

Project #MW 96658 - Youth Ministry Capacity Building

Vision of the project

The Africa Evangelical Church (AEC) in partnership with SIM desires to serve youth groups and youth leaders by providing effective training and mentoring. We are very committed to growing a youth ministry based on Jesus as the foundation of any good church ministry. Our vision is to see youth in Malawi come to know and worship Jesus Christ as Lord through His Gospel; and to become passionate growing disciples of Jesus, reaching out to the lost, bringing hope and transformation to a broken world.

Project background

This project seeks to continue to assist the Africa Evangelical Church (AEC) - SIM's partner church in Malawi - to build its capacity for effective youth ministries across all its local congregations. Currently, approximately 75% of Malawi's population is under the age of 30, making it one of the nations with the highest proportion of youth in the world. More specifically, youths (persons aged 10-29 years) comprise more than 1/3 of the country's population (38.7 %).

There are approximately 140 local churches in the AEC, grouped in 12 area councils (9 in the southern region, 2 in the central region and 1 in the northern region of Malawi). Not all of the local churches have functioning youth groups, and often there is no distinction between children and youth ministries.

The AEC is struggling to develop effective youth ministries that address the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs of youth within the church, as well as reaching the youth outside the church.

The project envisages that the church's capacity to undertake effective youth ministry will be developed in the following key focus areas:

- (1) Mentoring, training, equipping and development of youth & youth leaders in leadership, evangelism & discipleship;
- (2) Development of sustainable & relational 'programs' and 'platforms' for youth ministry
- (3) Provide access to Bible-based resources for spiritual growth

Progress

By God's grace, the AEC youth ministry continues to grow and bear fruit. Our hope is that God is continuing to bring about gospel transformation in the lives of the youth in Malawi. Besides the regular mentoring activities that occur on a weekly basis, here is a summary of the main events that occurred during this reporting period:

YOUTH MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAKESHORE

In April, the Lakeshore Area Council Youth Coordinator undertook a research trip to Salima to facilitate meetings with local youth leaders to plan a way forward to enable future mentoring visits to take place in the most sustainable way. The Lakeshore covers a vast area and it is very difficult for the Area Council Youth Coordinator to visit all the churches in this area. The initial plan is to split the Lakeshore Area Council into smaller clusters to enable the Area Council Youth Coordinator to visit the key youth leaders in each of the clusters at the one time, rather than travelling to each local church.

In May, the Lakeshore Area Council Youth Coordinator undertook his research trip and mapped out a pathway for his future visitations in the most cost-effective way. In June he visited the newly defined clusters of youth groups for the Lakeshore area following his research last month. On this trip he also advised the local church leadership as well as the youth leaders of these clusters, and had set them the task of appointing Cluster leaders for each of the clusters. These cluster leaders have the main responsibility of communicating any news to the local youth groups in their cluster, and also provide coordination of any activities planned for that cluster.

PRAYER & PLANNING RETREAT

In July, we also had our second Prayer and Planning Retreat of the year for the Area Council Youth Coordinators. This was our very first midyear retreat which provided an opportunity for reflection on the past 5 months and further planning for the remaining half of the year. The retreat was held at EBCoM between 6-8th July. MacDonald and I taught through the letter of I Timothy, drawing out leadership principles for youth ministry, as well as modelling how to read and interpret the Bible. This will lay the ground work for Bible leaders training in 2018 emphasising on how to teach the Bible in their youth groups.



YOUTH CAMPS

This year it was decided to conduct five youth camps – three in the Southern Region, one in the Central region and one in the Northern region. These camps were held back to back starting mid-August and running up to mid-September.

The main reason was to make the Southern region camps more manageable and to empower the youth themselves to run them. There were a total of 715 youth who attended the five youth camps. In the Southern Clusters, Chikwawa had 107 youth, Chipwembwe had 320, and Ngabu had 105, making a total of 532. In the Central region, Nkhotakota had 123 youth, and in the Northern Region, Mzuzu had 60 youth. The numbers seem to be consistent with the previous few years, except for the Central region youth camp where we had more youth due to the attendance of youth from Friends Ministries (Youth from Muslim background), who assisted with the organisation of the camp. The theme of the camp was “Walking with Jesus in these Last Days”.

YOUTH MINISTRY SEMINAR

On the 16th Sept, a Youth Ministry Seminar was held at Naotcha AEC dealing with the topic of "Discipleship of Teenagers". This seminar was especially targetted at parents of teenagers in the AEC churches in the Blantyre Area Council. Ms Cynthia Sundman, the SIM Point Person for Youth/Young Adults, was the fascinator. She taught using material that she had written, and is currently getting reviewed and translated in Chichewa.



