

THROUGH 2016 TO 2017: FFM WORK IN ZIMBABWE

A. THE OVERALL PICTURE

Vague policies have remained a key definer of the Zimbabwe situation for the bulk of 2016. Government has put contradictory policy instruments including the notorious Statutory Instrument 62 which forbids importation of certain goods. This comes on top of tough import duties including duties on basic necessities except medicines. In addition, a surrogate currency called Bond Notes was introduced to ease the prevailing cash crisis but that move has stirred public protest because people have lost confidence in both the Government and the central bank. On a positive note, Government started a Command Agriculture programme which was heavily subscribed by farmers due to inputs subsidies. Depending on good rains in the just arrived season, people put their hope in this programme to prevent famine and hunger in the coming year. Also, Government announced it will next year resume the construction of a dual highway connecting Harare (capital city) and Beitbridge (bordering South Africa) which will be a major convenience to business. Another remarkable development is that Government is unusually extending its hand to non-governmental agencies for partnerships in specified projects, a major shift in governmental stance regarding civil society involvement.

B. MATIBI 2016 AND AHEAD

The most agonising memory for FFM in the year 2016 is the wasted effort in trying to register the FFM Trust. The Church seemed to have a serious reservation on that idea, evidenced by a lengthy quiet which kept the other stakeholders waiting hopelessly. However, apart from the Church, the rest of the stakeholders are positive about the Trust. Regarding the projects, FFM has successfully funded a 10,000L water tank at the hospital. The institution was unable to provide this critical resource; so the project intervened in a critical emergency indeed. However, the same critical situation still exists in the school side of the Mission, worsened by too old pipes which are now bursting repeatedly and may need attention in the coming year.

The funding of allowances for Matibi doctors continued smoothly as in all past years. The doctors are happy with the allowances but suggested a variation in the packaging of the allowance, so that long service incentives are more than monthly incentives. Smooth operation has also characterised the procurement of medicines which continue to elevate the

image and efficiency of the Hospital. FFM has also funded the training of the doctors and nurses in specified service disciplines as well as servicing the mortuary. Now the hospital has become extra-busy and optimally functional. There is need to introduce specialist services early if not next year because the hospital catchment has practically expanded to include referrals from other health centres.

As well, St Ambrose Primary School shall remember 2016 as the year in which they received a jumpstart into their capacity development. The institution was financially unable to expand the school infrastructure but the FFM came in handy to build classrooms and toilets as well as servicing the school computers. Now there are 3 more classrooms which potentially help increase school enrolment and hopefully revenue as well. The classrooms have since been fitted with electric cables and will soon be powered. There was, however, an oversight in the block construction plan because the builder forgot to budget for the ceilings. Therefore, there is urgent need to put the ceilings before the wind blows off the roof. The playcentre for kindergarten was also propped up as well as the craft workshop which was donated electric stoves to replace charcoal stoves.

The FFM also did an earnest review of livelihood projects. They inspected the dam issue and engaged a Government engineer to advise the best way forward. The recommendations included erecting a new dam wall, making the project a rather big assignment. Also inspected were the garden projects around the community as well as women's vocations. The vocations that showed most potential are organic farming and credit schemes. There is great community interest in the FFM Programme such that it may be a prudent thing to organise community representatives into the FFM Trust rather than hoping for a church-dominated setup which is unlikely to sail through now.