

## SCOPE :

What do the AEA commissions do? We make an attempt to peep into three of these- the Mission, Relief and Development and Women's commissions. This is in addition to the General Secretary's *to-ings* and *fro-ings*. We will get a feel of the work of the Executive Board too. Happy reading....

## Jubilee Anniversary of Sierra Leone in the Gambia

The General Secretary was in Banjul, Gambia at the invitation of the Sierra Leonean gospel ministers in the little West African country over the Easter weekend, April 22-26, 2011. He was guest speaker at a grand thanksgiving service commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence for the ministers' country of origin, Sierra Leone. The General Secretary, himself a Sierra Leonean was emotionally touched meeting with a large community of his countrymen in exile.

The theme for the jubilee celebration was **“Sierra Leone will Rise Again”**. Addressing the crowd on the theme, Rev. Khabenje expounded on the biblical underpinnings of jubilee- a time for turning back to God and his commands, proclaiming freedoms and releasing the oppressed. This he



*Jubilant Sierra Leonean Jubilee celebrants*

said is a call for restoration and great rejoicing. However, if Sierra Leone should rise again, Rev. Khabenje called attention to the biblical example of Nehemiah; who was not only a refugee in a strange land like his audience but was a captive. On receiving the news about the destruction of Jerusalem, his home city, Nehemiah was deeply remorseful and cried to God in fasting and prayer. God gave him a vision of what to do and against all odds; both external and internal challenges; Nehemiah stood courageously and strategically forged ahead to accomplish his mission in record time of 52 days. Rev. Khabenje challenged his audience to learn from Nehemiah's example and not only talk about the challenges in Sierra Leone but to do something about it and to take personal responsibility for the problems rather than shifting blame to other people and institutions.

The thanksgiving event brought together the Sierra Leone community in Gambia including the High Commissioner and staff of the Sierra Leone High Commission in the Gambia.

The General Secretary took the opportunity to connect with the church in the Gambia. He had a meeting with the denominational leaders and members of the Council of the Evangelical Fellowship of Gambia (EFG). The fellowship has been dormant for sometime but this provided an opportunity to bring the church leaders together and hopefully the momentum will continue. Rev. Khabenje highlighted the past problems of AEA itself as contributing the dormancy of the EFG but with AEA back on its feet he assured the leaders of AEA's solidarity with EFG in the future. The church in Gambia needs our prayer support and pray for unity in the Body of Christ in that nation.

## AEA Stands with the Embattled People of Ivory Coast

Following the recent political impasse and national crisis in Ivory Coast the President, Rev.



*EFCI Executives meet with AEA visitors in Ivory Coast*

Samuel Yamego prompted that AEA makes a visit to the country and stand with the brethren in time of need. The General Secretary accompanied by Rev. Dr. Wilson Badejo of Nigeria and Regional President of AEA for the West Africa region were in Ivory Coast May 12-16, 2011.

The visit was hosted by the Federation of Evangelicals in Ivory Coast (FECI). The four day visit was full of activities including meetings with the Executive officers of FECI, an emergency extraordinary General Assembly of the Fellowship which brought together the heads of denominations and member organisations of FECI. The meetings accorded the AEA visiting delegation to interact with the church leaders and listen to their stories which highlighted challenges faced by the church for well over a decade; culminating in the most recent national crisis following the presidential run-off.



*EFCI extraordinary General Assembly*

At the time of the visit, Abidjan was returning to normalcy. However, a good number of people were either displaced or had personal loss in one way or the other. Many of the church leaders and pastors in Abidjan had displaced relatives or members of their church congregations in their homes. A number of the pastors were themselves in hiding for fear of reprisals by people in arms.

As an immediate response to the crisis, the Fellowship has set up a relief programme known as Good Samaritan. This is an effort to bring immediate relief to the displaced people in the homes and church compounds of the pastors. The relief items ranged from food to non-items like blankets, clothes, mattresses etc. The fellowship has also put together a proposal for a more long term engagement with the wider society to contribute in mitigating the national crisis and for social cohesion in their country.

