

## Networking theological education in Africa: the NetACT story<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This article, first, relates the story of the founding and growth of NetACT, a network of African theological schools. It furthermore shows how the member schools' desire to be part of efforts to address issues related to HIV&AIDS on the African continent led them to focus, amongst other things, on curriculum development and gender equality. As a logical first step, a detailed questionnaire had to be completed by all member schools. Data collected in this way was statistically quantified in order to show the existence or not of unequal gender representation in the participating theological schools and the churches that are their clients. Finally, in light of the results of this research, the work done by NetACT is highlighted, as well as its positive outcome as experienced by the individual schools.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The article tells the story of the Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT).<sup>3</sup> Within this story three events and subsequent streams of thought and action played a major role that were researched and is herewith described.

### 2. THREE STREAMS

Three events led to the formation of the Network for African Congregational Theology.

*The first stream* of NetACT's origins started with an "African Safari" in 1997, when three staff members of Stellenbosch University (SU) and one from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) visited 37 theological schools in Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Ever since the establishment of South Africa's first democratic dispensation in 1994, postgraduate students from churches founded through the missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa started attending UWC and SU. Students from other Reformed churches soon joined them. The aim of the safari was – besides conducting oral examinations with registered SU and UWC students who resided in the countries where the schools are located – to get to know the theological schools and their contexts better, in a more personal way, to strengthen ties, to further ecumenical cooperation and to put an important question to these schools: What are

---

1 Jurgens Hendriks is Professor Emeritus in Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He is a founding member of NetACT and serves as the network's Executive Director. Email [hjh@sun.ac.za](mailto:hjh@sun.ac.za)

2 The article is based on the first and second chapters of a new book: Hendriks, H Jurgens; Mouton, Elna, Hansen, Len & Le Roux, Elisabet. 2012. *Men in the pulpit, women in the pew? Addressing gender inequality in Africa*. Stellenbosch: SunMedia.

3 In August 2011 at its Annual General Meeting the NetACT Board accepted the DCMA (Deaf Christian Ministry Africa) as its 13th member. This school started teaching deaf people to become ministers to deaf congregations in Africa. The school is situated in Worcester, South Africa. [www.deafnet.co.za](http://www.deafnet.co.za) (Accessed 25 June 2012). The research reflected here was done when the member schools counted twelve.

the main challenges and problems that theology and theological institutions such as theirs face on our sub-continent? We were personally changed by this visit and so were our institutions.<sup>4</sup>

*The source of the second stream*, also in 1997, was in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, when the International Society for the Study of Reformed Communities met at the Free University for their triennial meeting. The Society studied the influence of secularisation on Reformed communities and a pretty negative scenario unfolded. The writer and our colleague, Prof. Russel Botman, represented the Reformed Church in South Africa and told the conference that the Society's research gave a pretty one-sided picture.<sup>5</sup> They then explained what was happening in southern Africa. They challenged the Society to listen to other voices than just those from the West. The outcome was that the Society's next meeting was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa in 2000. Ten of the 19 papers were from sub-Saharan Africa, that is from the countries visited during the 1997 Safari. They were presented by people we met on that Safari. This meeting between "North and South" left nobody untouched and eventually turned out to be much more than a typical scientific research-based event (Hendriks et al 2001). A lot of trust was built between the southern African contingent during the three years in which they worked on their papers and presented them. The papers had a remarkable impact on the academics of Europe and North America. This meant a lot to the southern contingent.

*The third stream* of our origins came from Karen, a suburb in Nairobi, Kenya 2-5 February 2000.<sup>6</sup> A consultation was organised by the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA)<sup>7</sup> and the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology (NEGST).<sup>8</sup> It was attended by 350 delegates from all parts of Africa and dealt with seminaries as theological institutions of higher education and their relationship with the church. "Serving the church: partnership in Africa" was the theme, and Prof. Tite Tienou, the previous president and dean of the Faculty of Theology in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and currently professor in Missiology at the Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, was the main speaker. The challenges, shortcomings and tensions in theological education in Africa were debated. The emphasis was on the importance of the church's financial support of seminaries and on the responsibility of seminaries to cooperate with the church in training future ministers.

