

Africa Inter- Mennonite Mission

*A seed
becomes
a tree*

June 2022



PO Box 744 440 Main Street
Goshen, IN 46527 Steinbach, MB R5G 1Z5
USA CANADA

(574) 535-0077
aimm@aimmint.org
www.aimmint.org

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches” (Matthew 13:31–32).

At AIMM we find guidance in Jesus’ parable of the mustard seed. Despite its diminutive size, the mustard seed becomes a large bush and provides nourishment for other living beings. So, too, the kingdom of God grows and provides nourishment for us as we live into Jesus’ way of peace and light. Small acts of humanity gradually become community and love for all our fellow humans. Just as the mustard seed provides life out of proportion to its size, so does Jesus’ love grow and spread across the world.

We highlight the following ministries as examples of the love and the light of Jesus Christ. Each of these ministries started as the mustard seed and have blossomed into life-giving and life-changing love for the communities they touch.

Semente Menonita of Angola

Like many Mennonite communities around the world, Angolan Mennonites’ livelihood depends largely on their ability to cultivate the land and on God’s provision through

plentiful harvests. That is currently less the case for those of us in North America than it had been in earlier generations. Mennonite history is full of stories of migration because of war or the search for land to cultivate. Such concerns are not just stories for our Angolan brothers and sisters, whose lives have been upended by war and migration for a generation.

From 1975 to 2002 the Angolan civil war caused significant displacement, diminished agricultural production, and



Semente Menonita members working the land. From L to R: Khumbi Maria Holo, Leontina Mahamba, Mama Veka. Women take the lead in agricultural projection. The cooperative estimates that 85% of the crops its members produce comes from women farmers.

resulted in endemic poverty. Many Angolans were forced to flee to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where some were introduced to the Mennonite faith. After the war these new Mennonites returned to their country to resettle

and rebuild their lives. Angola is rich in oil, gas, minerals, and diamonds, but those who have returned to Angola from the DR Congo do not have access to those resources. They do have access to arable land, however. When the Mennonite Community of Churches in Angola, one of the Angolan Mennonite groups, came to AIMM asking for help to increase the capacity of its members in agricultural production, this seemed like a good way to assist the church by helping families attain a sustainable livelihood through farming.

The church has already made some progress through the creation of a farming cooperative called “Semente Menonita,” which means “Mennonite Seed.” The cooperative has helped families to pool their knowledge and increase production. Even more could be achieved with better seeds, appropriate fertilizers, additional marketing opportunities, and more crop storage capacity. The Schowalter Foundation has generously agreed to partner with AIMM to help meet some of these needs and boost production. Our intervention will work with 5 groups of 10 farming families each to provide better seed material, training in enhanced agricultural practices, and supervision by specialists for one planting season. Beans, peanuts, cassava, corn, and sweet potatoes will be the crops. In addition to the resources already in hand, we want to find funds to build a storage depot for each of the 5 groups. The depots will reduce crop spoilage and increase marketability for farmers by providing storage until sale prices are most profitable. Each storage depot will cost \$975. Your contribution can help us provide these depots and change the lives of those in the cooperative!

Increasing Sustainability Through Local Resources

“Can you come to Kalonda to do this training?” asked Bercie Mundendi, Director of the Kalonda Bible Institute. She had just finished the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) training that AIMM had facilitated at



the Kandale congregation. The ABCD method uses a community’s own assets and resources as the basis of development, empowering people by encouraging them to use what they already have instead of immediately looking to outside sources for assistance. Bercie was convinced that the method would be useful for the Bible Institute, its students, and even for the wider church. She would like the students who graduate in the coming months to benefit from ABCD principles. As they start their pastoral ministries, they will need to be able to assess the local resources of their communities and create opportunities for

sustainable progress, in their churches and for their own livelihoods.

AIMM is pleased to respond with a resounding YES! Bercie, one for the first Mennonite women ordained to ministry in her denomination and the first female director at the Bible Institute, has provided Spirit-led leadership since she was appointed director in 2016. There have been many challenges, including being targeted during an armed rebellion and the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Most recently AIMM needed to incrementally end salary support for teachers and scholarship assistance for students over the last three years. Bercie is embodying the hope of Jesus’ resurrection by believing God has a plan for the Bible Institute and the church it serves, despite the challenges that arise. Join us in prayer for Bercie, the Bible Institute, and the future pastors. As the Spirit leads, consider making a donation to help us provide ABCD training to the students of the

Kalonda Bible Institute so that they might be better prepared for their future pastoral placements.

Please consider making an end-of-life gift to AIMM through your will.

If you have recently sold property or in other ways have had higher than usual income, consider a one-time larger gift to benefit AIMM ministries.



Illustration at the ABCD training at the Kalonda Bible Institute

The exercise of building a fire together shows the importance of social capital (relationships). A community can produce more than an individual can when everybody brings their contribution with all of their assets and talents. Resources come from the community: Start with what you have, and build with what you know.