

MASANGA – 3 YEARS OF RAPID DEVELOPMENT

By the Chairman, Peter Bo Jørgensen

The Masanga project is in rapid development. From a project focused primarily on restoring the hospital buildings, installing hospital equipment and initiating treatments, it now comprises training programmes, a number of entrepreneurial projects and a range of expansions in the medical areas.

The projects are progressing well and we have come a long way in the first three years. There are approx 100 employees and volunteers on a daily basis working in and around the hospital on various projects. Approx 25,000 consultations/treatments per year are carried out in our out-patients clinic and a total of almost 1000 children have been admitted to our children's ward and nutrition centre (TFC). Our maternity ward is benefiting from donations from the J L Lauritsen Fund, and the number of beds this year will be 60: 40 for the children's ward and 20 for the maternity ward. The goal is a Community Hospital with 200 beds and altogether 250 employees of whom more than one half will be medical staff. We are well on our way. The goal is to reach this target over a 10 year period.

The idea that this can be achieved is based on the acknowledgement of the connection between health, education and work. The free and equal access to basic health benefits and training together with the development of enterprises creates a correlation in the project that is attractive to many people who are interested in helping to turn around the uneven development in our complicated world. The project is, and must be, viable, i.e. at some time in future both in terms of competence and economy, it must be independent of donors. The money for the activities must come from the project itself and possibly from the regional or national authorities, in so far as the development in the country allows this. The competence to carry on the project lies with the local community through education and the training that has taken place throughout the period.

Therefore - even though we have only just begun – we are looking towards the end, i.e. when we as an organisation are able to pull out of the project. Our goal is “to assist in running the hospital until the local population is able to run it in the future”. The project itself is not owned by anybody. The rights to run the hospital are with AFOM and SLAA who together comprise the project's board. The hospital is owned by the government but the land on which it lies belongs to local landlords.

The 3 lines in the project, the Hospital-, the Training- and the Business line are independent units with independent management structures and organisation. They are connected in a natural way that they have evolved from each other and through their activities they will secure each others' existence and future. The growth and development that we create is deeply rooted in the local population, the local environment and the local culture. Its depth helps to ensure that we create a kinship, a feeling of common ownership and a will to protect the values of the 3 lines. The development of this institutional conviction takes time and we have a need for input from other NGO's with experience in this area of development work. Therefore, an initiative with IBIS is in progress, however other NGO's would be able to participate in this.

The road towards this final goal is long and winding. I do not believe that there is a single truth about the right strategy and the correct way to carry out development work. I believe in our project because we have reached such a long way and with very few means. This can only be done if there continues to be a connection between the determination and understanding of the local community and their desire for change, and our ideas, initiatives, work and modest financial capability.

On the education front, we are now starting off the next team of auxiliary nurses in our own small school. The goal primarily is to train employees who we can offer future employment at the Masanga hospital. We shall also be starting up registered nurse training in the district and will do so in collaboration with the local authorities and other NGO's and players, including the district hospital in Magburaka. We have started up a programme of adult education for staff and for the local population and a compressed secondary school course that will give students competences to seek places in higher education institutions. All education activities will now come under the Masanga Educational Centre, MEC. Here we have reached an agreement with the people behind the Retro Café who have developed Project-React which will in future run MEC in close co-operation with the daily management of the hospital and business administration. The first volunteers for this project will depart in the autumn to, e.g. prepare their first work-camp for February 2010 and to seek future local staff to include in the project.

Many small ships have been launched within the entrepreneurial field. Some are sailing without sails and a captain, others must use oars while a few have not only captain and sails but are also crewed by good sailors. The most important factor is to make a start. The carpentry workshop is busy primarily with restoration work for the hospital.

The bicycle workshop, which is run in co-operation with Basikeli, is growing and bikes are being repaired and sold. The workshop is functioning well and its economy is fine. We are now able to invest in extensions and import more used bikes from Denmark.

The tailor shop is getting new input from the latest volunteer to deploy, Chloe Rumark from the UK, who is a trained designer. Initiatives that will strengthen the local position, i.e. with the production of school uniforms, are underway. We are hoping and aiming to make a big success of the production of bags etc which will be sold in Europe. In this connection, an agreement is being made with the company Kadaver in Denmark, who will import these and be responsible for the wider distribution and sales. A survey of this market so far has shown that there is great potential and we shall do all in our power to bring our small tailor workshop up to speed in order to enter the international arena.

Soap production is progressing quietly and smoothly.

The canteen project has been adjusted, re-structured and is growing.

The poultry farm with egg production is ticking along and continues to grow, and now works together with other poultry farms in the country.

The agricultural project has been given a lift with tractor and implements donated by Lions, Dragsholm.

All the enterprises come under the Masanga Sustainability Business Enterprise, MSBE, which is a registered company with the right to import and export activities. All employees in the different projects will in time be employed by MSBE with contracts and appropriate tax and pension arrangements.

Many of these initiatives have been set up by volunteers, Masanga volunteers, and an important element of the project continues to be the fact that we have committed and dynamic volunteers who are helping to urge this outstanding project onwards.