In this atmosphere the representatives of Justo Mwale Theological College (Lusaka, Zambia), Zomba Theological College (Malawi), the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (Kenya) and Stellenbosch University met and decided to form NetACT. The following institutions were not present, but indicated their willingness to be part of such a network: Murray Theological College (Zimbabwe), Nifcott (Malawi) and Hefsiba (Mozambique).<sup>9</sup> The very first objective was to work

---

4 Cf. the unpublished 37-page report on this visit Conradie, Ernst, Hendriks, Jurgens, Louw, Daniël and Martin Pauw. 1997. Verslag van die Afrika-navorsingstoer van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch: Fakulteit Teologie en die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland: Fakulteit van Godsdiens en Teologie. 4 Junie-1 Julie 1997 (Report of the Africa research safari of Stellenbosch University Faculty of Theology and the University of the Western Cape: Faculty of Religion and Theology. 4 June-1 July 1997). This report can be accessed at the Stellenbosch University Theological Library.

5 The research revealed a pretty negative picture of trends in Reformed churches in the West with very little the growth of the Reformed Church in the South (Luidens et al 1998).

6 For a more detailed report, see: Hendriks, H. Jurgens. 2006. Multiplying Resources and Research in Africa – The NetACT Story. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 47(3/4):489-505. Also available online at: <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact/story2006.pdf> [Accessed: 6 February, 6, 2012].

7 ACTEA. See online at: <http://www.theoledafrica.org/ACTEA> [Accessed: February, 9, 2012].

8 NEGST subsequently became the Africa International University – see online at: <http://www.africainternational.edu/> [Accessed 9 February, 9, 2012].

9 NetACT: Minutes of the Constituting Meeting of NetACT, 2000. Online at: <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html> [Accessed: February, 6, 2012].

together to produce theological textbooks and to commence by writing *Studying congregations in Africa* (Hendriks 2004). The emphasis on “congregational theology” should be understood in the light of the Kenya conference’s theme and with the conviction that nothing will change in Africa if change does not start on a congregational level.

NetACT’s second meeting was in Lusaka, 18-25 April 2001. We put our dream in writing in the form of a mission, goals and a constitution, and we started working on our first book.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. WHAT MADE IT WORK?

The NetACT story highlights several principles that explain what makes such projects work. Adhering to and understanding these principles would be important for understanding the rationale and success of NetACT’s later and still unfinished Gender Equality project.

The first of these principles is undoubtedly leadership and commitment. From 2001 to 2011 NetACT had two chairpersons, Dr Amon Kasambala and Dr Devison Banda. Both were from Justo Mwale Theological University College (JMTUC), an anchor institution that was committed to NetACT’s goals. Stellenbosch University provided the necessary administrative infrastructure and the Executive Director, the present writer, kept the flow of communication alive. However, one can only fully realise the level of commitment if the names of the board members and staff members of the NetACT institutions themselves are scrutinised and one discovers how many staff members of these institutions undertook postgraduate studies and received doctoral degrees dealing with the very issues outlined in NetACT’s goals. A movement got underway as leaders were intellectually empowered through studies and research to dream and to envisage a Reformed church and society informed by a sense of mission. In this quest the indispensable input that only women can contribute is to some extent still lacking.

The second principle is that of trust. In the beginning there was something like layers of trust. On the upper level everyone was friendly with typically African sense of hospitality, but on deeper levels there clearly was a “wait and see” attitude. Stellenbosch University with its apartheid legacy and abundant resources seemed an unequal partner that was not so much distrusted as “put on hold.” This “elephant in the room” was fortunately expressly confronted ever since the second meeting in Lusaka (2001). Honest communication helped. Trust can only be built over time and through the development of deep and personal relationships. The HIV&AIDS programme that Christo and Liezl Greyling<sup>11</sup> presented to the whole Board and local church leaders in Lilongwe, Malawi in 2002 was a deeply spiritual experience that brought all together in a remarkable way. The testimony of a local CCAP pastor dying of AIDS forced all to face reality. It was the first time that a local pastor shared his status and the terrible journey of pain and spiritual suffering that he experienced. In the long run it was clear that all the institutions were benefiting and that Stellenbosch University did put its resources to benefit the NetACT. Personal friendship, getting to know one another’s families and homes, working together on various projects, are the indispensable prerequisites for building trust.