In response, the AEA delegation reiterated their presence was to sympathize with the brothers and sisters in Ivory Coast in time of crisis. They expressed regret at their inability to assist in material terms. However, they made a token cash contribution to the relief effort and offered to magnify their voices in appealing to the global church community for assistance. The General Secretary has requested our heads of commissions for Peace and Relief and Development to work with FECI in mobilising support for their interventions.

## **AEA Board Meets in Nairobi**

The second meeting of the newly elected AEA Executive Board was held in Nairobi June 6 & 7, 2011. Talking to the General Secretary he was upbeat about this meeting and here is why: According to the General Secretary, "Between this meeting and the first last December the Board recorded 100% attendance since their election into office last August at the General Assembly. This is encouraging compared to former years when a good number of elected officers did not attend any Board meeting for the whole tenure." The General Secretary revealed further that the Board members arrived in Nairobi at the weekend and had planned to attend church services in Nairobi to fellow-





*AEA Executive Board members pose for a photo after successful meeting*



*Enjoying the moment: Joyce Ngala receives her certificate from the General Secretary Rev. Aiah Foday-Khabenje as Dr. Emily Obwaka (Continental Coordinator PACWA), Miriam M' Nairobi and Simon Kaungute look on*

ship with the brethren in Nairobi. Highlights of the meeting included decisions about the way forward with the development of AEA properties in Nairobi, presentation of audited accounts for year ended December 31, 2010, approval of operations guidelines for AEA Commissions, review of staff manual etc.

The new Women's Commission (PACWA) Coordinator, Dr. Mrs Emily Obwaka was presented to the Board. The Board offered a prayer of consecration by anointing her and laid hands on her in prayer. Also, present at the ceremony was the Chair of the PACWA Commission, Rev. Esmé Bowers from South Africa.

## **A New Dawn in PACWA: Getting Ready to Launch into the Deep**

On March 9, 2011, PACWA Kenya began a new journey to train the core PACWA members in Community Health Evangelism (CHE). **Community Health Evangelism (CHE)** is a strategy for churches to drive holistic transformation in their communities. The idea of the training was to equip the Nairobi based PACWA resource team with an approach to empower women at the community level where ministry takes place. The training was conducted for 10 days over a period of 10 weeks – one day a week, and culminated in a colourful graduation which was witnessed by AEA staff members, friends and relatives of the graduating team and a

few other invited guests.

The training was the first of many trainings that will see resource teams (Sister's Keepers) start to impact their communities one group at a time. The women's groups will be used as empowerment forums where knowledge and skills will be imparted. As worldview, negative cultural beliefs and values are changed to align with the word of God, women will be motivated to become missional, take responsibility for their lives and make a difference in their communities. We see this training going all over Africa. Dr. Emily Obwaka PACWA Continental Coordinator will be participating in a conference in the Democratic Republic of Congo in August to envision about CHE. There are prospects of taking the same to Tanzania in the very near future.

## **The AEA Commission on Relief and Development (ARDC)**

ARDC is among the 10 Commissions of the AEA. Since its' establishment in 1987, AEA/RDC as the relief and development arm of the AEA has over the years enabled evangelical alliances and churches with relief, development and social transformation desks or departments towards increased engagement in integral mission. It has also facilitated interventions responding to needs of member alliances and communities affected by armed conflicts, floods, famine, civil wars, famine, and other forms of natural or man-made disasters.

ARDC is completely committed to AEA's vision, mission and broad strategic objectives. It seeks to serve the poor and those at high risk or vulnerability by carrying out specific or special project that target local church-based communities in Africa.

ARDC has carried out and supported the following interventions: Triple "R" initiatives (focusing on disaster relief responses, rehabilitation and long term reconciliation/peace building among /for communities in post-conflict areas in parts of Africa), development projects (such as the East Africa Supra Regional Project on basic social service delivery-water, basic education and health, and peace building), poverty reduction related initiatives by supporting the 8 MDGs, development education and exchange, church-community mobilization and providing platforms for partnerships in development work. It has encouraged the creation of strategic partnerships at all levels, sharing of development experiences, promoting active participation and equal engagement of partners (especially at the local grassroots communities). It has joined other development partners to build consensus and forge common partnerships on key thematic areas for addressing the development challenges facing the church and communities in Africa.

