the situation with COVID-19 will improve.

We have now acquired a point-of-sale machine to help us in the task of revenue collection, receipting and accounting. We now have printed receipts and invoices instead of handwritten ones, which is susceptible to fraud. We are also working on the issue of acquiring Title Deeds for the land in Mkushi for Makeni Centre and for settlers in the settlement villages. This is a challenging task considering the period we are in when offices are not operating normally.

Appreciation

The administration of Makeni Centre would like to thank all those that have supported us in 2020. Without your support our task would have been very difficult. We thank the Busy Lizzies of Flanders (Belgium), the Friends of Makeni in the Netherlands, African Aids Angels in Canada, Kloosterkerk in the Netherlands, St John the Baptist Church in Piddington, Little St Mary's Church in Cambridge, Pearl Foundation in the Netherlands, Reinhold Tournicourt of Flanders, Belgium; and Mr Driane of a foundation in the Netherlands.

We wish you all God's blessings as you continue doing this noble work of uplifting the living standards of many needy people of our society by providing financial and material support. We remain grateful to you.

Makeni Ecumenical Centre