The third point may not be a “principle” in the strict sense of the word but sustained funding remains a challenge and necessity for projects such as those undertaken by NetACT. By God’s grace NetACT’s path crossed with the Hartgerink family in the USA, particularly that of Dr Ron Hartgerink, a chemical engineer, whose father founded the Elmer E Hartgerink Trust. This Trust “paid our expenses” until 2006 and Dr Hartgerink with his business background as well as his knowledge of theological institutions (he was president of the Board of Western Theological

---

<sup>10</sup> The NetACT website has all the minutes and reports of this and subsequent meetings as well as the network’s mission, goals and constitution. <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Christo Greyling is Director, HIV and Infectious Diseases, World Vision International. Liezl is his wife.

Seminary in Michigan, USA) played an indispensable leadership role in establishing the network. So did people such as the well-known Dutch professor of the sociology of religion, Gerard Dekker. With Prof. Martin Pauw, missiologist from South Africa, they and others acted like father figures to get the network on track. Since 2006 NetACT has been challenged to become financially “independent.” Thus the NetACT institutions established a network of funding agencies or partners that shared their vision and funded the network’s endeavours. With NetACT’s proven track record, this transition was less painful than originally envisaged – it actually led to the expansion of the network with associate members who wanted to join it in pursuing its goals.

The fourth principle is a share confession. The NetACT Board and the institutions they represent share a vocation. One “discovers” vocation in strange places! At one point while drinking Kenyan tea at Karen, Nairobi in April 2000 a deep conversation with the fellow pastors from the theological schools that later constituted NetACT the conversation stopped because all present realised they share the same vision. The shared conviction about the importance of local congregational leadership shared by men, women and the youth was the birth of a movement. All were convinced that it was the triune God who personally called them on a missional journey to be a missional church in Africa.

#### 4. FROM HIV AND AIDS PROGRAMMES TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

The NetACT focus on gender was the result of a journey of discernment. When the network met in Lusaka in April 2001 to formulate its mission statement, vision and constitution, the topic most discussed was that of HIV&AIDS.<sup>12</sup> A typical remark was “If we want to address the issue of HIV&AIDS effectively and faithfully, we will have to move from denial to telling the truths.”<sup>13</sup> The network’s first formulation of its identity read:<sup>14</sup>

**NetACT** is the Network for African Congregational Theology, a network of theological institutions in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Congregational Theology** is theology as practised in the Christian congregation as the Body of Christ, discerning the will of God in the process of interpreting the Scriptures and its own specific context, empowering the congregation to address its multiple problems, challenges and sufferings, in sub-Saharan Africa manifest in the pandemic of HIV and AIDS, abuse of power, corruption and economic injustice (among others).

**NetACT** aims at assisting the participating institutions to develop congregational theology and leadership. It seeks to achieve this aim through:

- contextually relevant training of congregational leadership
- upgrading of academic standards and institutional capacity building
- developing research programmes at the participating institutions
- developing continuous education programmes
- lecturer exchange between its participating institutions
- conferences and publications in the field of theology in Africa
- addressing the HIV and AIDS problem, especially by providing the theological, moral and spiritual undergirding to curb this pandemic.

---

12 NetACT Minutes 18-25 April 2001. The minutes of all the NetACT meetings to 9 February 2012 can be downloaded from <http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html>.

13 NetACT Minutes 2000, 11.

14 NetACT Minutes 2000, 18-19.

Before the next NetACT meeting in Lilongwe Malawi 5-9 August 2002, the HIV and AIDS programme got underway with Rev. Christo Greyling<sup>15</sup> visiting the seminaries in Zimbabwe and Zambia in preparation for conducting their first HIV and AIDS programmes. A programme was developed and then taught at these schools. At the Board meeting in Malawi Greyling and his wife presented the programme to the Board and senior CCAP pastors. At this remarkable event those present were perplexed because they were not used to talking about sex, condoms and all there is to address in this “new world.” As was mentioned above, the testimony of a local CCAP pastor, dying of AIDS, touched all present and not even the Greyling’s research at two seminaries that disclosed that between 60% and 70% of the male theology students were sexually active shocked as much as this story. Dr Kasambala’s leadership of NetACT at this time brought all closer together. During the meeting a prayer house in the Nkhoma congregation was visited where more than 200 orphans were taken care of by older people in that specific ward. These experiences changed the character of the fight against the AIDS pandemic from an academic pursuit to something very real.<sup>16</sup>

