

EBM/MASA and its Partner Unions in Africa

In the year 2004, the 50th anniversary of the EBM, seven African unions belong as members and partners to the EBM:

- Equatorial Guinea
- Cameroon
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa
- Central African Republic.

The history of and the relationship of the EBM and its European member unions with the African Baptist Unions are diverse and manifold. This article does not represent a general reflection on church history but only sketches a short overview over the EBM endeavor in world mission.

Equatorial Guinea

EBM missionary work in Equatorial Guinea is closely linked to the work of the Spanish Baptist Union. Already in 1940 a missions committee existed in the Spanish Union under the leadership of pastor *Joaquin Cabrera*. This committee was responsible for Equatorial Guinea, though it did not yet have missionaries. Neither were the Spanish Baptists able to realize their missionary responsibility after the war. Equatorial Guinea has been a Spanish colony, which gained its independence only in 1968. Only after that, a strong desire emerged to become active in Equatorial Guinea. Pastor *Eutimio Herreros Navarro* made first contact with the leadership of the Baptist churches in Equatorial Guinea. His moving report at home leads to the decision to make Equatorial Guinea the focus of their missionary endeavor. In co-operation with the International Missions Board the first missionary couple *Jess and Peggy Thompson* were sent out in 1982, in later years also the *Driggers* and *Whitters*. In 1983 Pastor *Jorge Mut* visited Equatorial Guinea for a prolonged period of time and worked alongside *Jess and Peggy Thompson*. Their goal was to develop a common missionary perspective. After further contact and communication with the EBM, the Spanish couple *Esther and Daniel Banyuls* was sent out to Equatorial Guinea in 1995, and *Damaris Llopis* in 1999. Their work in **Malabo**, **Bata**, and other cities had a different focus. On one hand the co-operation with the local union and local churches is of great importance in order to reach the people of Equatorial Guinea with the Gospel in various ways. After communicating with local staff, a general strategy was developed by *Esther and Daniel Banyuls*. Evangelism and social work are both important building blocks of missionary work. Then there is also the responsibility for two evangelical schools in **Malabo** and **Mukurassi** under the leadership of pastor *Mario Bolo* from Equatorial Guinea and *Damaris Llopis*. Another area of work is the discipleship and training of the local churches to enable them to be self-responsible and look after their various ministries. There are also now groups from Spain visiting Equatorial Guinea for short term stays every summer. A program called "LOVE GUINEA" strives to support staff and churches in their missionary work.

Cameroon

The missionary endeavor of the European Baptists in Cameroon has a long tradition. Before the "Baseler Mission" sent out missionaries in 1884, already the British "Baptist Mission Society" (BMS) was active in Cameroon. In 1891 the first German missionary, *August Steffens* left for Cameroon, sent by the "Deutsche Kamerun Mission" (German Cameroon Mission).

During both world wars there were decisive changes. German missionaries had to leave the country. Even after the Second World War German missionaries were not allowed back in. This fact became the starting point for the founding of the “Europaischen Baptistischen Missionsgesellschaft” (European Baptist Mission Society) in 1954 and later the “Europaischen Baptistischen Mission” (EBM) (European Baptist Mission).

Because only after the foundation of the EBM - being a European organization - missionaries could be sent out again, first the French missionary couple *Farely* and after that again German missionaries e.g. the *Kassuelkes*. First mission stations were built in the North of the country. In 1963 the Swiss couple *St aeubli* left for South Cameroon. In 1973 a Bible College for the training of pastors and evangelists was founded in **Ndiki** in the South. In the same year the “Centre Technique de Maroua”, a training project by the German “Gemeindejugendwerk” (GJW) (Youth Department) was established. Later the missionary work spread south. To name one: the training programme “CAREJ“ in **Nkondjok** in the South. First in 2003 the German couple *Hanna and Dirk Pusch* were called to the capital city **Yaoundé** for church planting. They support the work of the Cameroon pastor *Moise Epoh*.

The joint missionary endeavor of the EBM and “Union des Eglises Baptistes Camerounaise” (UEBC) has grown in various ways nearing the year 2004.