YOUTH PBS

In September, we also had the Youth Pastors Bookset Conference (11-15 Sept) which was held at Blantyre Baptist church. This conference was attended by about 100 youth pastors and leaders from various denominations and churches in Blantyre. The speakers for all the main sessions, seminars, workshops and seminars did a fantastic job, and the overall feedback from the delegates was very positive. As a result of this conference, several



youth leaders have come to realise that they have not been focusing on the core task of disciple-making in their youth ministries, but just running programs. They have indicated that they would like some assistance from SIM with this issue, and follow-up will be undertaken with them.

MENTORING VISITS

During this period, Macdonald visited the youth leaders and pastors from five area councils – Lilongwe, Ndamera-Lulwe Chilmombo, and Mzuzu. At Chilmombo, 5 youth came to Christ as a result of the youth group doing sports ministry there. At Ndamera, 3 youth came to Christ because of the activities of the youth group there. These youth groups are going strong because of the interest shown by the matron/patron and their financial contribution to the group.

SCHOOL DISCIPLESHIP

In May, MacDonald visited the AEC students at Bangula and Nsanje Secondary Schools as part on our ongoing intentional school discipleship strategy. Given that a lot of youth spend a big proportion of their time at school, it makes sense to disciple them in this context.

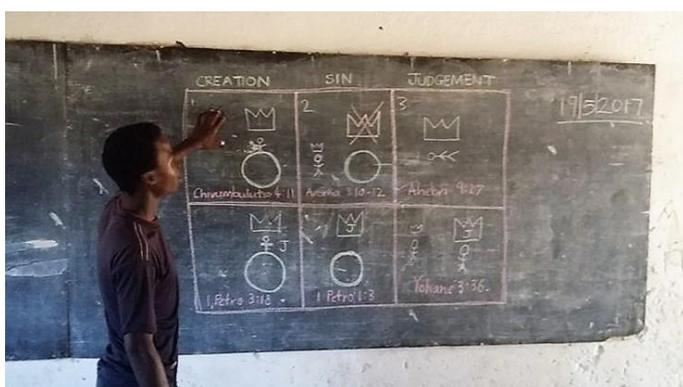
MUSLIM YOUTH

On 20 May, we conducted a Gospel training with the youth from "Friends Ministry" in Nkhotakota, which is a group of Christian youth from Muslim backgrounds. We were expecting 35 youth to turn up but we were pleasantly surprised when 60 turned up, and an hour early too! There were 11 youths who still identified themselves as Muslims as they were not associated with any churches yet. The leaders reported to us that after the training, some of these Muslim youths made commitments to follow Jesus.

Stories

“The life changing Gospel”

Allan had attended the Gospel training where 60 other youths had turned up. Not everyone who attended was a Christian but nevertheless they were drawn to this meeting that their Christian friends had invited them to. For Allan, he was only just further along in his faith journey to Christ. He had only become a Christian not too long ago but he had a deep hunger to know how to share his faith with other youth from Muslim background. Allan's father is a Muslim while his mother is a Christian. Growing up in a community that is predominately Muslim, he had access to the life changing gospel through his mum and his Christian friends who faithfully lived out the gospel before him. Having encountered Jesus, he now wants to make him known to others.



Outlook:

These are some of the upcoming key events or developments coming up in the youth ministry:

- Mentoring Trips - In October, Macdonald plans to travel to 5 area councils - Muona, Bangula, Tengani, Chididi and Lulwe - for mentoring the local youth leaders, and encouraging the Area Council Chairpersons to be supporting the local church youth ministry.
- Adolescence Girls Camp in December 2017
- Prayer and Planning Retreat in January 2018.

- Local Youth Group Income Generating Activities - Macdonald also observed during his recent visit to some of the Area Councils that some of the local youth groups have come up with their own incoming generating initiatives such as moulding/selling bricks (Chilumba, Nkhande). Macdonald plans to encourage all the youth groups to start IGAs in order to fund their local youth ministry activities, especially for the youth camps next year. Macdonald will also look into small scale farming business as an option for some of the rural youth groups, and to determine whether a pilot farming business can be undertaken by one youth group in each of the three Regions.

Prayer requests:

- Pray for Pastor MacDonald Chiutale, the AEC National Youth Coordinator as he continues to mentors youth leaders.
- Pray for the ongoing spiritual growth among all the youth in the AEC.
- Pray for intentional discipleship of youth in the local churches, and that the pastors and church leaders will take an active interest in them, walk alongside them and cheer them on.
- Pray for God's provision of funds for the youth ministry to keep going in 2018
- Pray for God's leading on where and how to reach youth in communities where Jesus is least known.