At all the NetACT institutions people were identified and trained to present HIV&AIDS programmes – unfortunately all our trained facilitators were offered better-paid jobs by governments or NGOs! From 2006 to 2009, a second module was developed and a book, *Our church has AIDS. Preaching about HIV and AIDS in Africa today*, (Mash et al. 2009) was published.<sup>17</sup>

At the 2006 Board meeting in Windhoek Rev. Janet Guyer,<sup>18</sup> regional AIDS consultant for Southern Africa for the Presbyterian Church (USA), facilitated a discussion, that led to a number of decisions being taken. Amongst other things, it became clear that we had to concentrate on curriculum development. The problem was that a “once-off” module on HIV&AIDS, often presented by part-time lecturers, did not lead to a change in attitudes and deeply-ingrained cultural assumptions. It was realised that curricula were not contextualised and as such did not address the issue holistically. As long as AIDS was seen as “someone else’s responsibility to teach” and was addressed only in a specific module, deep cultural transformation would not take place.

The 2009 Board meeting coincided with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Theological School at Stellenbosch. A three-day workshop on curriculum development was presented for Old and New Testament lecturers as well as for lecturers teaching HIV&AIDS modules. Those attending testified that this interactive workshop was probably the most constructive one NetACT ever ran. During this workshop, Stellenbosch New Testament scholar Prof’ Elna Mouton tabled the following motion, which was unanimously accepted:<sup>19</sup>

Every institution is to write a 10-12 page article on Gender Equality in its context. This should include consultation with women voices and should check existing research. Articles should be ready for agenda of 2010 AGM.

---

15 Read the remarkable testimony and story of Christo Greyling online at: <http://www.redribbon.co.za/living-openly-profile.php?show=mymenu2&profileID=Christo-Greyling>. Greyling is a senior World Vision employee dealing with HIV&AIDS; cf. <http://www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/about/press-development-aids> [Accessed: February, 9, 2012].

16 This led one of the local lecturers, Janet Brown, doing her doctoral degree on AIDS issues: Brown, Janet L. 2004. HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5491> [Accessed: March, 16, 2012].

17 Read the HIV and AIDS report in the NetACT Administrative Report 2009, 19-20.

18 On Janet Guyer see online at: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/guyer-janet/> [Accessed: February, 9, 2012]. NetACT Minutes 2006, 10-11.

19 NetACT Minutes 2009, 8.

Between 2009 and 2012 two initiatives gained considerable momentum. NetACT institutions realised the value of curriculum development. The Namibian Evangelical Theological Seminary (NETS) and Murray Theological College (MThC) took the lead and literally revised every aspect related to curricula in a process that involved both staff and board members of their schools. NETS was subsequently the first Namibian tertiary institution to receive national accreditation from the country's National Qualifications Agency. This inspired the rest of the NetACT family and Rev. Kruger du Preez –who was requested by NetACT to do a doctoral dissertation on the status of curriculum development in the network –to conduct workshops in Kenya, Malawi, Angola and Nigeria, attended by all NetACT seminaries in those countries as well as non-member institutions who requested participation.

At these workshops the conviction grew that the decision by the Board in 2009 to deal with gender equality was a wise one. However, because of the curriculum workshops NetACT lacked both the capacity and the funds to start addressing this challenge in 2010 already. It was at this stage that Stellenbosch University's HOPE in AFRICA initiative<sup>20</sup> offered to participate in NetACT's venture and to finance its 2011 meeting. Several partners also came forward to support the gender equality venture.

Thus far this essay has outlined NetACT's history and its journey of discernment, ending by highlighting the relationship between HIV&AIDS, the development of a holistic curriculum to address the AIDS issue and the importance of addressing gender equality. The logic behind this journey has been the realisation that very little in the African AIDS scenario will change if gender equality is not attained. In light of this, the 2011 and 2012 meetings of the NetACT Board were gender equality workshops, where the principals and/or Board members of the NetACT institutions attend accompanied by at least one woman staff member or church member. The goal of this exercise was to intellectually and theologically empower at least one woman from each constituency to be the standard bearer in that church and seminary with regard to gender issues. For this the wholehearted support of the principals and Board members was given. They are committed to securing the necessary backing to these women to pursue their research and writing.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

The background of the NetACT focus on addressing gender inequality in member institutions and their client churches, is the unfortunate fact of the reality of gender inequality in most of the twelve seminaries that form the NetACT network. This section relates the findings of an empirical study conducted among the seminaries that established this fact.

