



We Are Witnesses: The African Church and Governance

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Introduction

by Bruce Campbell-Janz

The title of this issue of the Peace Office Newsletter references a quotation made by Archbishop Palolino Lukudo in October 2010 in the lead-up to the January 2011 referendum on secession in Sudan. Archbishop Lukudo was asked to provide closing remarks to a gathering—called Kajiko II—in Juba to a meeting in which the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) called the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) for conversation about the necessity for a peaceful future of an independent nation of South Sudan. Archbishop Lukudo's words—'Your church is alive and well. We are here. We are witnesses.'—are a powerful reminder of the power of the Christian church in being a relevant presence in governance processes across the African continent.

As many African nations have moved into a new era of regular election cycles while celebrating a wave of 50 year independence commemorations of throwing off the colonial yoke, the 'messiness' of nascent democracies has had a direct impact on the lives of millions. Over the past two years, nearly twenty African nations have faced national elections. In some cases, significant unrest has accompanied these processes while at the same time new openness and change is being experienced in nations across the continent. In the coming year, major election and other governance processes are looming in countries that have recently faced significant challenges in a move toward democratic systems and finding space for the voices of the people to influence their nations. Two of the most significant up-coming processes are national elections in Kenya early in 2013

and an eventual constitutional referendum and national elections in Zimbabwe.

MCC has put a priority on supporting significant capacity building in peace processes for partner groups. This has included sending partner staff from across the continent to several training institutes on the African continent. This list includes the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) in Ghana, the Great Lakes Peace Institute (GLPI) in Burundi, NPI-Africa in Kenya, the Africa Peacebuilding Institute (API) in Zambia, and Reconcile in Sudan. Peacebuilding training deeply rooted in the African context has impacted many lives and peace work in many countries. In addition, MCC has sent partners and staff for training to the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP) at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in the U.S. and the Canadian School of Peacebuilding (CSOP) at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Canada. MCC is also working on connections to a peace training centre in Mozambique called JustaPaz. Equipping local church leaders and grassroots advocates to engage issues of relevance in their communities is critical as it is clear that years of preparation are what lay at the foundation of meaningful engagement by the church and other faith-based groups in working toward peaceful governance 'miracles' across the continent.

MCC has also walked with partner groups in equipping them to engage issues of peace and justice in their contexts—contexts profoundly impacted by elections and governance processes in many instances—through exchanges

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and learning from each other. You can read below of the experience of a 2007 exchange facilitated by MCC between the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) and the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC). In addition, in 2010 MCC was able to facilitate an exchange called the Africa Peacebuilding Learning Exchange (APLE) in which participants from D.R. Congo, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Canada, and the U.S. travelled together in all of those countries (except D.R. Congo) to connect with local issues related to governance and grassroots advocacy and to learn from each other as peace practitioners in faith-based institutions.

Looming governance processes in Zimbabwe and Kenya are cause for significant concern and, therefore, calls for significant engagement. Zimbabwe's 'arranged government' has continued to struggle since being put in place 3 years ago. As Zimbabwe lurches toward the approval of a new constitution through a referendum and followed by national elections, groups like Habakkuk Trust continue to work for just and peaceful processes. During the spasm of election-related violence in Kenya at the very beginning of 2008, a group came together there called Concerned Citizens for Peace. This group—a diverse group of those working for peace in the face of acute violence—documented their work after the violence subsided in a short book called *'Citizens in Action: Making Peace in the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya—2008'*. One of the Learning Points identified out of this process in Kenya was the critical contribution of an 'inclusive web of improbable, strategic actors'. The

Christian church across the broad African continent is finding itself more-and-more in the place of a key and strategic actor in working to ensure that communities are not victimized by powerful people, powerful institutions, and powerful processes but rather become actors in preventive action and a just future.

The broad array of articles here touches on countries across the continent from Nigeria to Uganda and Congo to Sudan. The articles touch on issues ranging from gender to religion. The authors represent both MCC partners and MCC staff on the African continent. All of them speak to passionate people and institutions—most critically the church and other faith-based groups—that engage in working for God's kingdom of peace and justice in the face of the worldly realms of governance processes and national elections. And, in the end, we are reminded again by Sudanese Archbishop Lukudo that 'Your church is alive and well. We are here. We are witnesses'. And, indeed, African churches and faith-based groups are not just witnesses but also key actors—alive and well—in the struggle for life in abundance for all of God's children across the African continent. MCC is privileged in walking alongside, in the name of Christ, these committed sisters-and-brothers who breathe life into churches relevant to their local contexts across the African continent.

Bruce Campbell-Janzen was the MCC Africa Area Director from May 2006–December 2011 and is currently working as the MCC East Coast Executive Director.

Elections in Nigeria: Challenges of the Church's involvement and inter-faith polarization

by Gopar Tapkida

Religious manipulation in Nigeria is better pictured through the metaphor of potential swimmers, who like the politicians seeking elected positions, advance toward an ocean intending to swim across it. Each politician fervently tries to convince the crowd of voters standing at the shore of his or her capability to lead them safely across the mass of terrifying water to the other side where a life of superior quality awaits, only if they are voted to power. But the politi-

cians have their limitations. They may be ignorant of their limitations, or they may deliberately refuse to admit to them.

