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REPORT FOR THE BATLAGAE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Prepared by Mohammed Tikly, Executive-Director of the Batlagae Trust.

17th September 1991

This Report is in two parts: PART ONE is principally a summary of the work done by the executive-director since his involvement with the Trust, while PART TWO raises some fundamental questions in the light of recent developments.

PART ONE

PROGRESS REPORT

Since the first approach to me during July 1991 by the ANC's Department of Education, Repatriation Committee and the .1 Treasurer-General to direct my efforts towards making arrangements for SOMAFCO returnees, I attended three meetings of the Main Management Committee in Pretoria during July and August. On July 26th, Michael Corke, Neil McGurk and Franz Auerbach interviewed me with a view to appointing me as Executive-Director of the Batlagae Trust. Although my appointment was formalised by at a meeting of the trustees as late as August 27th, I commenced with certain tasks of the Trust, such as the search for a reception centre and school, while simultaneously attending to duties of the Projects Department of the ANC.

The Treasurer-General of the ANC wrote to Michael Corke on August 14th to say that the ANC was willing to second me for a period of one year to assist the Batlagae Trust with the repatriation and reintegration of SOMAFCO pupils and students. Until such time as the Batlagae Trust was able to fund my salary, the ANC will continue to remunerate me.

.: On August 20th, Michael Corke and I drafted a funding document for the establishment costs of the Batlagae Trust and a job description for the executive-director. The funding document was sent to the German Embassy on August 26th, and, as at 16th September there has been no response. On 9th September, I faxed to Michael Corke a list of 8 other potential donors to whom the funding request could be sent.

Together with Maria Corke, Ntsiki Memela and Caleb Bush, I went to Stilfontein on August 28th to assess the disused mine compound as a possible reception cum adult education centre. We considered it to be unsuitable. On September 2nd, I visited a Seminary near Nigel and consider the price of R3.5 million to be excessive, and, assuming the funds were available immediately, it will take months to take possession of the Seminary.

I commenced fulltime work for the Trust on 9th September and have found temporary office accommodation on the 16th Floor of 51 Plein Street, at the offices of the Matla Trust. No rental is required at least for September and most telephone/photocopying costs will be met by Matla Trust. The cost of trunk calls and faxes will, however, be billed to Batlagae Trust. '

The Chairperson, Michael Corke, leased a vehicle for me as from 5th September for a month to facilitate the search for a site. The cost will be met from the Rhodes Trust donation of R 19,500 to the St. Barnabas Outreach Fund for the Oversight Committee as seed money.

At a meeting on 4th September between Michael Corke, Lindelwe Mabandla and myself and the meeting of the Oversight Committee on 6th September, discussion focussed strongly on the need for a site and it was felt that the ANC should through President Mandela remind the State President of the government's commitment towards the children of SOMAfCO. Since the bombing of Hillview School and the impasse over the government's insistence that its representatives should go to Tanzania to undertake a "situation analysis", things are at a standstill, especially since the last meeting of the Main Management Committee on 2nd August.

The Chairperson, Michael Corke wrote to the then Minister of Education and Training, Mr. Stoffel van der Merwe, on 20th August over the question of an alternative site to Hillview School and the unwillingness of the Tanzanian Government to allow South African Government representatives to go to Tanzania. Minister of National Health, Mrs Rina Venter replied on 2nd September, reiterating the government's insistence on the visit to Tanzania. A memorandum reminding the government of its commitment towards SOMAfCO pupils and students was drafted by Michael Corke, John Samuel and myself and submitted to President Mandela on 10th September, with the request that he should raise the matter directly with the State President. However, due to the National Peace Conference, the matter was deferred to this week, 16-20 September.

With the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNHCR and the government on September 4th 1991, it became necessary to ascertain what plans, if any, the UNHCR has in relation to SOMAfCO pupils and students. Michael Corke, Lindelwe Mabandla and I met with the Deputy-Director of the UNHCR, Mr. Andrew Sokiri, who is here to establish offices and make plans in consultations with government, the liberation movements and the NCCR on the repatriation/resettlement programme for exiles. Our meeting with Mr. Sokiri on 8th September regrettably took place before he had embarked on his meetings with the interested parties, so he was not able to say much to us, but requested from the Batlagae Trust a project proposal with a plan of action regarding the children from SOMAfCO.