First, some remarks about the methodology followed to get the information. In March 2010 a letter was sent to the NetACT Board members explaining how the NetACT Executive planned the workshop to be held in August 2011. The letter stated:

Each NetACT institution nominates two representatives, the principal/board member and a woman.<sup>21</sup> The principal or his representative has the responsibility to create the institutional initiative, support and supervision that are needed for the research that has to be done by the female representative. At the first workshop in August 2011 each institution

---

<sup>20</sup> More about this can be found online at: [http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/rektor/docs/botman\\_talloires.pdf](http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/rektor/docs/botman_talloires.pdf) [Accessed: February, 9, 2012]. A comment from the report: "Building the engaged university; moving beyond the ivory tower."

<sup>21</sup> At the time (and until the present) no member institution had or has a women principal except SU where Prof Elna Mouton served as Dean.

will present a report/evaluation of the gender equality situation at their institution, church and society indicating to what extent their curriculum deals with it (a structured questionnaire accompanies this letter). Our first academic publication will be a compilation of these reports. At the first workshop we will have papers on our research topic. A call for papers accompanies this letter and we encourage you to submit a proposal. We hope to get leading (women) theologians to give papers. However, our main objective will be to jointly decide on how to structure the research on "Teaching Gender Equality in Africa".

Although all the institutions were represented at the workshop and all (except ISTE<sup>22</sup> due to unforeseen circumstances) had a women representative present, the last questionnaires were only returned in February 2012. Three schools are in Portuguese-speaking countries and received and responded to their questionnaires in Portuguese. The following sections give an overview of the findings of the research.

## 6. FINDINGS

### 6.1 Gender representation in church offices and seminaries

**The first table** summarises the extent to which 25 Protestant/-Reformed churches that send their members to the 12 seminaries allow women to take up the offices of deacon, elder and pastor. The following remarks point to the trends in this table.

- All but the Reformed Church in Nigeria allow women to be **deacons**. As far as dates were provided, it seems that the first to do so was the Presbyterian Church in Zambia in 1897! Second was the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (in Namibia), which did so in 1934, followed by the CCAP Livingstonia Synod in Malawi in 1936. The last church to allow women as deacons was the CCAP Nkhoma Synod in November 2009.
- The first church to allow women to be pastors was the Presbyterian Church in Zambia in 1919, followed by the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (in Namibia), which did so in 1934.
- All but four churches allow women to be elders.
- Five of the 25 churches do not allow women to be pastors. Four of these churches were founded by Dutch Reformed missionaries from South Africa: CCAP Nkhoma Synod in Malawi, IRM in Mozambique, the RCEA in Kenya and the NKST (the Reformed Church in Nigeria).
- In two countries, Angola and South Africa, all the constituent churches allow women to take up all the offices.

**The second table** is a list that indicates the total number of pastors in the 25 churches as well as the number of women serving as pastors.

- The 25 churches have in total 5 835 pastors, of whom 274 are women.
- Thus 4.7% of the pastors in these churches are women.
- The number of members to a congregation differs considerably from church to church. The average membership of the about 1 600 South African DRC congregations is 1 000.<sup>23</sup> The CCAP Nkhoma synod has 171 pastors serving a membership of over one million people in 141 congregations (Msangaambe, 2011). The implication is that the average congregation has more than 7 000 members. In these congregations the pastor actually serves the

---

<sup>22</sup> Abbreviations list at end of article.

<sup>23</sup> See the *Jaarboek van die NG Kerke 2011*. (Yearbook of the DR Churches). Wellington: Tydskriftemaatskappy, 413.

prayer houses and the elders do most of the preaching and pastoral work.<sup>24</sup> Elders are seldom allowed to serve the sacraments, hence the minister travels every Sunday from one prayer house to another serving sacraments and confirming new members. The main church building or service sees the pastor in many of these “mega churches” only about four times in a year. In other countries congregations are much smaller. In Namibia the 44 DRC congregations have on average 481 members<sup>25</sup> and the Uniting Reformed Church far fewer. When this researcher visited Angola in 2004, shortly after the war, the secretaries of churches did not have any idea of the number of congregations and members. All they knew was that the church was growing at a rate that they could not keep track of. This is also true of Mozambique – that the church is growing is the only absolute certainty when it comes to statistics!

