



## NEWSLETTER Spring 2006

### **From “Angola-Between Hope and Fear”**

*by Luis Samacumbi, National Director of Social Affairs, Studies and Projects Dept, Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola (IECA), one of our AMSF Angolan church partners, writing to IECA project supporters.*

As in the time of Ezekiel, we also may raise the question: “Can these bones live? Ezek 37:3. **Let us continue building this devastated, beloved country and the broken hearts of its people.** I am aware of the demand and energy it will require of us, but why not join hands, strategizing together in order to be more strong and effective? Mother Theresa said “well it is true that what you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight.” Let us build anyway.



*Photo by Sue Short*

**For the thousands of Angolans who have lived the martyrdom of a long war, ended in 2002, nothing should be as before, because Peace has come forever.** However there is still the great challenge of national reconstruction and the hard work towards a more inclusive democratic exercise of politics. The economy has yet to recover from the effects of war including a lack of infrastructure. Angola is rich in resources but relies heavily on the oil industry, which is responsible for about ½ of the national GDP. There is, as well, an inequality of access to resources.

**People in Angola live, on average, on less than \$1.00 US/day.** Where they can, they practice subsistence agriculture. Traveling can be extremely dangerous, as Angola remains one of the world’s most heavily mined countries. Landmine accidents increase during the rainy season, as vehicles maneuver to avoid mud. Most rural people travel on foot or by bicycle.

**Schooling is not mandatory and most schools remain derelict due to the war. As a result Angola has one of the lowest literacy rates. The government and NGOs are working to reconstruct schools throughout the country.**

No health insurance system exists. The mortality rate for children under age 5 is 260 deaths per 1,000 live births. A major killer is malaria. Waterborne disease such as cholera and diarrhea are common. National campaigns against polio have been effective. **With the advent of peace, child malnutrition has been decreasing.**



### **Dondi Mission Station-Recovering from the Scars of War**

“The founders of IECA preached the gospel to empower Angolan indigenous people to know God, who provides spiritual and material abundant life. They created Dondi mission as a centre for community leadership development. At Dondi, the Currie Institute for boys, the Means school for girls, the Emmanuel Theological College, and Dondi hospital were used to prepare teachers, rural development agents, pastors, nurses and midwives to work with communities in villages. Many present Angolan government leaders, governors, deputies, were trained in Dondi. **Dondi was destroyed by war in 1975.**”

*Unhappy face of the Currie Institute Chapel*



**(Inside of Hey School Ruins: Louis Samacumbi and Rev. Kapamba motivate pupils not to give up)**

The present IECA project of rehabilitating Dondi as a Christian Rural Community Development Centre is in response to the request of 8 newly resettled communities in the area. There are 7,000 potential students not in school. About 448 students were being taught in Dondi, without adequate learning conditions, by volunteer teachers. The government suspended the school, until standards are met. Some of the teachers were incorporated into government schools, to teach those Dondi students who were able to transfer to government schools. **One Dondi school building is presently being rehabilitated.**

Villagers near Dondi have volunteered to begin repairing local bridges and to continue to repair houses, with salvaged bricks. A huge piece of Dondi land was tilled and the plan is to grow crops for food for residential students, who will help farm in their free time. The Dondi leprosy health centre has 2 nurses and has received essential medicine kits from time to time. Hopefully the nurses will assist students as needed.

## **AMSF HAS COMMITTED TO RAISE \$12,000 TO REROOF THE CURRIE INSTITUTE IN DONDI**

**Toronto: St. Luke's United Church Sunday School Children and Rev. Etta Snow with map of Angola. The children raised \$425 for the AMSF Currie Institute roof project in order that students can go back to school in Dondi.**



## **Mazozo Village Methodist School Report** by *Francisco Kitembo*, Manager of Communications for the United Methodist Church – Western Conference

**Editor's Note: LAST YEAR AMSF DONATED \$20,000 TO THE ANGOLAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TO HIRE TEACHERS TO ALLOW THE START UP OF SEVERAL VILLAGE PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**



**Mr. Kitembo reports on one of these schools**

Mazozo village is located 60km from Angola's capital, Luanda. The population lives on fish and agriculture (mainly sweet potatoes and corn). There is no electricity. People haul water from a major river, the Kwanza.

There are 2 primary school buildings. One belongs to the government and the other to the Methodist church. The church school, built in the 60s by the Portuguese colonial government, is in an unusable state. The government school has 1 usable classroom, 2 bathrooms and a teacher's residence in desolate condition. There is a lack of supplies, desks, blackboards, paint and teachers. The local Methodist pastor, Alfonso Gamboa, agreed to take on the job of teaching elementary classes: beginners (12 students), grade one (18), grade 2 (10), grade 3 (7), grade 4 (4). A total of 51 students.



**Below are reported comments about the first school year, by Pastor Gamboa, the students, and a community member.**



**Pastor Gamboa (left) General condition of the school:** It is deplorable but spiritually sound. We have been making every effort possible through the church to maintain the progress of the school.

**Eligibility:** The whole community can start their studies here. Besides the children from our church, we have children from the Tocoista Church (native Angolan church) and from the non-religious community. **Recruitment of children:** We have 4 meetings with those in charge of education, stressing the importance for children to learn to read and write. Then we ask for the documents necessary to register the children, a photocopy of the ID certificate and 2 photos (photos postponed because we have no studio).