Currently, the AEA Commission on Relief and Development is carrying out the following initiatives:

#### ***The ARDC-EED Project in Uganda/Kenya***

This project focuses on the improved access and delivery of basic social services in basic education, HIV-AIDs prevention education, and peace building/conflict transformation in the post conflict areas of Northern-Eastern Uganda (and along with the borders of Kenya and South Sudan). This project follows the one facilitated and implemented by ARDC for the Masai communities in Kajiado District in Kenya, with respect to access to clean water.

The ARDC-EED Project has its overall goal of church based communities strengthened and their capacities improved to ensure the right access to a meaningful basic education, fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS, and have found solutions for peaceful living in the post



*Pupils learning in a classroom at Karita, Uganda*

-conflict areas of Uganda (and along its' frontiers). The key project components are:

- Access to improved quality basic education through non-formal approaches
- HIV/AIDS prevention education and female genital mutilation (FGM) special campaigns;
- Peace building and mediation efforts
- Capacity building for local partners

#### ***World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)/Refugee Highway Partnership (WEA/RHP) Initiative***

This initiative focuses on the plight of refugees and internally displaced people groups in the conflict and post-conflict areas. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of people have been uprooted from their original homes due to civil and armed conflicts. They end up on the major highways in search of peace and safety. ARDC has for several years worked with the WEA partners under the refugee highway partnership to provide a Christian response to the needs of the refugees and internally displaced groups in parts of Africa. ARDC is the Africa Regional chapter of WEA/RHP. It has initiated the Triple "R" initiative for South Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire, and is currently closely following the situation in these countries (including Libya).

***Supporting the Triple "R" Initiatives for refugees and internally displaced in South Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire, Northern Tchad (and along the frontiers of these countries)***



Armed conflicts have continued to escalate in countries like South Sudan, Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire, Libya and Tchad. Thousands of people have been uprooted from their homes. They end up as refugees in neighboring countries or the majority is internally displaced. AEA has members and partners whose communities are seriously affected in these countries. AEA members, partners and commissions are working with partners in South Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Kenya, to ensure that the triple "R" initiative is implemented, whose focus include- short-term emergency responses, medium term reconstruction and peace building (reconciliation).

#### *Other specific activities carried out by ARDC*

- ▶ Documenting of learning experiences by ARDC and its partners
- ▶ Forging strategic partnerships on common development issues in Africa
- ▶ Supporting strategic initiatives and networking that promote a new Christian Agenda for development in Africa ( such as the Vision Africa Conference processes, the Micah Challenge and Network special campaigns on poverty);
- ▶ Working with the AEA members, commissions and projects to build synergy and increased engagement in matters of integral mission, relief and development that positively impact the local church and communities in Africa;

#### *ARDC Prayer Items*

1. God's continued provision and faithfulness to ARE/RDC (particularly with respect to personal and ministry program activity and operational support.
2. AEA/RDC proposed Triple "R" initiative in Cote D'Ivoire and South Sudan intended to come alongside the AEA partners as they seek to respond to the growing/emerging needs in the 2 post conflict countries;
3. The WEA/RHP Leadership consultation that will be held in San Francisco at the end of July 2011. ARDC will be represented at this consultation, and intends to present the needs of the refugee and internally displaced groups in the immediate conflict zones of Africa ( i.e South Sudan, Abyei, Cote D'Ivoire and Libya).
4. The availability of urgently needed resources (both

financial and human), to ensure that project/program activities and operations go on uninterrupted for the next 3 years.

5. AEA/RDC Office in Kampala as it coordinates activities (especially in areas of disaster response), and building of links with partners in the post conflict areas in Africa (there seem to be more growing needs against the available scarce resources), and all this requires strong evangelical partnerships that are willing to work together ;

6. God's mind, overall plan and wisdom to prevail.

### **MISSIONS: Reflecting Globally Responding Locally**

If the Evangelicals on the continent of Africa have to fulfil the great commission, then we have to stretch our vision and at the same time deepen our commitment in local expression. This sums up my learning experience for the last 6 months as I travelled and interacted with what God is doing. From Uganda in East Africa and to Britain in Europe, God is stirring His church in a synchronised way towards a central focus of how to understand Islam in order to reach the Muslims with the Love of God. This global focus is being locally responded to differently. In Uganda it is theological education, in Kenya it is in national constitution, in UK it is confronting this issue on a global platform.

