

The Youth Rights Information Centre is now open at Mindolo!

The Swedish Zambian Association (SweZam) is supporting a project in co-operation with Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF). The purpose of the project is to facilitate for young people of Zambia to learn more about Gender issues, Human Rights and HIV/Aids. Generous contributions from our members and finance from Forum Syd have made it possible to recently open a Youth right Information Centre (YRIC), in a room close to the library. Since the visit of five SweZam members in September of 2005, the following activities have taken place by funds from SweZam:

- On October 24 there was a UN-day held at Mindolo. Students from Primary Schools (Government schools and Private schools) were invited to participate in games and a quiz on Human Rights and HIV/Aids.
- In December, three different workshops took place. Basic School Teachers (Grades 1-9) in the Kitwe area were invited for a workshop on Library orientation. The aim was to show ways to organise a library for the purpose of the teachers to be able to set up libraries at their own schools.
- There was a World Aids Day held at Mindolo. It was a one-day workshop. 69 Youths (14-18 year olds) participated in activities such as sports and also listened to a popular lecturer, Mr. Bowa from CHEP (Copperbelt Health Education Project) who focused on Human Rights and HIV/Aids.
- There was also a two day workshop in the rural area of Solwezi. 9 Teachers and hospital workers were invited to learn more about Gender issues and Human rights and the focus was to how to become more sensitive to the children's needs.

Progress in 2006

In January 2006 books and posters on HIV/Aids, Human Rights were purchased in Lusaka and brought to Mindolo. During the following months a room for set up of YRIC was chosen and furniture bought. Apart from the books and furniture, a computer and printer was also bought to facilitate to focus and do research on the Internet for students, teachers and personnel at MEF.



The Director at MEF, Father Charles Tomas, and me, as a representative of SweZam, officially opened The Youth Rights Information Centre on the 27th of June.

Meeting with the SweZam Committee

During my one-day visit to Mindolo, I had a meeting with the SweZam Committee at MEF, participated in the official opening of YRIC and had a discussion with Youths.



Me together with the SweZam committee at Mindolo

During the committee meeting we were discussing the present status of the project and looked at future progress. I was informed about the different workshops and activities that had been carried out in 2005-2006. As a summary it can be mentioned that the transfer of funds are now working, and money have been spent on workshops, books, videos, furniture, a computer and printer. The next step is to purchase more books on gender issues, since there is a lack of these books in the YRIC. A digital camera will be bought soon, to be able to document how the project progresses. The committee members at MEF feel that the limitations in budget make it difficult to follow through all the planned activities. The appreciation of the Kwacha is also affecting the allowed budget. Especially the rural workshops are expensive, since there is a problem with transport. In the long run they would like an extended budget for follow-ups and costs for a vehicle.

The communication between SweZam in Sweden and Zambia is depending on email. From now on we will look into the possibilities to use Skype (a telephone communication over Internet).

It is very important to be physically present at the start up and running of a project. In September Anna Tyllström, will start her work as a volunteer for four months in Mindolo. She will be able to take an active part in the progress of the project and a mid term review, which yet is to be carried out. According to the SweZam committee that target audience (students, teachers) are responding well, but we talked about the importance to make them participate more in planning and follow through of activities.

Need for a volunteer

There is need for an IT-volunteer at Mindolo, from January 2007. A technician who can set up networks and keep them running, and also be able to teach computer literacy and help Mindolo to set up and update their website. MEF can accommodate one volunteer from SweZam every year, staying for 3 month up to one year.

Meeting with youths

I had a discussion with youths, and the meeting was very rewarding. There are a total of 25 youths connected to YRIC. There are five students from five schools in the Kitwe area. The students were chosen to participate in YRIC, because they are members of the Anti-Aids Youth clubs at their schools. The purpose is to invite these groups of students for workshops, and they will there after go back to their schools and teach their peers what they have been taught at MEF. A total of ten representatives (Grade 11), from Mindolo High School and Helen Kaunda High School, were present during our discussion. These students had participated in two workshops during 2005. One in June focusing on Human Rights, one in August focusing on Environmental Issues and they also took part in the World Aids day in December, when all students were invited.



The SweZam Youth Club

Here is a short summary of our discussion.

1. They appreciate to participate in activities at MEF. They liked the World Aids Day the most, and would like Mr. Bowa to come back and lecture.

2. They would like to know about the planned workshops and other planned activities in advance. At present they feel that they get information very late, sometimes even the same day as the event is taking place.
3. They don't feel like they are participating in the planning or follow through or evaluation of the project. A suggestion is that they will be invited to an informal afternoon meeting once a month together with Anna Tyllström or another member of the SweZam Committee at MEF.
4. They would like teachers from their school to participate in the workshops, preferably one teacher per workshop. In that way it will be easier for the students to get the right support for discussions and follow-ups at their schools.
5. They would like the HIV/Aids workshops to be more focused on boys. At present they find most of the material focusing on females and their behaviour.
6. They would like to be given posters on Human Rights, HIV/Aids and Gender Issues, which can be put up at their schools. We also talked about the possibility for the students to make their own posters.
7. We talked about a name for this group of students. We decided on the **SweZam Youth Club**.
8. One of the students raised a question if he/she can still be a member of the club after graduating school (Grade 12). I believe that they should. It will strengthen the bonds between the age groups and secure the purpose of the project. It is very important to have new students enrolling the club. At present there are only students from Grade 11. To keep up a continuation of the project, students from Grade 10 should also be part of the project every year.
9. They would like to have exchange of information and ideas with Youths in Sweden, preferable pen-pals in their own age.
10. The youths really appreciated to see the area for the YRIC. They appreciated the books, videos, posters and computer. They are looking forward to take more active part in YRIC and its progress to success.
11. We are encouraging the youth club to invite fellow students to the YRIC room. We made a decision that there will be one member from the SweZam Youth club in the YRIC room every afternoon between 14.30-16.00, to be able to help the visitors and find what they are looking for in the reference library material.
12. They members of the youth club will get Computer Literacy training, so they can have handle the computer and use the internet for research.