The politicians' shortcomings are many. First, they do not know how to swim. Second, they do not know the depth of the ocean. Third, they do not know its width. And fourth, they do not know the strength of the waves. They manipulated the crowd on the basis of identity and got voted into power at last, and jumped into the ocean

of leadership. That is when they quickly discovered weaknesses and anxiously began to look for floaters to keep them from sinking. They turned to the crowd again, hoping to find a solution for survival. Identity further becomes a platform that the elected officials manipulate to remain in power. Of course, such leaders and their communities cannot progress, only tread water, so eventually sink. A leader that lacks vision will ultimately drift with the waves.

The popular definition of democracy as 'government of the people, for the people, and by the people' has apparently become a mirage in Africa. Unarguably, democracy is a government of the people, but the question is whether it is really by the people and for the people. Where election is not credible, transparent, participatory and inclusive, it denies people the right to vote and the right to free and fair elections, and that nullifies an important part of democracy.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed about a dozen elections. However, as in most parts of Africa, the principle of democracy has not been allowed to blossom, as several factors negate the processes of what could be considered fair elections.

In 1999, at the re-emergence of democracy in Nigeria, people wondered if the country was ready to conduct an election. Bishop Matthew Hassan Kuka of Sokoto described the transition as a "muted fraudulent strategic repositioning by a ruling class that had run out of moral options." This vividly points out that the election was completely marred, and that seemingly set a precedent for future elections in the country.

Election is defined as the competition for people's votes. The key concept of election is choice; this means choosing out of free will, from among several available options, that which is good. It should then be a happy event, due to the fact that it provides a healthy opportunity for one to exercise his or her franchise. On the contrary, election processes are often fraught with disputes and violence leading to the emergence of unpopular candidates. The electorates who thought to have elected credible leaders of their choice often suffered disenfranchisement.

Amazingly, the 2011 elections in Nigeria showed some significant improvements and I believe the following factors were responsible:

First, before now Christians in Nigeria regarded politics as a dirty game. They did not see any need to take part in politics or vote. Now, it's as if Christians have realized

that democracy is a game of numbers and the church has decided to carry out its civic responsibility by encouraging its members to participate in all political activities such as voting. Political awareness began to take place in Sunday services, Sunday schools, mid-week prayers, Bible studies as well as in church-owned schools. As a result, Christian politicians felt it might be possible to bring transformation to the country. Second, both local and international churches and NGOs sponsored and/or participated in elections' monitoring. This increased citizens' participation thereby decreasing rigging and fraud, as more eyes were on every stage of the electoral processes.

Third, the electoral mechanism was adopted. The credibility of staff of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was deemed excellent for the first time in the history of the country. The use of electronic capturing machines added a high degree of transparency in the electoral system. Though the score was not perfect, it minimized electoral rigging and malpractices significantly.

Finally, the incumbent, President Goodluck Jonathan who was also a presidential contestant, played an important role in the credibility of the elections. He repeatedly stressed that nobody should rig the election on his behalf. He stressed that his political ambition and that of his opponents was "not worth the blood of any Nigerian." Such an outlook contrasted with the often vilified 'do-or-die' posture of previous elections.

Yes, Nigerians should congratulate themselves for the outstanding feat in the 2011 elections. However, the implications of church involvement in the elections call for serious examination.

First, the involvement of the church exposes it to political manipulation. Christian politicians may view the church as vulnerable and manipulate it for their selfish ambition. When they gain power, they may end up committing more atrocities than their other counterparts.

Second, while church involvement in the elections did change the course of elections in Nigeria, it also increased friction between Christianity and Islam. If it is not checked, a deepened polarity may arise between the two main religions in the country.

Third, despite the 2011 elections being proclaimed the most free, fair and credible election ever conducted by the church, local and international elections' observers, most people were stunned by the post-election

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Cell Phones and Hate Speech

The violence that erupted following the 2007 elections in Kenya, taking 1,300 lives and displacing over 800,000 people, shocked many Kenyans. Political actors were able to mobilize ethnic groups not only for votes, but also for violence.

In response, some Kenyans looked to the burgeoning cell-phone technology for tools to prevent further violence. One of these persons was Ory Okolloh, a Kenyan lawyer and activist. She helped to create Ushahidi (Swahili for “witness”), a web platform that uses text messages, twitter and email to collect ordinary peoples’ information about what is happening and map the spread of violence. Ushahidi now has gone global, and has been used not only for tracking social unrest but also for mapping disasters and disaster response.

When Kenya faced a referendum on the new constitution in August 2010, many were worried about the potential for renewed violence. This was the first time Kenyans would go back to the polls, and there were vocal divisions among politicians and other leaders, including church leaders, about the constitution.

The response was to develop a network to combat hate speech using cell phones, which are ubiquitous in Kenya. All the cell phone companies agreed to provide one number that anyone (using any of the providers) could text, at no cost, to report hate speech. The number was widely advertised. Messages went into a central clearing house that linked to the police, who were ready to respond quickly. If you heard a politician at a rally condemn another ethnic group in a way that could be called “hate speech,” you had only to send a message and within a short time—at times even before the rally ended—there would be a police response. The network reported receiving over 1,000 messages about hate speech, and the rapid response prevented crowds being stirred up to violent action. The referendum happened peacefully, partly thanks to this pro-active and creative use of ordinary phone networks.

violence that claimed several lives and destroyed property. This explicitly reveals the wide division that exists between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. One might speculate that the results of the elections did underscore the gradual ascent of equity in Nigeria’s politicking, but forced violent reaction from some political oligarchy.

It is worthwhile to conclude by recalling the union between the ancient Greek State and the church during the time of St. Augustine.