Schools were founded and developed in connection with the churches throughout the whole country. Traineeships in technical and other trades were offered to young people, both on a small scale in local churches and on a larger scale in the training centers in **Nkondjok** and **Garuo**. Evangelists, deacons and pastors are educated at the Bible College in **Mokong** in the North and at the Theological Seminary in the South. Four big hospitals in **Zidim**, **Mokong**, **Nkoteng** and **Bonaberi** are part of an extensive medical work of the churches. Time and again young students from Cameroon went to the Theological Seminary of the German Baptist Union in Hamburg or to the International Baptist Seminary in Rueschlikon, Switzerland. To name a few: the General Secretary of the UEBC Pastor *Emanuel Mbenda* and *Samuel Johnson* who is at present pastoring the German church in Hamburg-Reinbek. These opportunities have furthered the contact between the national unions, the EBM and the UEBC.

Since 1957 the EBM has a partnership with the UEBC. In Cameroon there is also the “Eglises Baptistes Camerounaise” (EBC) and in the English speaking part of the country the “Baptist Convention of Cameroon” (BCC). Today there are more than 25 EBM missionaries from various countries working in the North and South of Cameroon.

Malawi

Already in 1986 the former EBM General Secretary *Horst Niesen* got in touch with the General Secretary of the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA) due to an inquiry and the subsequent research. During the following years information was exchanged occasionally. From 1994 to 1997 preliminary considerations for a concrete co-operation were drafted by the leadership of the Baptist Convention together with the African secretary of the EBM, Dr. *Detlef Kapteina*, and with Dr. *Klaus Fiedler*, Baptist lecturer at the Theological Seminary in **Zomba**/Malawi. In 1997 when *Detlef Kapteina* visited Malawi, important details regarding the relationship between the EBM and BACOMA were discussed e.g. the fundamental policy to further local missionaries who under the supervision of BACOMA were responsible for church building in various areas.

In close co-operation with the General Secretary of the Baptist Convention of Malawi, Pastor *Akim Chirwa*, the first two local missionaries were appointed for evangelism and church building in 1997/1998: Pastor *Francis Nkhoma* and Pastor *Hauke Khuzalo*, and later pastor *Brasswell Nkhonjera*. Meanwhile Pastor *Graham Chipande* succeeded Pastor *Francis Nkhoma*. In 2000 when the EBM was restructured, *Regina Claas* became regional representative of the EBM in Southern Africa. After talks in Malawi in 2000 and 2002 questions arose concerning a concept for the Convention at home, concerning specific social

projects and concerning another job for a local missionary to the swamparea in Southern Malawi.

Mozambique

Mozambique has been a Portuguese colony for 470 years. After a long and fierce war Mozambique gained its independence in 1975, first as a marxist-leninistic state. After further civil and rebel wars, a peace treaty was negotiated in the years from 1988 to 1995. This paved the way for democracy and a stable political situation.

In 1991 the General Secretary of the EBM, *Max St aebli*, visited Mozambique and made first contact with the Convenção Baptiste de Mozambique (CBM). Already in 1992 the CBM was welcomed as a partner union of EBM and a year later, in 1993, the Portuguese couple *Pires* was sent out as first EBM missionaries to Mozambique. When they returned in 1999, a further Portuguese couple *Isabel und Eduardo Melo* were sent to **Beira**, focusing on “theological training”. Through the flood in 2000, *Eduardo Melo* together with the CBM was temporarily involved in disaster relief. During this time, a short-term team from Austria was able to help tremendously. This is worth mentioning, because this time led to the personal calling of *Doris* und Dr. *Günther Schwarzingler* from Austria. They were sent out as EBM missionaries to Mozambique in 2002 to develop a social centre in **Macia** in the South of the country.