- Although this was not asked in the questionnaire, it is common knowledge that the number of women at church services and in membership total roughly 70% of the total membership.

**The third table** reflects the situation regarding staff.

- The 12 schools have a total of 116 full time lecturers of which 21 (18%) are women and 85 part time lecturers of which 19 (22%) are women.
- Three schools, JMTH, MThC and RTS, have no women on their staff.
- The question explicitly excluded women who were only teaching the wives of pastors, but were not allowed to teach theology students.

**The fourth table** looks at staff qualifications.

- 80% of full-time male lecturers have either a masters or a doctoral degree.
- 70% of full-time women lecturers have either a masters or a doctoral degree.
- The percentages for the male and women part-time lecturers are 53% and 26%.

NetACT institutions indeed did well. The percentages were certainly not this high 10 years ago. Additional research may easily establish how many of these degrees were awarded during the last ten years – and where they were rewarded.

**Table five** summarises the number of students.

- The 12 schools have 948 students in total, of whom 218 or 23% are women.
- The average number of BTh students per school is 79.
- At two schools, JMTH and RTS, there are no women students.
- ABC has the highest percentage of women students: 42%.
- The three schools with the highest number of theological students are ABC (267), RTS (200) and SU (143).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In light of the above data the challenge faced by the member institutions and the Gender Equality project of NetACT remains considerable. To summarise:

- The average number of students per full-time lecturer is just 8. From a financial point of

---

<sup>24</sup> Taking Malawi as an example, one is reminded that very few people have any form of transport.

Ministers walked, then got bicycles and now are “rich” if they have a motorbike. Very few have cars. <sup>25</sup> *Jaarboek*, 416 as well correspondence with their General Secretary, Rev. Clem Marais (clem@ngkn.org.na.).

view member schools are thus very expensive as student fees cannot cover the cost of the salaries of the lecturers.

- Women lecturers constitute only 20% of staff and women students only 23% of the student body.
- The number and percentage of women in the pulpit are still low, but, fortunately this is expected to increase. At present the 25 churches mentioned in the questionnaires have on average 4.7% women pastors. However since the percentage of women doing theological training is 23% of the total number of students. This indicates that their numbers and percentage will increase. Cultural changes are also taking place. The trend is clear if one looks at the dates that the churches accepted women in the church offices, one after the other (Table 1). The percentage of women pastors is thus set to increase.

The unanswered question is what the network should do with all the requests of similar institutions to join it. We do not have an easy answer. The NetACT Board is urgently debating the issue. We feel we need a bigger or wider platform in order to expand.

I want to conclude the essay by relating the following an incident that may serve as a metaphor for what NetACT wants to do, in general, but also with regard to its Gender Equality Project:

On a journey in a Toyota Hi-Ace mini-van from Limuru near Nairobi, Kenya, to Eldoret in the Kenyan highlands, delegates from NetACT were enjoying the scenery of the Rift Valley. Along the way they passed the refugee camps where displaced people were given shelter after the ethnic violence that followed Kenya's last election. It was a sad and moving sight, the rows and rows of tents, and seemingly irresolute people sitting around doing nothing, small children playing soccer with a ball made from plastic bags.

As we crossed the equator near a billboard that marks the symbolic boundary line between North and South a woman was weeding a crop of maize with a pick-axe. It was hard work. Suddenly a cell phone rang. The woman put the pick-axe down and from her apron produced the phone. While stretching her back, one arm in the air, the other holding the phone to her ear, she laughed out loud, greeted her conversation partner in a clear, warm, welcoming voice and talked away with gusto, her free arm waving around, part of the lively conversation. This is Africa, our continent: hard but fertile, poor but warm and welcoming. It is here that NetACT is called and guided by God to cross several boundaries on a journey to help churches to be missional churches in Africa.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, Janet L. 2004. HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5491> [Accessed: March, 16, 2012].
- Hendriks H. Jurgens, Luidens Donald A., Nemeth Roger J., Smidt Corwin E. and Hijme C. Stoffels (eds.). 2001. *Reformed Encounters with Modernity: Perspectives from Three Continents*. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers.
- Hendriks, H Jurgens. 2004. *Studying congregations in Africa*. Wellington: Lux-Verbi-BM.
- Hendriks, H. Jurgens. 2006. Multiplying Resources and Research in Africa – The NetACT Story. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 47(3/4):489-505.
- Hendriks, H Jurgens; Mouton, Elna, Hansen, Len & Le Roux, Elisabet. 2012. *Men in the pulpit, women in the pew? Addressing gender inequality in Africa*. Stellenbosch: SunMedia.
- Jaarboek van die NG Kerke 2011*. (Yearbook of the DR Churches). Wellington: Tydskriftemaatskappy Luidens, Donald, Hijme Stoffels and Corwin Smidt (eds). 1998. *Reformed Vitality: Continuity and Change in the Face of Modernity*. Lanhan: University Press of America.