However, in a plural state like Nigeria, a separation is expedient, but that does not bar the church from getting involved and participating in political activities. The church shall hold it as a duty to ensure elected officers fulfill their mandates as well as prevail on Christian politicians to exhibit the attributes of love, humility, truth, peace and justice.

Gopar Tapkida is MCC Central and West Africa Regional Peace Advisor.

Holding the cork to election violence in Uganda

by David Otim

Uganda has conducted only a handful of presidential elections since becoming independent in 1962. But Uganda has had nine presidents—more than any country in the region. Some regimes are lasting a quarter of a century, and still counting, while others never celebrated their first birthday.

Ugandans prepared for the February 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections, aware of three negative factors: a history of fraudulent and violent electoral processes that spurred on identity-based behavior; rampant in-fighting among political and religious institutions; and increased arrests of journalists and closure/cautioning of media houses. An additional factor was rather peripheral—the fact that Kenya had witnessed electoral violence recently. The ‘talk around town’ among the ordinary Ugandan was full of lament and anxiety. Meanwhile the political groups busied with designing partisan rhetoric aroused tribalism tendencies and traditional enmities.

MCC Uganda has strong peace, church and inter-faith partners who work with local communities. MCC therefore has ‘its ear to the ground.’ During an external program review exercise for MCC Uganda in 2008, several partners revealed that MCC is strong at connecting people. Several Ugandans spoke about the lament and anxiety that was growing as Uganda approached 2011 elections, and urged MCC Uganda to use that strength—of connecting people—to convene practitioners of peacebuilding and reconcili-

ation in Uganda. Gann Herman, the then MCC co-representative, concurred that such a deed would be a noble task within MCC’s ability. In a statement during a brainstorming conversation in 2009, she remarked, “We cannot wait, as civil society did in 2006, until a few months preceding national elections. Now is the time to prepare our communities to understand the context in which they are, in order for them to act on a vision for a peaceful Uganda.” MCC Uganda began to create space for peace-loving Ugandans to brainstorm and learn more about the Ugandan context. The initial aim for this was to get the context right, and generate adequate information to engage different actors (religious, political, cultural, academic, business, media, etc.) in conflict analysis. In one such brainstorming session with a group of MCC advisors, coming from different locations of Uganda, we got a sense that Ugandans everywhere might actually have similar concerns. Three people who lived in different locations of Uganda were asked: *What do you see in your local area regarding violence prompted by perceived differences in identity?*

Jessica Okello (Kampala, Central) shared: “Radio talk shows magnify small things, or give the extremists’ views a hearing, and the moderates have no voice. Newspaper editors too, make big headlines out of small matters.” Romano Longole (Karamoja, North-east) said: “Information becomes more critical and those who don’t want the info to be exposed will block the radios. Those who

talk on radio do have important info sometimes—closing radios can silence the truth.” Rev. Rose Kaheeru (Bunyoro, West) commented: *“In Bunyoro I hear divisive media messages; and news reporters and editors often make small things appear big and thus raise fear in the population.”*

These similar observations revealed something to us. We wondered if there were any programs being designed based on honest listening to the concerns coming out of the population. We thought perhaps we did not need to design any new project, but only be the ear and the conduit of information for others. How about going around the country, to listen to what is going on? I could not find the right ‘peace words’ to describe what we wanted to do, so I called it a ‘listening project.’

I became excited about the country-wide listening idea, but now I needed a ‘listening team.’ Sam Eibu, Leo Mmerewoma, Evelyn Mayanja and Johan Lorenzen—all active community persons—became excited too. We set out, taking a few days in major regions, listening to Ugandans. The key question was deliberately active: What do you see, hear, and feel that will affect a peaceful electoral process in our country? Do you suggest any remedy to these concerns?

After three months, we were back with our ears full. Then what? Rather than close myself in a room and later emerge with a good publication to my name, I invited 20 people working on conflict in different locations of Uganda to come together to analyze the information collected. After two days of analysis, we seemed to hear some unanimous concerns from Ugandans, these included:

- **Militarization of Politics**—Proliferation of security agencies in the country; there were over 20 active paramilitary groups. The police institution itself was using more than 10 uniforms, and Ugandans feared that during elections criminal groups could take advantage of a myriad of military gear, and Ugandans would not tell the difference.
- **Youth Unemployment**—Thousands of young people are idle and available around the country. These groups can easily be mobilized for action, and can be procured cheaply.

- **Commercialization of Politics**—There were no clear mechanisms to mitigate corruption of elections. There were so many cases in the Constitutional Court of candidates buying voter loyalty.
- **Credibility of the Electoral Commission and Process**—There was skepticism about Electoral Commission credibility, fairness and reliability since the re-appointment of the chairman whom the opposition groups accused of bias.

There was a risk at this point. Listening had exposed concerns that needed action, but we did not have a plan address these concerns. However, Bishop Zac Niringiye, of Kampala Diocese (Anglican), who had attended the analysis workshop, took these concerns to the relevant institutions. One day I received an invitation to attend a dialogue in which these issues were being discussed, and Bishop Zac was the moderator. He invited me to share key insights from the listening project with an audience that comprised the Electoral Commission, the police, National planning authority, UNDP, civil society actors and the media. I presented the key concerns as we had listened, and all of them were discussed with keen interest around the room. During the actual presidential campaigns Bishop Zac had the opportunity to meet most of the presidential candidates individually to dissuade them from inciting violence. Once in a while I would get a phone call from him, to touch base on how things were going and we would talk again about one or two of the key concerns. In the weeks leading up to the actual elections, I noticed a few other actors picking up some of the issues for advocacy for peaceful elections.