ANC and NCCR representatives subsequently informed us that Mr. Sokiri was left with the impression that the Batlagae Trust was independent of the NCCR and he felt it would therefore make it difficult for UNHCR to cooperate with the Trust. As executive-director, I drafted a background document (attached herewith) on the Batlagae Trust for the benefit of ANC and NCCR representatives who are in close liaison with Mr. Sokiri. I submitted copies of the document to Michael Corke, Barbara Watson and Venita Meyer for their comments and proposed modifications. On September 12th, I had a meeting with the Rev Frank Chikane and gave him a copy of the background document and a copy of the Deed of Trust. I felt it was necessary to introduce myself to him and brief him on the Trust's priorities. He conveyed the NCCR's reservations over the government's insistence regarding the visit to Tanzania by its representatives and over the overtures made by the government to raise funds for repatriation from foreign governments. He felt that the UNHCR will involve itself with the repatriation of the children from Tanzania on humanitarian grounds, even if its infrastructure was not in place within South Africa. Finally, he proposed that we continue with our efforts to find a reception centre and suggested that we contact Bishop Stanley Mogoba of the Methodist Church and Brother Jude of SACBC. I met with Ihron Rensburg on September 9th to enlist the assistance of the NECC with regards to identifying a vacant school as a reception centre. He agreed to provide us with a list of empty government schools and said that the Southern Transvaal Regional Coordinator of the NECC would get in touch with me, but to this date there has been no word from him. There have been three meetings of the ANC Task Force on SOMAFCO where the issue of a reception centre was extensively discussed. The Department of Social Welfare has been trying a number of leads and an appointment has been made with the Principal of St. Ansgars School, Lensaria, to explore the possibility of the returnees being accommodated there. The NCCR, ANC and the Batlagae Trust planned a visit to SOMAFCO to refine the information so far obtained on the children prior to their return to South Africa. The visit was to have taken place in early September but had to be deferred. It is now proposed that three members of the Trust should accompany an ANC NEC delegation that is planning to go to Tanzania within the next 10 days. Finally, after a weeks fulltime work as executive-director, it is clear that I shall require an assistant and as from October 1st, offices and a permanent address for the Trust's letterhead. Apart from the Rhodes Trust seed money, there is no other funding forthcoming.

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PART TWO

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND QUESTIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE TRUST.

The Objectives of the Batlagae Trust are to raise and provide financial and other resources for the education of children and young adults and to provide ancillary assistance, inter alia, the establishment of schools and other places of instruction and training, the establishment of an educational fund for bursaries, the devising and presentation of courses of training and the engaging of teachers.

As I understand it, the Trust came into being to extend the capacity of the NCCR to attend to the repatriation and settlement of SOMAFCO pupils and students. Its creation was proposed by the NCCR's Oversight Committee to raise funds and to implement the transfer and educational integration of this target group. Apart from a reception centre, it was envisaged that an adult education centre would be established for both returnees and marginalised youth, and in this way assist the process of reintegration, taking cognisance of the sensitive issue of "favoured" treatment for exiles whilst many out-of-school youth roamed the street.

The government's commitment to assist with the repatriation of SOMAFCO children led to the setting up of the Main Management Committee (MMC), the joint NCCR, ANC and government implementation agency for the reception centre/school. A substantial amount of funding was initially committed by the government.

The role of the Batlagae Trust was to coordinate with the NCCR, liberation movements and the Main Management Committee and to raise supplementary funds for the reception centre. Therefore, the tasks of the Batlagae Trust in respect of a reception centre, assuming Hillview School and the MMC Task Force to Tanzania had materialised, appeared to have been well defined.

But, after the bombing of Hillview School and the impasse over the MMC Task Force visit to Tanzania, the Batlagae Trust is faced with an impossible task. It has (a) to find a site,

(b) obtain all the required funds for the reception centre, apart from funds for the running of the Trust itself, and, (c) establish and coordinate enabling committees on education, professional services, facilities, transport, etc, which previously was the joint responsibility of the MMC, NCCR, BT and ANC.

Meanwhile events are moving rapidly, the return of the children is imminent and nothing is in place to receive and settle them. In this situation the UNHCR will be compelled to make emergency provision for them, in terms of a reception centre and a dispersal programme.

The setting up of long-term adult education centre is the other major objective of the Trust, but here it is unclear whether the government will participate in establishing and funding it, in which case, the Batlagae Trust will have to take total responsibility for it. Substantial resources will be required for

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this task, including an appropriate infrastructure within the Trust and the project will take at least a year to come into operation. This also raises the fundamental question about the desirability of launching a private institution and letting the government off the hook from carrying out its obligation towards returnees and the marginalised youth.

With the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNHCR and the government, the NCCR and ANC are naturally concerned to enlist maximum assistance from the UNHCR. Tripartite consultations between the UNHCR, NCCR and ANC are in process about the return of SOMAFCO children.

Where does the Batlagae Trust fit into this schema? It appears that the NCCR does not have a clear understanding of the role of the Batlagae Trust and Mr. Sokiri of the UNHCR has reservations about working directly with the Trust. Even if the UNHCR accepts that the Batlagae Trust has a role to play, it is bound to query the Trust's capacity to undertake the responsibility of bringing the children back and settling them here.

Arising from the above, the Batlagae Oversight Committee requires to address the following questions:-

1. how does the Trust relate to the NCCR, liberation movements and churches?
2. what is its precise mandate in the short and long-term?
3. where will its funding come from?
4. does it have a role in the present conjuncture in which the UNHCR is expected to play the dominant role in the repatriation and settlement programme, and in which the government appears to have abdicated its responsibility towards the children of SOMAFCO?