**Student gender balance:** We are off balance, because we have only 12 girls studying, and the community has more girls than boys. **Cause of dropouts (4):** They are orphans, with none to support them. In this first phase, we, the school administrators, also do not have the conditions to support the students materially. The school has 12 orphans living with grandparents who are on average 70-80 years old and living on charity. The children often climb our baobab trees to pick the fruit to feed themselves. To enable these children to finish the school year the local church has made efforts to buy pencils and notebooks to give to them.

**Administration:** The 4<sup>th</sup> graders must walk 16 km to a government school to take their exams. Our school is recognized by the government, as it follows the guidelines from the Ministry of Education and the regional municipal administration. However the state does not pay the teacher's salary, because all details and documents are not legalized. **After 4<sup>th</sup> grade:** I have no comment as Mazozo has only the first level of education. **Plans for next year:** We are making every effort to have more teachers. Four groups were a lot of work for me this year. **Successful recruitment depends on a guaranteed financial component.**



**Students:** (From left) **Carolina is 9 years old and in 1<sup>st</sup> grade.** She is an orphan who never knew her parents. Carolina lives with her grandparents who are in their 80s. It is difficult for them to feed her. Carolina's big dream is to be able to go to school for 3 more years and later be Pastor of the Methodist church. She believes it is a noble thing to do and as Pastor she will be able to help many other children. **Maria is a nine year old in first grade.** As an orphan she lives with her grandparents. She says the Church has given her all her school supplies. Maria's dream is to be a teacher, to teach ABCs to other orphan children, not only from Mazozo, but from all over Angola. **Acacio is 12 years old and in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.** He is an orphan, without parents, and lives with his grandparents. He confirms that the teacher gives them all their school supplies. Due to the difficulties he faces in life Acacio, who already knows how to read and write, preferred not to say what he would like to do in the future. **Luis is 9 years old and lives with his grandparents because his parents have died.** His dream is to become a teacher because he would like to see all the children of Mazozo reading and writing.



(Left) **Community member Dona Lauriana and Mr. Kitembo:** Dona Lauriana is about 65 years old and never had an opportunity to learn to read and write. **For her, the initiative by the church to have a school in the community is welcome.** At this time some of the children can read and write. Also, she sees that now the children are in school their behavior has improved a lot.

# AMSF HAS BEEN CONTRIBUTING TO THE TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF ANGOLAN WOMEN. (\$30,000 US THIS PAST YEAR)

AMSF president Etta Snow recently attended the World Council of Churches conference in Brazil. While in Brazil she and others met with one of IECA's leaders in women's work, Rev Adelaide Tomas Manuel. Rev Adelaide has just completed a master's degree at the Methodist University of Sao Paulo.



*Rev Etta Snow, Rev Adelaide Tomas Manuel and Rev Marion Pardy, Brazil*

Rev Adelaide has also been teaching at the **ecumenical** United Emmanuel Seminary in Huambo. IECA has asked Rev Adelaide to complete her Phd in theology, in order to help raise the level of seminary training at United Emmanuel. IECA is committed to better preparing seminary students for the challenges and changes they face in a post war society.

Adelaide did her early schooling at Means School in Dondi, until war closed the school in 1976. People were fleeing from place to place and fierce battles were being waged. Adelaide, 17 at the time, accompanied her father and other church leaders as they visited families, encouraging them through hymns, prayers and sermons. Adelaide felt God was calling her into the ministry, through these experiences. She graduated from United Emmanuel Seminary, when she was 24, having also met and married her fellow seminarian, Rev Manuel. Revs Adelaide and Manuel had 4 children. Rev Adelaide did Christian Education work and completed a degree in Home Economics. She offered courses to wives of seminarians, when her husband was director of United Emmanuel. When Rev Adelaide was 36 her husband was wounded in a car ambush and died shortly thereafter. Rev Adelaide moved to the capital city of Luanda and became an assistant pastor, concentrating on women's projects. She helped found and coordinate women's formation programs in several Angolan centres.

When she was 43, IECA, recognizing Rev Adelaide's intellectual and leadership abilities, asked her to do graduate work at the Methodist University of Sao Paulo. Rev Adelaide and her two younger children were thus reunited with her two older children who had been invited to study in Brazil by colleagues, after her husband's death.

IECA gives priority to women's formation programming, and values Rev Adelaide's outstanding present and future contributions to this work. This appreciation was recently demonstrated when women at 10 formation centres gave a vote of support for Rev Adelaide's further studies. They trimmed some of their own programs to help her financially to finish her MA. Pursuing the dream of having a first IECA woman leader with PHd level training is an act of faith by IECA that the necessary funding will come.

**Donors, your prayers and your donations to the AMSF-sponsored education work in Angola are so very appreciated.**

**AMSF has recently received donations in honour of Fred Brancel, Ki Henderson, and Bev Houslander. AMSF also has received donations in memory of Tom Brown, Flora Ervin, Ethel Myers, Bill Tolley, Elizabeth (Bib) Utting and Betty Welch.**

**We give thanks for these members and supporters of AMSF and remember, with love and appreciation, those of us who have passed**

Donations may be sent to your AMSF Regional Representative or to the **AMSF Treasurer, Steve Gilchrist, 28 Marsh Road, Toronto, Ontario M1K 1Y8.**

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**www.angolamsf.org** - note: excerpts from "Angola Awake" by Sid Gilchrist, and his biography, "Salute to Sid", are available through the AMSF website.