It is important to note that Uganda’s elections in the end were generally peaceful; although I must quickly say that it is impossible to put a measure of contribution of our effort. It was never our intention to give opinion on the outcome of the election, but to make sure that whatever the outcome of the poll, violence had no place in our society.

David Otim is Program Officer for MCC Uganda.

Democracy does not kill people, demonstrations do . . .

Demonstrations do not equal democracy. Certainly not here in Uganda! Not even in Egypt, Syria or Libya. In a democracy people are not killed, but demonstrations in these contexts kill dozens and thousands. In Uganda, since February 2011, we have seen more demonstrations than we have in our entire history; and in the same period the democracy meter is at its lowest reading. A 2-year-old baby was shot dead while the police officer was hunting down a demonstrator. The president of Uganda is pushing for a law to deny bail to individuals caught in illegal demonstrations. In two years the police in Uganda have acknowledged only one demonstration as legal—one where a group of women activists marched to a hospital to visit the sick. Police pressed treason charges on a dozen Ugandans for planning a peaceful demonstration, popularly known as “Walk to Work.” Democracy and demonstrations—how can the two possibly come together in Africa?

—David Otim, Program Officer for MCC Uganda

Interview with Tatiana Ndjoko

Tatiana Ndjoko grew up in the Mennonite Brethren Church in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Always active in church, particularly in youth and children's ministries, she graduated from the University Center for Missiology in Kinshasa in 2008. She is an ordained minister in the Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo. As part of her seminary focus on teaching peace to children, Tatiana attended the West African Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) in Accra, Ghana, sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee. Wanting to use what she had learned at the WAPI trainings, Tatiana started, and serves as president of, an organization called the Center for Training Children in the Culture of Peace (CEECP). The Center organizes an annual peace camp during school holidays in July, has started peace clubs in churches and schools, and organizes special events.

In mid-2011, with national elections approaching, the members of CEECP and the children they work with wanted to do something to learn about the election process and to encourage political candidates and leaders to hold peaceful elections. Tatiana described the "Message of Peace" project in the following words (translated from French):

"The children who participate in CEECP activities know that when there are elections there is often violence, between people from different political parties, between people from different regions, and from the police and military as they try to maintain order. They also know that children are always among the victims of the violence that erupts at election time.

The youth and children in the CEECP groups wanted to do something, wanted to tell their leaders how badly they want to live in a peaceful country. They said, "We can't vote. What can we do? We can sing!" Whom did they want to sing to? The current political leaders and the presidential and legislative candidates who were campaigning. And what would they want their songs to say? "Don't make violence in Congo!"

The contribution of the church to peaceful elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo

by Rose Lala Biasima

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) recently experienced its second presidential and legislative elections, on 28 November 2011. Eighty-five percent of the costs of these elections were paid by the DRC itself.

For a democracy that is still very fragile in a post-conflict country, these elections presented a major challenge to peace and stability in the DRC.

[In mid-2011], in the face of the danger that was looming on the horizon, several organizations and the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC)—the national council of Protestant churches—sought together ways and means to help the elections take place under the best possible conditions. Among other activities, we can point out these:

The leaders of the national interfaith committee made a declaration to political leaders, calling for peaceful elections. This declaration was presented to all the leaders of the political parties, to the Independent Electoral Commission, and to all the embassies in Kinshasa. The international organization World Vision, also seeing danger ahead, developed a series of consultations with church leaders, politicians and civil society, to discuss strategies that could help the elections take place in peaceful conditions.

For the churches, it was a question of knowing what role the churches could play in light of the expectations of the voters that the elections would be peaceful. What could the churches do before, during and after the elections? These discussions led to the formation of a mediation committee made up of representatives from churches, civil society, and groups planning to observe and monitor the elections.

Protestant women did not sit on the sidelines during the search for ways to have peaceful elections in the DRC. Two workshops were organized by the Women and Family Department (DFF) of the ECC. One focused on "governance and peace, challenges for the churches in the DRC." The other focused on accompanying women through the electoral process in the DRC. Both workshops were organized with funds from the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). These workshops were designed for women leaders in ECC member churches, and for women who were candidates, from all the different political parties. The Protestant women closed this series of activities that focused on the search for peace in DRC with a week of prayer for peaceful elections in DRC. The week ended on 28 October 2011 with a prayer service at the Centenary Protestant Cathedral. The theme of the service was "Whatever you do, whether you speak or act, do it for God's glory." (Colossians 3:17) Before the prayer service, 3,500 women marched from downtown Kinshasa to the Centenary Protestant Cathedral with banners asking those who were involved in political campaigns to do all they could to help the elections be peaceful, and to avoid shedding the blood of innocent people. Some banners asked God to give the DRC peace.

Now that the President of the DRC has been sworn in for a new term, and in light of all the tensions that were part of the electoral process—especially on the day when provisional results were announced—and in light of the calm that has now returned to the city of Kinshasa, we thank God for answering our prayers and we believe that God, who has never done anything half way, will work for a lasting peace in the DRC.

Rose Lala Biasima is the President of the National Federation of Protestant Women of the DRC and Member of Parliament (Deputy) of DRC.

