



*MIMAMO*

**Missão de  
Misericórdia  
Abrangente em  
Moçambique  
Outreaching  
Mercy Mission in  
Mozambique**

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**INCEPTION OF MIMAMO AND WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK EVENT REPORT**

*Presented by*

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### THE REPORT

13th January 2016 marked the approval of MIMAMO CC into the United Religions Initiative family. This was soon followed by a period of the memorable event of the family's World Interfaith Harmony Week which takes place during the first week of February every year from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> day. MIMAMO CC celebrated this week in style as it was still in its period of celebrating its approval into URI family. Its program reached its peak on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> of February in the city of Lichinga with three distinguished guests, Sheikh Mnane, representing Islamic Faith, Priest Julio Chiunda and Bishop Franklin Choo, representing Christian Faiths. The message which was carried to the people on this particular event was the need for strong interfaith recognition in the communities.

This is a program that started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February with a visit to various offices within the city and travelling to remote villages with the intention of briefing, networking and disseminating the objectives of URI and MIMAMO CC in Mozambique. Various places were visited which included the following:

Provincial Commission for Religious and Constitutional Affairs staff, Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) where we managed to talk to Sheikh Mustafa Mbuana and Mr. Jose Domingos respectively.



*MIMAMO leaders during a briefing with the Director of CCM in his office. Left to Right- Shadreck Kwagwanji, Mr. Jose Domingos and Barnabe Welo.*

Then we went to introduce ourselves to the District Administrator Mr. Alberto Mussa where we briefed him about URI and MIMAMO CC on their mission and activities. He therefore accompanied us to the Permanent Secretary, Ms. Hilda who is in charge of administration technicality and procedures. We too briefed her about the mission and activities of URI and MIMAMO CC. She gratefully thanked us with our mission and wished us all the best and success working with interfaith dialogues and other matters of community concerns. She pointed out that each and every success depends on effective communication



between MIMAMO CC and the District Government in projects and programs. For example, we can cooperate on cutting issues, such as land erosion and global warming interventions in planting trees and any other appropriate measures.

*MIMAMO leaders pose for a photograph with the Permanent Secretary in her office. Left to Right- Shadreck Kwagwanji, Hilda and Barnabe Welo.*

After the Lichinga administrator's office, then we went to Lago District which is about 120 kilometers away. On our arrival to Lago District, we first went to see the District Administrator, Lady Deolinda Alfeu. After our self-introduction, she was briefed on what URI and MIMAMO are, their objectives and World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW). The Administrator was very happy to hear about URI and MIMAMO and most welcomed the mission in the district. The mission has come at the right time when interfaith dialogues, love to God, love to one another and love to the good are ever more needed in our societies. She also said apart from that, the district experiences soil erosion and rising temperatures which is a big concern. The district would also love to have a planting trees project which would be very important to fight against erosion and replenish bare laid lands. She reiterated that the provincial governor on his visit to the district recommended the planting of trees as one way of solving this problem of soil erosion.



Then, we went to the Municipal Council of Metangula with the intention to talk to the Mayor. We were told that she was in Maputo attending the Women Central Committee function with the purpose of electing the President of Women's Organization of Mozambique. So, we were referred to Urbanization and Constructions Councilor Anussa. He received us. As usual, he was briefed about URI and MIMAMO. After that, he advised us to see the Agricultural and Economical Activities councilor. As he was briefed, became so much grateful to have us. He then presented to us problems he faces in producing seedlings for the project of planting trees: lack of plastic bags, watering cans, water tank and horse pipes. As a result, the seedlings production capacity has been reduced to four hundred seedlings of

different species and kinds, such as fruit trees, shadow trees.

Lago District Administrator Ms. Deolinda Alfeu



*A drop in the ocean! Tree nursery owned by the whole Municipality which can hardly meet the demand of the population in the district.*

Despite the huge amount of the lake water in disposal if you take an account of the population of people, the number of trees mentioned is just a drop of water on the sea or ocean. The project has the colorful future depending on the availability of required resources which can turn it into a Mega Seedlings Production Project to meet demands of the whole Lago District.

*Talking to Agriculture technical advisor of Metangula Township.*

Over the weekend we went to Mbetazigone and Chioko villages outside the city of Lichinga for the World Interfaith Harmony Week ceremony. The ceremony was successfully held with the involvement of the community. Local and Traditional Authorities, Mustafa and Luciano witnessed the event amongst others. On explanation of URI and MIMAMO CC objectives, the community welcomed the URI and MIMAMO interfaith initiative. They also presented their chronic problems of school for their children and lack of safe drinking water being a very terrible experience to the community.

A large number of children at school age between 6 and 10 just wake up, loiter around the village each day because they can't go to school. The school that exists is located very far away



about 3 or more kilometers away that children in this community of the age described cannot afford to walk such a long bushy distance. We were shown a structure of what was meant to be a school. They complained that this situation has a long outstanding problem which needed an immediate attention. The community's fruitless effort to curb this problem can be witnessed by their attempt to construct this uncompleted structure in the picture below.



*The abandoned school project in Mbetazigone*

In addition to this, people draw their drinking water from shallow ponds which always dry out after rainy season and the communities travel long distances in dry season in search for water for domestic use. See picture below:

*Unsafe drinking water consumed in the village of Mbetazigone.*

In continuation of our program, we interviewed a young interfaith couple on their marriage challenges and experiences. So, they shared their challenges and experiences as being more from external than internal. Due to strong beliefs and segregation based on religion, paternal and maternal Muslims appear not to be happy with this kind of interfaith marriages. And this couple is not exceptional. They are living happily because of their strong love otherwise the marriage would have been broken up. Our visit to this place with this message of interfaith brought a better understanding and harmony between the two belligerent faiths of Islam and Christianity. Night after their interview, the couple were blessed with a baby boy as she was expecting in her last days.



