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Norsk Ekumenisk Komité for det Sørlege Afrika — NEKSA

Norwegian Ecumenical Committee on Southern Africa

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The Chief Representative
African National Congress
Postboks 6765, St. Olavs plass
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REPORT FROM NORWEGIAN ECUMENICAL COMMITTEE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA.

STUDY PROGRAMME 1988.

INTRODUCTION

Some 30 Norwegian church people participated in a study programme organized by the Norwegian Ecumenical Committee for Southern Africa (NEKSA). The programme culminated in a three week tour of Southern Africa in June 1988 including a one week seminar in Harare.

The events were coordinated with and served as part of the overall cooperation programme between the Nordic countries and the independent states in Southern Africa, SADCC.

The tour was preceded by two seminars, the first at Granvolden 4th to 7th of February 1988, the next at Diakonhjemmet on 9th May. All Africa Conference of Churches and national Christian and Church Councils in Africa were partners with NEKSA, and for the seminar at Granvolden with the Nordic Ecumenical Institute, in organizing the events.

The programme was funded through grants from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Development Cooperation, the Norwegian Church Aid, the Council of Norwegian Free churches, the Karibu Foundation and fees from participants. An initial budget in the total amount of Norwegian Kroner 916.251,- was adjusted due to reduced grants. The reduction equalized some reduced costs, see separate accounts.

Extensive cooperation in planning and execution of the study programme was extended to the organisers and participants by representatives of the Norwegian government in countries where there is such representation. Representatives of the Lutheran World Service, Norwegian Church Aid in Angola, the Church Councils and individual churches and people did a lot to facilitate the visitation programme. For this, and for the warm hospitality extended, the organizers and the participants are very grateful.

NEKSA

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THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMME.

The churches in Southern Africa today find themselves in the middle of the acute and dramatic conflict which destroys the lives of millions of people in the region. The rapid and drastic deterioration in living conditions caused by this conflict, the destruction of family life and all other forms of dignified human life which results from the continued domination of the evil Apartheid system in South Africa, challenges Christians and the churches to greater involvement in the struggle for Justice and Peace.

There is an encreasing realization among people both in the north and south of interdependence and mutual responsibility for root causes of injustice, inequalities and conflicts within and between regions.

The purpose of the programme covered by this report was

- to increase the level of information and understanding amongst Norwegian church people and the public in general about the situation in the third world in general, and Southern Africa in particular,
- to improve the theological reflection about the role of the churches in the struggle for Justice and Peace in the world at large.
- to bring together church people at the levels of leadership to discuss and develop increased cooperation and sharing of resources we have as churches in the two regions.

The peoples and churches of Southern Africa have gained experiences and reached levels of theological and political awareness which represent a rich resource for other peoples. This resource was a major input in the study and visitation programme.

THE NORDIC/SADCC AGREEMENT OF COOPERATION.

The ecumenical contacts between churches in the Nordic countries and the SADCC region should be viewed also in the context of the Joint Declaration on expanded economic and cultural cooperation between states in the two regions. The agreement encourages the forging of stronger ties also between churches.

At the seminar at Granvolden some 60 representatives from churches in the Nordic countries met with some 15 church leaders from SADCC countries. The seminar was chaired by the Anglican Archbishop for Central Africa, W.K. Makhulu. One of the main speakers was a senior official of the African National Congress,

Mr. Thabo Mbeki.

The seminar also served as preparation for the 25 participants in the NEKSA group. It dealt with themes like:

- Hopes and aspirations from the North
- Hopes and aspirations from the South
- The churches in Southern Africa and in the Nordic countries -areas of common ground.
- Cooperation between the Nordic countries and the SADCC countries, challenges to the churches from the Nordic governments.
- The role of the Church in the Liberation Struggle
- Regional cooperation within each region.

A statement was adopted which provides for continued and increased cooperation between the churches of the two regions. The report from the Granvolden seminar is available upon request.