Waiting for freedom to be born

by Kaitlyn Jantzi

Nyantoc is a friend of mine. She is a member of St. Monica's Women's group in Rumbek; one of the groups I work alongside and the one where my office is housed. A few months before South Sudan's first independence day she came into my office to say hello, and our conversation inevitably found its way to July 9th, the day when South Sudan would become its own country. Nyantoc said:

"We have been pregnant for a long time. We have been waiting for this child, Freedom, to be born . . . When we were pregnant we dreamed of this baby. We dreamed of who this baby would grow up to be. We labored for a long time pushing, pushing, and then the baby was born. It is a beautiful big baby. But now if we don't pay attention to our baby it will die. We need to care for the baby; we need to protect our child. We need to teach our child to love, and not to revenge. Our child doesn't need to revenge [sic] or hatred, our child needs forgiveness and compassion."

If pregnancy is our metaphor, the gestation period of baby South Sudan has been about six years. When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005, when this document ended the 'hot war' of 22 years, it held within it the possibility of South Sudan's eventual independence. The referendum vote took place in January 2011. People in South and North Sudan as well as the diasporas voted on whether or not to become an independent nation. The vote came in overwhelmingly for yes; by all accounts over 90 percent of those who voted, voted for secession. On July 9th South Sudan became its own country. On July 9th I sat in Juba, the newest capital of the newest country and saw fireworks. The fireworks were more beautiful than any I had ever seen before because at first when we heard the noise, the blasts loud and close, I thought it was bombs. I thought it was finally happening; the rumors were true and the war was starting again.

Before independence there were rumors, before the referendum vote there were rumors: The North would never let the referendum occur in peace, the people of the south would never overcome all of the incredible logistical hurdles, the vote wouldn't happen on time, the people

wouldn't understand what they were voting for, there would be corruption, false registration, violence to stop registration, violence to stop voting, violence that takes advantage of the rumors of violence. There were rumors.

As the reality of the impending referendum sunk in, the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek, an MCC partner, was involved in a prayer campaign called "101 Days of Prayer for Peace." This campaign called on Catholic churches across North and South Sudan to dance, sing, hope, and pray for the future. The message was forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the same way another MCC partner, the Sudan Council of Churches, engaged local Peace Mobilizers who worked on community sensitization. There were events and church gatherings focused on civic education. The Peace Mobilizers formed local peace committees that emphasized community cooperation across ethnic lines during the time of the vote.

In these ways 101 days passed and despite rumors, despite enormous logistical challenges, the referendum came. Peace Mobilizers and Regional Peace Officers monitored the voting process directly at the polling centers. National staff working with the Peace Mobilizer project regularly conducted both national and international advocacy visits. The vote was held, the ballots were counted, the results announced, and the whole event was an internationally recognized peaceful success.

This success was a hope we held onto lightly, afraid to hold too tightly, to hope too strongly. We still heard the rumors, read the papers and the analyses; we weren't yet out of those proverbial woods. Even still, walking in those woods, with wolves of different names believed to be behind every tree, people started to consider that maybe prayer worked. Maybe, just maybe, we could tempt the fates again, hold a little tighter to hope and see this secession through.

Ten weeks before July 9th the Diocese of Rumbek started another prayer campaign called '10 steps to Unity in South Sudan.' It was based on prayerful reflection of forgiveness, solidarity, peace, and human rights. It brought together groups of women, youth,

Interview with Tatiana Ndjoko (continued)

With the help of a local musician, and the participation of a young woman from the peace camp who is a very good singer, the children wrote a song and made it into a video entitled "Don't do violence in Congo!" The video shows scenes of actual street violence in the DRC during election times, and of children suffering as a result of that violence. Then through lively song and dance the children themselves call on political leaders and candidates: "Don't do that here!" The video includes photos of the 11 presidential candidates; the children address them through song: "Children need peace. Don't do violence."

The children and I visited five television stations to introduce the video and our message. One of the stations accepted the video and played it many times on the local station. It was very exciting for the children to see themselves on TV!

On November 25, just three days before the elections, the youth and children from CEECP held a small demonstration in Kinshasa. They all wore t-shirts that said "work for peaceful elections," and staged a peaceful march. They knew that many youth were getting text messages saying, "We are going to pillage the city if our candidate does not win," and they wanted to encourage their friends to remain peaceful even if their preferred party would lose.

I believe that television is an excellent way to teach peace to children and young people. Music is an excellent medium for teaching peace, because children listen, learn and internalize the messages they receive through music, and through sincere, well-planned presentations made by their peers. We will continue to write and produce songs of peace.

—Suzanne Lind, MCC representative for Democratic Republic of Congo

Translated from French by Suzanne Lind

Prayer for PEACE in Sudan

Lord Jesus, you who said to us: "I leave you peace. My peace I give you."

Look upon us your sisters and brothers

in Sudan as we face this moment of referendum.

Send us your Spirit to guide us.

Give us the wisdom we need to choose

our future where we will know your true peace.

You call us out of slavery, oppression,

and persecution so that we may have life in abundance.

Grant us peace with one another.

Give peace among ethnic groups.

Help us to work together for the good of all.

We ask this in your name, Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

This is the Official Prayer of the 101 Days of Prayer Towards a Peaceful Referendum in Sudan.

http://www.solidaritysudan.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=14

elders, and lay church leaders to participate in discussions about the rights and obligations of citizens in forming a new country. Through the social teachings of the Catholic Church it was emphasized time and again that independence was a new beginning; that people would need to work and build the new country.

As these gatherings of prayer and peace occurred there was a spike in violence and tribal divisions within the borders of the Diocese of Rumbek. It turned out that some of the rumors of violence were true. Some of the violence fueled new rumors and some of the rumors fueled new violence. People were saddened, confused, and scared about what was happening in their day-to-day lives. People were losing hope. The discussion groups were a safe space to share these concerns, to question, ask and to hold hope for one another. Amidst these worries the church spoke peace, forgiveness, and the newness of hope offered by the opportunity to become an independent country; by the moving beyond years of war and insecurity.