*The young interfaith couple Manuel and Hawa.*

One of the MIMAMO's key activities is environmental conservation hence the address on this important issue to the participants. On observing the effects of careless cutting down of trees which were now evident in the village of Mbetazigone, the issue of water problem for example, is a result of loss of trees in the village where water dries out as soon as the rain stops. The Search for a viable site where nurseries for tree planting project could be located in order to replenish the trees in the areas where there are no trees due to tree logging became a big task on this day. This involved the village headman taking us a long distance looking for catchment areas with signs of all season water availability. See photo below.



*A match to find a place for putting a nursery for producing seedlings*

Our program execution involved the participation of both Christian and Muslim faiths. In Mbetazigone, the meeting was opened by a prayer from a village Muslim Sheikh.



*A Sheikh is leading an opening Islamic prayer at the meeting.*

The closing prayer was conducted by Mrs. Neema Kwagwanji one of MIMAMO CC members.

*A Christian closing the meeting with prayer.*

At the end of the meeting the gathering was asked to pose for a group photograph which included some of the non-school going children.



*A cross section of participants to MIMAMO CC meeting. Standing next to the Sheikh in the middle is the Village Headman Mustafa a Muslim.*

Thereafter, members of MIMAMO were taken around the village. The people in the village are hard workers who depend solely on farming to earn a living. Although the rains started very late in some parts of the areas there is promising bumper yield this year.



*Healthy maize in one of the farms and banana harvest.*

Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2016 marked the climax of MIMAMO's program which started at 16.00Hrs in Lichinga city.



*World Interfaith Harmony Week commences with everyone listening attentively.*

In attendance were three invited distinguished guests Sheikh Mnena, Fr. Julio Chiunda and Bishop Choo together with other fifteen participants.





*The three invited distinguished guests getting set for the event.*

Mr. Kwagwanji opened the event by asking the priest to give an opening prayer which was followed by a welcoming speech and later Mr. Banabe Welo was invited to explain the significance of this event as well as the history of URI, MIMAMO and WIHW to the gathering. Each invited distinguished guest had a ten minute message on harmony, peace, love and goodwill. The photos below show each distinguished guest stressing a point on the theme of the event about “World Interfaith Harmony Week”.



*Sheikh Mnane*



*Fr. Julio Chiunda*



*Bishop Franklin Choo*

The event was symbolically commemorated with the three invited guests lighting their candles from one source signifying that each faith believe in one God though with different names.



*A unique significant moment of the event as the three announce that United We ca Make It in promoting peace*

A message to the gathering on this day was the goal of URI through MIMAMO CC to establish peace and harmony among people of different religions regardless of their beliefs and faiths. The candles further represented an enlightening moment to the gathering about what URI through MIMAMO is to bring to the people of Mozambique.



*May Peace Prevail so they declare the three distinguished guests*

The gathering later held hands in a circle where Sheikh Mnane closed with an Islamic prayer.



*A joint prayer for the event led by Sheikh Mnane*

After the prayer, soft drinks and snacks were shared. It was a wonderful moment and participants commented with expectations to seeing this mission achieve its goals.



*Time to share a drink and a snack*

At the end there was a very happy farewell bidding by Sheikh Mnane as he left the room. He left earlier because he had some other errands to attend to. This can be expressed from the happy faces in the picture below that MIMAMO is here to stay and work with various religions for social and developmental welfare of different communities.



*Sheikh Mnane bidding farewell*

## **CONCLUSION**

The program, was a complete success. All the areas which were on the program were achieved except for Administrator's office for Chimbunila District as well as Local and Traditional Authorities of Massenger are not yet visited but they will be briefed about URI and MIMAMO mission activities. In all places visited the message about interfaith was overwhelmingly welcomed and supported. This is a sign that observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week will serve peoples of all faiths and beliefs to coexist in peace, harmony and goodwill. MIMAMO's challenging task will now be how to meet the local needs presented by people from various places visited. Pressing issues include the supply of safe water, education, reforestation, and capacity building.

1. Capacity building.

We started working without any training and experiences in aspects of interfaith and dialogues, peace and conflict resolution. Our work this time was very much based on traditional and local instinct and experiences. Thus we need training in these areas.

2. Planting trees.

This project has got three quarters folds:

- a) Replaces the logged trees
- b) Provides shade to people in sunny summers;
- c) It is part of the solution of global warming and green house effects.

The project is a vital plan for recovering the lost trees and amending problems associated with the absence of trees and neglected Mother Nature. It is an unprecedented opportunity to avoid things from becoming worse.

3. Construction of a primary school.

The construction will have two components:

- a) Three classrooms with a built-in office block; and
- b) Two houses for teaching staff.

Education is one of the basic rights of a child anywhere in the world. So, it is so important that children should be educated for future challenges of life, leadership of the world and development. All is ONLY possible with education.

4. Constructing a Borehole water /well.

Borehole water is safer than most of other sources. This water project may require a big tank and a water pump. Water is pumped into the tank and then people fetch water from water taps.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week has been a beneficial challenge where we have drawn some experiences working with traditional and local authorities and various government officials in different capacities. We therefore look forward to organizing the World Interfaith Harmony Week in a very coherent and participative manner next year.