The seminar in Harare, 26/6-1/7 1988, concluded the study tour and served as a follow-up to the Cooperation agreement between the two regions. It had some forty representatives from churches in the SADCC countries, South Africa and Namibia, and 29 from Norway, together with representatives from liberation movements. A Statement of Understanding between SADCC churches and Members of Norwegian churches was adopted and is attached to this report.

GOVERNMENT AND ECUMENICAL DEVELOPMENT AID ACTIVITIES.

In the SADCC region churches and ecumenical councils participate very actively in communitybased development activities. Considerable financial support and some technical assistance to such programmes come from agencies like the World Council of Churches, The Lutheran World Federation, Norwegian Church Aid and others, directly or through ecumenical channels.

Orientation about such activities and the development cooperation projects between the Norwegian government and the governments of the SADCC countries formed an integral part of the study programme. Extensive orientations were given and materials made available to all participants. Some of the field exposures included on the spot visits to Government funded and church organized projects. The Norwegian government has extensive extensive programmes of cooperation with non-government organizations, including churches and ecumenical bodies.

In the countries were the Lutheran World Federation and/or Norwegian Church Aid are engaged in operational activities such projects were visited. In several countries the participants met with representatives of liberation movements and visited their

projects.

VISITS TO COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

During the first two weeks the participants from Norway were divided in groups (list attached) which went to one of the following countries:

Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa and Namibia.

ANGOLA

The three participants spent 9 days in Luanda and three days travelling separately with staff from the Council of Churches (CAIE) to different outlying areas. A varied program including interviews with church and government officials at high level, visit to refugee settlements, liberation movement and the NCA supported CAIE centre in Luanda.

Practical arrangements were very well taken care of by CAIE and the NCA staff member in Luanda. Field trips to areas of tense conflict were organized by government and church council together. Members of the group experienced what the ongoing conflict entails in terms of security, communication problems, tensions and delays.

In reports from the participants dramatic and tragic consequences of South African aggression and other acts of destabilization from outside are spelt out. However, the very positive impressions from meetings and travelling with Angolans, warm, friendly and with dignity, dominate.

Participants commended CAIE for efficiency and hard work in spite of extreme adverse conditions. It is recommended that future assistance be channelled through CAIE and that increased efforts be focussed on activities which improve the conditions of women.

ZAMBIA

The Christian Council of Zambia organized a programme for the five participants. Valuable help in doing this was rendered by the NORAD representative and his staff as well as the LWS representative and his staff.

Considerable time was spent in interviews and orientation sessions with church officials, government and non-government organizations in Lusaka.

A field visit to the LWS run refugee settlement Ukwimi for Mozambican refugees as well as a stay at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe were part of the programme. So was a meeting with the ANC and visits to church development production schemes.

Reports from participants show that in spite of the limitations of a relatively brief exposure and a crowded programme, the many interesting and strong experiences in church and community life has had a lasting effect.

"We were taken to the Service at the Mother Thomas African Methodist Episcopal Church in Mtendere, which was an excellent introduction to African church life in general - and to Africa as a whole: the liveliness, the wonderful singing, the smiling kids everywhere, the generosity with which we were received, - all made a deep impact on us".

"We heard of family problems, of "bottle stores", of school leavers with few future possibilities. We met leaders with sound perspectives, realistic considerations, and firm beliefs".

BOTSWANA

The LWS representative and his staff prepared the visitation programme in consultation with Archbishop W.K. Makhulu. With the assistance from the NORAD representative visits were made to Norwegian Government funded projects. Also a number of LWS/NCA sponsored projects were visited. Time was short, considering the long distances involved and the amount of information to be gathered.

Participants have commented that future programmes of this nature should allow more time for contacts and exchanges with village and church communities.