And then it happened. Not entirely smoothly, but seemingly all of a sudden we were there. After many discussions, many prayers, many moments of hope and accompanying moments of disbelief, we were there. July 9, 2011. The baby we had waited for, the infant South Sudan was born.

We walked with tens of thousands of people down the streets of the new capital. The flag of the new country was ubiquitous and covering every surface, every person. We walked together to get close to the place where the new anthem was playing, where the new leaders were meeting, where speeches of hope were being spoken. That evening we sat; I climbed on top of the rain barrel to get a better view of the fireworks— not bombs, fireworks—that splashed the sky with the colors of celebration and hope.

Kaitlyn Jantzi served as Women's Desk Coordinator for the Diocese of Rumbek from 2009 to 2012.

Habakkuk Trust: A glimpse into challenges, threats and opportunities

by Dumisani O. Nkomo

Habakkuk Trust is a Christian advocacy organization based in Zimbabwe and a significant part of our work is supported by MCC. In the rapidly changing and shifting socio-political landscape of Zimbabwe, Habakkuk Trust has had many insights on the challenges that we have faced in our operating environment

Habakkuk Trust operates in the south western part of Zimbabwe known as Matabeleland, which was the scene of government-led massacres from 1983 to 1987 that resulted in the butchering of more than 20,000 people in the province. The government has refused to acknowledge the massacres or take any remedial action to ameliorate the plight of the survivors of the genocide, but it has been more than ready to take swift and brutal action against anybody who raises the issue of the genocide. Habakkuk Trust works with communities that were directly and indirectly affected by this genocide in places such as Kezi, Tsholotsho, Gwanda

and Mangwe in rural Matabeleland. Incidentally the region is the driest in the country and is subject to drought. This is worsened by the fact that it has the highest HIV and AIDS rates in the country and most of the people live well below the poverty line.

The post-2000 Zimbabwe in which Habakkuk Trust operates is epitomized by many repressive laws that make it difficult for ordinary people and organizations such as Habakkuk Trust to practice and exercise freedoms of association, assembly, expression, thought, conscience and movement. These laws include the brutal Public Order and Security Act that suppresses the rights of people to assembly freely; the Criminal Law Codification Act; and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. These pieces of legislation basically criminalize fundamental freedoms and have a direct bearing on how Habakkuk Trust operates and interacts with the 30 communities that it is working with in Matabeleland.

In order to have public meetings or community meetings, for example, Habakkuk Trust has to inform or seek permission from the police. It is up to the local police commander to give permission or withhold it. When permission is granted at least two plain clothes police officers attend the meetings. This has been the case at most Habakkuk Trust community meetings. One can only imagine how difficult it is for locals and staff to freely express themselves in the presence of officers who document the proceedings of the meetings.

Frequently, before giving the go ahead to have public meetings, the police officers require Habakkuk Trust officers to present themselves at the police station. Interestingly at the time of writing this article I received a call from our receptionist that four plain clothes police officers wanted to see me. The best thing to do is to not panic otherwise they will start searching the offices and arresting people. We treated them to a nice cup of tea and biscuits and I had a friendly chat with them. All four were from the notorious Police Internal Security Intelligence, a special intelligence arm of the police that deals with political as well as law and order issues. They have extra judicial powers and can arrest people at any time for anything under the guise of maintaining law and order. They are known for their ability to make people disappear. Nonetheless, in true biblical fashion, we gave them a reception fit for a queen and after a 20-minute chat they were on their way. Such is our life at Habakkuk Trust. Police officers ask for details of our board or staff and at times funders.

Our staff has mastered the art of managing potential conflict situations and diffusing possible security threats. [The police] will be back, either for a cup of coffee or some information, but praise the Lord, we have nothing to hide and the more we show that we are not scared the more confused they become. It takes mental and spiritual resilience and fortitude. Truthfully though, most our staff members are young and at times this constant invisible threat to their safety is a source of great stress.

Earlier in the year police officers stopped us from having public meetings at a place called Tsholotsho, which is one of the areas worst affected by the 1980s massacres. Another meeting we wanted to have with our community advocacy team in the same area was

stopped by a police spy even though the small meeting did not require police clearance.

Later Habakkuk Trust, as part of its Peace and Advocacy Project, was due to have a community meeting in Kezi centre where victims of the massacres wanted to meet with government officials in the Organ for Reconciliation and National Healing. The Organ, composed of three government ministers from the three rival political parties in the Government of National Unity, was due to be addressed by one of the ministers from the former opposition party, Mr. Moses Mzila Ndlovu. After receiving police clearance we proceeded to pick up the two police officers who were to monitor the meeting. Then we were told to pick up an operative of the dreaded spy agency, the Central Intelligence Organization, and we did. On our way to the meeting the intelligence operative announced that we had to cancel the meeting as he had received instructions that the meeting should not go ahead. We proceeded to the venue where the minister was already present. The minister, who is a member of “former opposition”, was told that he could not address the meeting in spite of the fact that National Healing is a program of the Government of National Unity. We had to abandon the meeting and three weeks later Minister Mzila Ndlovu was arrested for addressing a similar meeting, stripped naked and subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment.