Sierra Leone

The foundation of the first Baptist church in Sierra Leone can be traced back to the year 1792, when due to the English anti-slave-movement former slaves, who had been soldiers in the American independence war, came back to Sierra Leone. From this stems the name of the capital city of Sierra Leone: “Freetown”. These former slaves founded the first Baptist church; and e.g. today’s Regent Road Baptist Church has its origin in this church. Already before the foundation of the “Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone” (BCSL), the EBM had sent out missionaries: in 1966 *Elisabeth Eckel* left for Sierra Leone as the first EBM missionary, followed by the couple *Hagen* in 1972, to further the foundation of a church union. The “Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone” (BCSL) was founded in 1974. Various Baptist churches, which established through EBM missionary work and through the Baptist Missionary society, united to form a convention. To name a few: the churches in **Mambolo**, **Lunsar** and the Robert-Street-Baptist-Church in **Freetown**. First of all, the main “mission station” was in **Mambolo**, where European missionaries were responsible for the development of a church, a clinic and a school. In 1978, in co-operation with the “Christoffel Blindenmission”, the eye hospital in **Lunsar** was opened; the reopening of which in the year 2003 - after the traumatic experiences of the civil war from 1991 to 2000 - was of great importance for the whole country. In the seventies and eighties there were a number of missionaries in Sierra Leone. During those years the missionary work of the EBM in co-operation with its partner union spread through the whole country. Also during this time the BCSL as a church organization developed a new structure and built up different ministry departments in the sense of “churches help churches”. The theological training, too, was a focal point of the missionary work of EBM. The “Evangelical College of Theology” in **Jui** was founded in 1964. It is our goal to thoroughly train young men and women for responsible professional work in various areas of society. Before and during the rebel war the number of missionaries had decreased considerably, though the needs remained the same in all areas of the country. Today the work of the BCSL and its churches reaches areas as far as **Bo**, **Kono** and **Kenema**.

South Africa

The relationship with the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) started already in 1987, when *Regina Claas* und *Olaf Kormannshaus* from the German "Gemeindejugendwerk" (GJW) (Youth Department) came into contact with the (mainly black) Baptist Convention. First a partnership with the GJW developed, which existed since 1989 and was already bearing fruit on many levels in the early years. There were short term stays of volunteers in South Africa, African staff was supported financially and materially, there were training programmes and study tours, and there was an international Children's Camp in 2001.

In 1994 *Regina Claas* was called to South Africa as the first EBM missionary, to co-ordinate existent contacts and first of all to develop in co-operation with the local Convention social ministries closely associated with the churches. From this work a Kindergarten society emerged with about 60 Kindergartens all over South Africa, which by now is independently managed by African sisters and brothers. Over the last few years a trend has developed towards making AIDS projects a focal point; concerning this the BCSA together with the EBM has applied for support from "Brot fuer die Welt" (Bread For The World) etc. Further missionaries from Germany are the *Klammt* family and *Kristina Hasenpusch*, who have been in the country for four years now and who all work at the Theological Seminary in **Soweto**. Because of the longstanding partnership in South Africa, the Baptist Convention wishes to be a partner of EBM, though there are four other Baptist unions in South Africa, which form - together with the BCSA - the South African Baptist Alliance. Even before the end of Apartheid German missionaries like Pastor *Ernst Haus* were already working in South Africa. Between the German Union and the BCSA an immediate partnership developed over the past few years, which will be sealed with a partnership agreement at the Assembly of the BCSA in Bloemfontein in December 2003 and at the German Assembly in Cottbus.

Central African Republic

First contacts between the EBM and the Baptist churches of the Central African Republic were made in 1976 when the EBM General Secretary *Helmut Grundmann* visited Sierra Leone as representative of the "Deutschen Evangelischen Allianz" (German Evangelical Alliance). There he met with Pastor *Paul Changé*, who is the founder of the "Union Fraternelle des Eglises Baptistes" (UFEB). The UFEB is a group of Baptist churches which developed from the Central African Republic churches of the American MID mission. In 1981 *Helmut Grundmann's* successor, *Max St aebli*, went to the Central African Republic to analyze the situation there and to consider a common perspective.

After further talks an official partnership of co-operation between the EBM and UFEB was agreed upon at the mission council in Lueneburg in 1984. In 1985 Dr. *Jean* and *Doris Vincent* were sent out as missionaries and in 1987 *Susy* and *Max St aebli*.

The goal of the partnership was to support the young union UFEB in its theological and social work. Focal points of the EBM were the structuring and rebuilding of the "Evangelical Theological School" in **Bangui** (ETEB) in close co-operation with its President *Paul Changé*, and the extension of the training programme for women and the development of the community center „Maison DORCAS“. Furthermore there is the strong support of the work with the pygmies together with *Marc Caparang* and the "Basisgesundheitsdienst" (Basic Medical Aid), which is connected to the name of Dr. *Mechtild Schroeder*.

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