Because of its proximity to South Africa the refugee programmes in Botswana are highly sensitive. Insights into such activities were given also through a visit to the Dukwe settlement which has received considerable assistance both from the Norwegian Government and NCA. A number of other activities on behalf of refugees as well as to the benefit of ordinary Botswana were scrutinized.

The participants were received and given orientations both in the Office of the President and the SADCC secretariat in Gaborone.

ZIMBABWE

Three participants spent two weeks in Zimbabwe prior to the Harare seminar. Their exposure was organised by the Christian Council. Separate programmes were tailored to bring the visitors

in close contact with ordinary church congregations and grassroots development activities.

Visits to schools at different levels were included.

Reports from the field trips are strong and varied to show that the intention of bringing about human exchanges and forging of ties between cultures and churches succeeded.

The participants were living with villagers and enjoyed the hospitality and riches of african traditions and culture.. "You will never be the same after such a visit to Africa". Strong encounters with local leaders who together with their communities recently came out of a protracted struggle for independence and human dignity have had lasting consequences. The unbelievable experience of how "the policy of reconciliation" has produced a unique situation where the former tyrant (Smith) eats at the table with those who previously suffered in his torture chambers.

Contacts with Government, Norad and LWS were organised during the seminar (see below) subsequent to the exposure programmes.

NAMIBIA

Three participants had two very exiting weeks with the churches in Namibia, visiting also the war zones in the most northern parts of the country. A detailed and varied programme had been prepared by the Council of Churches. It is reported that it was carried out with effectiveness in spite of the turbulent period in which the visit took place.

Participation in church services, political rallies, visits to hospitals and other health programmes, industrial plants, community schools, opposition newspaper and church leaders fully integrated in the liberation struggle formed parts of the programme. The massive school boycott with its explosive political potential provided a dramatic background for the visit to the different parts of the country.

The group was divided in three, one going south, another north and the third to the west coast. The militarization and conflict provided for much drama and despair as the participants stayed with church people in communities under extreme stress.

Again the strength, dignity and faith in God as the provider of courage and willpower to fight the evil of oppression gave hope and inspiration also to the visitors from Norway.

SOUTH AFRICA

The seven participants spent the period in South Africa in either Durban, Cape Town or Johannesburg. Valuable assistance in preparing and implementation of the programmes was given by a

number of church people as well as the Norwegian Consul General in Cape Town.

Details of the activities are given in reports by the participants. Suffice it here to say that the exposure to the life and struggle of the people of South Africa was immense in both scope, variety and intensity. Important church leaders who spend all their time in the midst of the conflict took time out to provide in depth orientations to the visitors. Projects and areas which normally are out of reach for outsiders were included.

Many of the participants were hosted in private homes, and therefore received valuable insights into the day to day life of people, their anxieties, hopes and struggle for justice and peace.

THE HARARE SEMINAR.

The programme for the study tour included a one week seminar in the Harare Kentucky Airport Hotel which is the Christian Council Conference Center. The aim of the seminar was to provide an opportunity for the group of 25 participants, together with a few other Norwegian resource persons and a number of resource people from the region of Southern Africa, to reflect and discuss their experiences and observations as they had visited the different countries prior to the seminar.

As the project planning developed, the aim of the seminar was gradually expanded to accommodate a broader need for information sharing and discussion with representatives from churches in the region. The local organiser, the Christian Council of Zimbabwe, managed to mobilise church leaders from Angola, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia and South Africa, plus a large number of Zimbabweans.

This opportunity was used to include in the programme a number of presentations which raised substantive issues for deliberation. In hindsight it seems to have crowded the seminar programme to the extent that some of the participants in the country visits felt that sufficient time was not given to share and reflect over what they had experienced in the different countries they had been to.

However, the situation in the region being as tense and dramatic as it is, the organisers felt it would have been wrong if at all possible not to include in the agenda items of substantive relevance to the desperate need of the churches in the region. The expectations from the churches in the south are increasingly taking the form of a challenge to churches in the north to better understand the situation and to take more effective concrete action in solidarity with the peoples in the region. Rightly so, this challenge came through in the seminar, loud and clear.