Surely it is only the grace of God that enables us to continue with this work under these most adverse conditions. Our personal security is not guaranteed neither is the safety of our families, but our hope and trust is not in the sword, nor in the arm of the flesh, but in the Lord God Almighty. It is because of this hope and faith that we have in our God, and the support of our brothers and sister in MCC that we will, like Nehemiah, continue with this great work of rebuilding our nation.

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.” To God be the glory.

Dumisani O. Nkomo is Habakkuk Trust Chief Executive Officer. You can read more of his writings at www.dumisanionkomo.blogspot.org.

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In late 2007, MCC was able to support an exchange visit between Sudan and Mozambique. This exchange brought together leaders and peace workers from the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) and the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC). As Sudan was in the midst of implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in 2005, which brought an end to Sudan's two decade civil war, the SCC sought to learn from the experience of the CCM in working through Mozambique's post-civil war era more than ten years earlier. This bridge-building between church councils engaging in the lives of their communities in working for God's reconciliation and a peaceful future has had a significant impact in these two countries. This includes through programming like the Preparing People for Peace and Democracy program in Mozambique which eventually evolved into the Swords into Ploughshares initiative and, in Sudan, this has included the Kajiko II gathering (to which the SCC invited the Government of southern Sudan in the days leading up to the referendum) and the Peace Mobilisers project. Creating the space for church institutions on the continent to learn from each other is a critical step in valuing and leveraging those experiences and in collaborating together on peace and justice for all.

20 Years of post-civil war in Mozambique

by Boaventura Zita

Mozambique experienced war from 1964 to 1975, seeking independence and again from 1976 to 1992, as the country experienced destabilization and civil war. The Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) played a significant role in the post-conflict processes of peace. As the civil war came to an end, it became apparent that CCM needed to help people prepare for peace.

CCM was a strong network of national relief and emergency programs through out the war. In the post war period it partnered with the Association of Western Parliamentarians in Actions against Apartheid (AWEPA) to jointly launch a national program to contribute to a national understanding of new realities resulting from the multiparty democracy in the making. Seminars focused on forgiveness as a way of preparing for peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights. Taking into account that democracy is about diversity, CCM cautioned people about the need for the church and especially church leaders to be neutral, calling on churches to avoid dividing on political lines.

CCM regarded civic education as a process of empowering people to know their rights and obligations as citizens. Civic education programs combined contextual Bible studies with the present realities. Later, CCM shared their experience with other organizations, establishing a platform to tackle issues of national interest.

One of the programs launched was Transforming Weapons Into Ploughshares (TAE)¹, whose main objectives were to complement the government disarmament, demobilization and social integration of former combatants, collect weapons by involving former combatants and the local population to identify the whereabouts of weapons, destroy arms and use the wreckage to produce sculptures to educate people to not resort to violence to resolve differences. TAE continues to work with local populations, and now focuses on urging people to resolve differences peacefully by providing biblical guidance with help of local pastors. TAE still uses artifacts from the war to build sculptures, as remembrances to Mozambicans to never again use violence as an instrument to resolve differences. TAE also works with political parties, calling on leadership to refrain from using a violent approach

and violent language in their interaction with other parties.

CCM has advocated for improved lives for Mozambicans. Through the Social Economic Justice Program (SEJ), CCM brought ecumenical experience to the Christian Aid Jubilee 2000 for the cancellation of debts of poor countries. It participated in the Poverty Eradication Program as well as monitoring the national budget. CCM monitored mega industrial extraction of mineral resources, focusing on social responsibility and how it contributes to poverty eradication and community development.

CCM is part of a group composed of Mozambican organizations working in the field of electoral observation, voter education and electoral and constitutional reform. It educates Mozambicans to vote, observes elections and performs parallel vote tabulation for transparency. It also works in the field of electoral law reform and Constitution reform, collecting opinions of local populations on issues that are not clear and together with lawyers and electoral experts, bringing proposals for change.

Peacebuilding is a process. CCM was actively involved in many initiatives that paved the way for the present relative peaceful and multiparty democracy. But the end of war is just a beginning of another process—striving for justice. Today, there is a need to work on issues related to elections because some circles cry that this essential element of democracy is not meeting expectations. CCM is attempting to bring internationally accepted standards to elections. Changes in electoral regulation will create the need to adjust the Constitution.

Democracy is a process of serving the people and sharing the resources needed to feed the social, economic and expectations of people, and if this does not happen, apathy and fatigue can result. People welcome democracy and elections as a process to select the best Mozambicans to serve the nation. However, in the strategy to fight against poverty, there is a delay, due to the large gap between the few rich and many poor who survive on less than \$2 U.S.a day.

Though Mozambique is experiencing a relative peaceful period where there is no war, people do not enjoy decent life with

dignity—the challenge is to find a solution to this problem. Social participation in the search for justice is a perpetual process, which needs a willingness of all active actors to strive for justice. CCM, at the end of the war, was able to give a timely appropriate approach, mobilizing national and international support and working with political national actors on a common agenda to reach peace. In recent years, CCM has not been as active nationally in the peace processes. Former CCM President, and President of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission (JPRC) Bishop Dinis Sengulane said, “Similar [to] what we did in the course of [the] peace process, we need [to continue] to prepare people for peace on present circumstances . . . and how Mozambicans can work in order to mitigate the violence.”

There is an international perception that because the war is over, Mozambique is in a position to work peacefully without international assistance on rebuilding the country, but this assertion fails to realize that Mozambique does not have the resources to do that without international assistance. Mozambique still needs national transformation and solidarity because it is poor. Poor farmers cannot deal with the endemic pov-

erty and diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria without assistance. Charity starts at home, but only with a profound transformation of all hearts and minds.