#### ***UGANDA: Theological education refocuses on understanding Islam***

Theological institutions have introduced Islamic studies in order to prepare students to face the emerging reality of Islamic influence in the nation. While in the capital Kampala, one could not miss catching glimpse of the imposing structure of Muammar Gaddafi mosque built by donations from the Libyan leader on the old Kampala hill. This is one of the indicators of the growing influence of Islam in this predominantly Christian East African nation. Although Uganda's population is 84% Christian and only 11.5% Muslims, the later are having growing influence in commerce and of late education. One of the contributing factors to this influence is the existence of the Islamic University of East Africa based in the Eastern capital of Mbale with other campuses in the capital city of Kampala, Kabojja

in central Buganda and Arua in the North.

At the *Uganda Christian University*, a new program on Islam has been introduced to equip the theological students in understanding Islam at undergraduate and graduate levels. Through this contact Mr Lawrence Oseje a Kenyan graduate from the AIU (formerly Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology NEGST) was hired to teach the Islamic courses. The *Kampala Evangelical school Of Theology* is undertaking research and educating Christians on Islam at certificate and diploma levels.

### ***Visit to UK with a Mission organisation having impact all over the world***

Each morning for 2 weeks I was part of a dedicated team of staff at the Barnabas fund who met to worship God in song and pray for Christians all over the world before they attended to daily duties. Most of them prayed for people they may never see in places of the world they may never travel to. Such commitment to global vision was also manifest in the local church and not just a preserve of global charity. From Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March to April 14<sup>th</sup> I was in the United Kingdom, headquarters of the Barnabas Fund in Wiltshire where I underwent an intensive orientation program. I learned issues of global Islam and how this organisation is involved through network of well coordinated activities on every continent. This was an exposure that deepened my commitment, broadened my perspective of God's work and inspired hope in confronting my own ministry challenges in Africa.

While in the UK I joined in the fundraising activities of the Barnabas fund in a couple churches as a learning experience. Compared to Africa, church attendance and membership in the United Kingdom is low, yet the small church membership has unequalled commitment to mission all over the world and great generosity. For example a church in Oxfordshire County had only 12 adults in attendance yet one of them had been from a short term mission in Kenya and two were planning to visit Malawi for mission not to mention they gave an offering towards the Barnabas fund. If a church of 12 in UK can send and support missionaries to the rest of the world, economics aside an African church of 300 members should do the same or even more.

### ***KENYA, Triggering the mission vision***

Church Leaders from the Nairobi Eastland's chapter of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya will be attending the ***Kairos Course*** June 20-24, 2011. Kenya has over 19,000 000 evangelical Christians making it among the top 10 in the world and second to Nigeria on the continent. The great potential of the Christians as a mission force is still to a very a large extend untapped. The *Kairos course* has been useful all over the world in igniting a passion for missions and creating commitment. It is hoped that these will lead churches developing mission policies and eventually and multiplication of the missions force in Kenya.

### ***COMING EVENTS***

► **Legal consultation-October 27- 30, 2011 in Nairobi** - A few select Christian legal practitioners, political activists and some church leaders from all over Africa will meet in Nairobi from October 27-30, 2011 for a Christian legal consultation. The consultation shall address legal/political issues affecting Christians across much of the African continent. These include changes to national constitutions, laws or regulations that impact Christians' rights, official or unofficial discrimination, human rights issues, and the expansion of Islamic influence through Sharia, Qadi courts and other legal/political initiatives.

► **Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria** - In the months of July, August, and September, we have planned visits to Ethiopia, Tanzania and Nigeria. The purpose is to meet with National Evangelical Fellowships and asses mission activities. In Nigeria I hope to meet with Bayo Fomanure the former director of the Evangelism and mission commission for mentoring and there after a possibility of visiting another West African state, possibly Senegal.