The seminar programme is attached. A number of the papers presented are available upon request. The major items covered, after reports from the country visits had been dealt with on the first day, were:

- Human resources development, SADCC perspective and Nordic perspective.
- Churches in Human resources development.
- The Liberation Struggle, presented by liberation movements.
- Churches' involvement in the Socioeconomic, political and military conflict in the SADCC region.
- The refugee situation in the SADCC region.
- The situation of women in the SADCC region.
- Women in the Church, SADCC perspective and Nordic perspective.
- The situation of Youth.
- Norwegian involvement (government) in the development efforts of Zimbabwe.
- Regional Ecumenical network for Information sharing.

Two statements were adopted by the seminar and are attached to this report:

- Statement of solidarity with the South African Council of Churches in their deliberations at their Annual Conference, 1988.
- Statement of Understanding between SADCC churches and members of Norwegian churches.

REPORTS

Most participants have submitted reports on their country visits and the Harare seminar. Constructive criticism has been raised to be taken into account when similar exchanges are to be planned in the future. In general all participants have expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the programme. For most of them it seems evident that their participation has had a lasting effect to enhance awareness and involvement in accordance with the aims of the programme.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NEKSA would like to express deep appreciation to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Ministry of Development Cooperation, Norwegian Church Aid, the Karibu Foundation for funding the programme.

Sincere gratitude is also extended to the many individuals and church bodies in Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa who contributed so willingly to make the programme such a success.

On behalf of NEKSA

Hans Petter Hergum
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(sign.)

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DIAKONHJEMMETS INTERNASJONALE SENTER

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Til deltagerne på NEKSA studietur

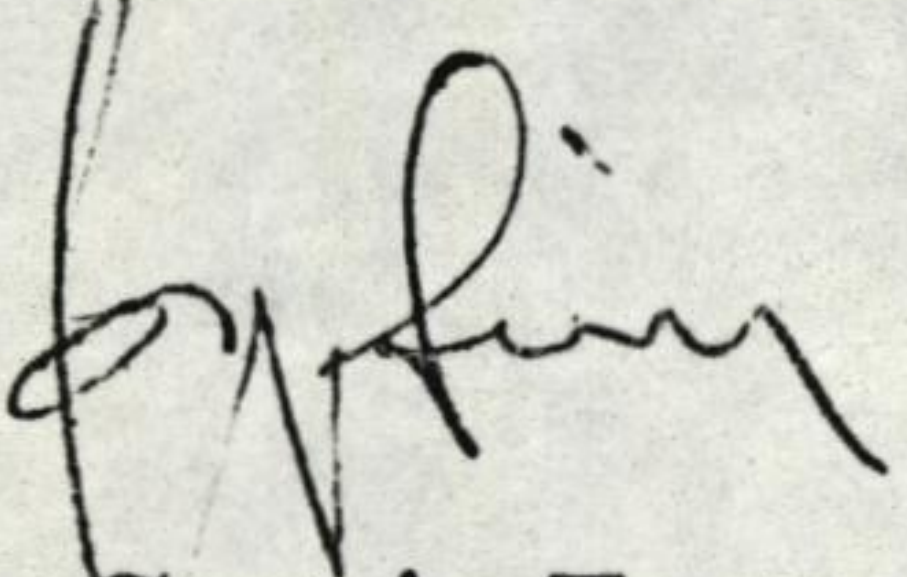
Oslo, mai 1989

RAPPORT FRA STUDIETUREN.

Det har tatt tid å få revidert regnskapet for oversendelse av rapport med revidert regnskap til de instanser som finansierte turen. Nå foreligger det, og styret i Neksa har bestemt at kopi av rapporten også skal sendes til deltagerne på turen.

Rapporten følger vedlagt.

Med beste hilsener og takk for hyggelige minner.



Øystein Tveter