In a country shattered by long dehumanization, those working for reconciliation must strive for best practices on how to live together and share resources that are linked to the root causes of past problems. New deposits of minerals are being discovered and explored, and there is a need to find ways for local populations to benefit from them, by improving their living conditions and access to resources. Where empty stomachs exist, the potential for violence is high because people become prone to manipulation and to violent responses. Jesus lived and died so that all can have life and dignity abundantly. CCM, as an ecumenical sign of hope in Jesus, must search for the best ways to address national problems. CCM brought hope to suffering people during the war; today, it must work with other national actors to respond to Mozambique’s present challenges.

Boaventura Zita has worked with the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) for over 25 years and is currently the National Coordinator for the Transforming Weapons into Plowshares program of CCM.

Elections and Democracy in Africa

by Patricia Kisare and Kayon Watson

Democracy” promotion has been a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy since World War I. After the end of the Cold War, the U.S. shifted from its containment strategy to the spread of democracy internationally. While the extent to which different Administrations’ commitment to spreading democracy has varied, many U.S. Presidents have embraced this mission.

This policy is also embodied in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (U.N.). The U.N. sees the language used in the preamble [“We the people”] of its Charter as a reflection of the core principle of democracy.

One way in which this policy has been shepherded is through elections. Elections are often considered to be a critical step in the process of democratization. In Africa, the number of elections has been increasing since the late 1990s.

Electoral violence has nonetheless continued to plague the continent. A disputed electoral outcome in Kenya, a flagrant disregard of the election results in Zimbabwe, and the electoral experience in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are a few examples.

Zimbabwe

The 2008 elections in Zimbabwe were characterized by widespread violence and political repression. The incumbent, President Robert Mugabe, refused to give up power despite polling results showing that the opposition candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai had garnered more votes. The resulting political impasse led to a prolonged period of increased violence, much of which was directed toward those perceived to be anti-incumbent.

In response to the crisis, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional body of which Zimbabwe is a

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member, appointed former South African President Thabo Mbeki to lead a mediation process for Zimbabwe. In September 2008, a Global Political Agreement (GPA) was reached between incumbent President Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai. The GPA set out a broad framework for a power-sharing agreement in which Mugabe retained position of President and Tsvangirai became Prime Minister.

In 2008, a similar arrangement was reached after widespread violence in Kenya's recent presidential election. Kenya's power-sharing agreement created a Grand Coalition government in which executive functions and cabinet positions are shared by the two main parties.

By and large, these agreements have succeeded in ending widespread conflict and restoring stability.

Power sharing agreements have been widely used in multi-ethnic societies as a conflict management tool. While in a short-term they serve a great purpose of restoring stability, they set unwarranted precedent. By allowing losers to negotiate their way to power, such arrangements provide no incentive for politicians in other young democracies to step aside when they lose in an election. Ultimately, they undermine the democratic process, disfranchise voters, and increase the possibility of electoral violence in the future—especially where root causes are not addressed.

As we see in Zimbabwe, implementation of such agreements is an important part of this equation. Although it's been three years since the GPA was signed, many of the items ascribed in the document have not come to fruition. These include adoption of a new constitution, creation of an independent electoral commission, new electoral districts and new voters' rolls, all of which are to be in place before any new elections are held. Continued power struggles between and within the two parties are partly to blame. This stalemate has resulted in vast government inefficiencies and a deferment of elections previously scheduled to take place in 2011.

Zimbabwe is home to the largest Brethren in Christ church in the world. Through its partnership with the Brethren in Christ church, Mennonite Central Committee funds trainings in peace, local advocacy, capacity building and conflict resolution.

Democratic Republic of Congo

The U.N. was highly involved in the 2011 DRC elections. The United Nations Orga-

nization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) provided technical and logistical support to the Independent National Electoral Commission. The United Nations Development Program managed financial contributions by various countries through their program. The day of the elections Roger Meece, the Special Representative of the Secretary General and the Head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission MONUSCO visited polling stations and expressed satisfaction at the orderly and peaceful way that the voting process was being conducted. He also condemned the violence that marred the end of the campaign period which led to loss of lives and property. Meece stated, "It is regrettable and I am therefore calling on all the political leaders to exercise restraint and to accept the verdict of the polls." For a country only in its second national election, there were fewer clashes of violence than expected; however, the administration of the electoral process is questionable.

Democracy is weakened when there are human rights violations related to the election. The Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallstrom said it was "completely unacceptable" that the militia commander Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, who was indicted for mass rapes in the eastern DRC town of Walikale last year and yet remains at large, has been campaigning for a parliamentary seat. In a functioning democracy, the needs of the citizens must be considered by the political candidate. It is imperative that the democratic structure serves the views of the people and not the desires of the political candidate.

Meanwhile, the U.N. is mandated to support the government in the electoral process and has focused their approach on capacity building. There is an underlying assumption here that the DRC is democratic because it was able to hold elections. Unfortunately the 2011 elections were peppered with allegations of fraud and irregularities. Elections alone do not amount to democracy. Institutional capacity building is a key part to instilling democracy. In addition to functional institutions, a true democratic society requires a buy-in by individuals within all levels of the government.

1 John 4:21 says, "Here is the command God has given us. Anyone who loves God must also love his brothers and sisters." Even with the infrastructure in place to sustain elections that ideally will lead to democracy, ultimately the end result will be determined by the choices made by each individual across all levels of government.

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