Mash, Rachel, Cilliers, Johan, Griffiths, Keith, Chemorion, Edith and Archwells Katani (eds.). 2009. *Our Church has AIDS. Preaching about HIV & AIDS in Africa Today*. Stellenbosch: NetACT.

Msangaambe, Chata, E.J. 2011. Laity empowerment with regard to the missional task of the CCAP in Malawi. Unpublished DTh dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/6750> [Accessed: March, 16, 2012].

**KEY WORDS**

NetACT  
HIV and AIDS  
Gender equality  
statistics theological schools  
staff qualifications

**TREFWOORDE**

NetACT  
MIV en vigs  
Gender gelykheid  
statistiek van teologiese skole  
personeel kwalifikasies.

**Table 1: Gender and church offices**

Question: Do the following churches in your country accept women to be called / serve as 1] pastors; 2] elders; 3] deacons? If known, mention dates allowed.

| NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES      | PASTORS  | ELDERS   | DEACONS    |
|--|----------|----------|------------|
| ABC: Lilongwe Malawi; JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi;    |          |          |            |
| ZTC: Zomba, Malawi                             |          |          |            |
| CCAP: Livingstonia Synod                       | Yes 2000 | Yes 1936 | Yes 1936   |
| CCAP: Nkhoma Synod                             | No       | Nov 2009 | Nov 2009   |
| CCAP: Blantyre Synod                           | 2000     | In 1980s | In 1980s   |
| Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique              |          |          |            |
| IRM = Reformed Church in Mozambique            | No       | No       | 1990       |
| ISEU: Huambo, Angola ; ISTE: Lubango, Angola   |          |          |            |
| Angola   |          |          |            |
| IERA: Reformed Church in Angola                | Yes      | Yes      | Yes        |
| Presbyterian Church                            | Yes      | Yes      | Yes        |
| Methodist Church                               | Yes      | Yes      | Yes        |
| Lutheran Church                                | Yes      | Yes      | Yes        |
| JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia                          |          |          |            |
| CCAP Zambia Synod                              | 2002     | 1918     | 1918       |
| Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa         | 1919     | 1897     | 1897       |
| Reformed Church in Zambia                      | 1999     | 1999     | 1999       |
| MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe                       |          |          |            |
| Reformed Church of Zimbabwe                    | 2004     | 1984     | 1984       |
| NETS: Windhoek, Namibia                        |          |          |            |
| United Congr Church of Southern Africa         | 1934     | n.a.     | 1934       |
| Evangelical Baptist Church                     | No       | No       | Yes always |
| Calvin Protestant Church                       | Yes      | Yes      | Yes        |
| Uniting Reformed Church                        | 1991     | 1986     | 1986       |
| Dutch Reformed Church                          | 1990     | 1990     | 1982       |
| RITT: Eldoret, Kenya                           |          |          |            |
| RCEA   | No       | No       | Nov 1998   |
| Presbyterian Church                            | Yes      | Yes      | Yes        |
| RTS: Nigeria                                   |          |          |            |
| The Reformed Church                            | No       | No       | No         |
| The Presbyterian Church                        | 1981     | 1954     | Yes        |
| SU: South Africa                               |          |          |            |
| Dutch Reformed Church                          | 1990     | 1990     | 1982       |
| Uniting Reformed Church                        | 1982     | 1978     | 1978       |
| Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa | 1975     | 1975     | 1975       |
| Africa   |          |          |            |
| Anglican Church                                | 1992     | 1992     | 1992       |
| Moravian Church                                | Dec 1989 | Yes      | Yes        |

**Table 2: MEN AND WOMEN SERVING AS PASTORS**

Question: How many pastors are serving in congregations in the churches named below in your country? How many of them are female?

| NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES                             | Number of pastors | Number who are women |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| <b>ABC: Lilongwe Malawi; JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi; ZTC: Zomba, Malawi</b> |                   |                      |
| Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: Livingstonia Synod             | 172               | 5                    |
| CCAP: Nkhoma Synod  | 171               | 0                    |
| CCAP: Blantyre Synod  | 200               | 12                   |

|   |             |            |
|---|-------------|------------|
| <b>Hefsiba: Mozambique</b>                              |             |            |
| IRM = Reformed Church in Mozambique                     | 90          | 0          |
| <b>ISEU: Huambo, Angola &amp; ISTE: Lubango, Angola</b> |             |            |
| <b>Angola</b>   |             |            |
| IFRA: Reformed Church in Angola                         | 121         | 2          |
| Presbyterian Church                                     | 145         | 4          |
| Methodist Church  | 517         | 59         |
| (?)   | 83          | 3          |
| <b>JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia</b>                            |             |            |
| CCAP Zambia Synod                                       | 55          | 3          |
| Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (Zambia)         | 32          | 3          |
| Reformed Church in Zambia                               | 113         | 10         |
| <b>MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe</b>                         |             |            |
| Reformed Church of Zimbabwe                             | 62          | 5          |
| <b>NETS: Windhoek, Namibia</b>                          |             |            |
| Evangelical Baptist Church                              | 37          | 0          |
| Calvin Protestant Church                                | 1           | 0          |
| Uniting Reformed Church                                 | 18          | 1          |
| United Congregational Church of Southern Africa         | 7           | 1          |
| Dutch Reformed Church                                   | 52          | 0          |
| <b>RITT: Eldoret, Kenya</b>                             |             |            |
| RCEA  | 112         | 0          |
| <b>RTS: Nigeria</b>                                     |             |            |
| Reformed Church   | 636         | 0          |
| Presbyterian Church in Nigeria (Eastern Synod)          | 80          | 8          |
| <b>SU: South Africa</b>                                 |             |            |
| Dutch Reformed Church                                   | 1602        | 70         |
| Uniting Reformed Church                                 | 788         | 10         |
| Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa          | 439         | 22         |
| Anglican Church (The three Cape diocese only)           | 256         | 45         |
| Moravian Church   | 48          | 11         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>5835</b> | <b>274</b> |

**Table 3: Full-time and part-time lecturers**

Question: How many of the following persons do you have at the seminary? [Do not count as lecturers women or pastors teaching pastors' wives how to do parish ministries. If these women lecture theology students studying to be evangelists or pastors, do count them in.]

| <b>NETACT INSTITUTIONS &amp; SUPPORTING CHURCHES</b> |           | <b>MEN ON STAFF</b> | <b>WOMEN ON STAFF</b> | <b>STAFF TOTAL</b> |
|--|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>ABC: Lilongwe Malawi</b>                          | Full time | 11                  | 6                     | 17                 |
|  | Part time | 8                   | 3                     | 11                 |
| <b>Hefsiba: Mozambique</b>                           | Full time | 6                   | 1                     | 7                  |
|  | Part time | 7                   | 2                     | 9                  |
| <b>ISEU: Huambo, Angola</b>                          | Full time | 5                   | 0                     | 5                  |
|  | Part time | 4                   | 1                     | 5                  |
| <b>ISTEL: Lubango, Angola</b>                        | Full time | 4                   | 3                     | 7                  |
|  | Part time | 4                   | 0                     | 4                  |
| <b>JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi</b>                          | Full time | 5                   | 0                     | 5                  |
|  | Part time | 2                   | 0                     | 2                  |
| <b>JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia</b>                         | Full time | 8                   | 1                     | 9                  |
|  | Part time | 12                  | 6                     | 18                 |
| <b>MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe</b>                      | Full time | 4                   | 0                     | 4                  |
|  | Part time | 2                   | 0                     | 2                  |
| <b>NETS: Windhoek, Namibia</b>                       | Full time | 5                   | 1                     | 6                  |
|  | Part time | 9                   | 3                     | 12                 |
| <b>RITT: Eldoret, Kenya</b>                          | Full time | 4                   | 2                     | 6                  |
|  | Part time | 2                   | 1                     | 3                  |
| <b>RTS: Nigeria</b>                                  | Full time | 20                  | 0                     | 20                 |
|  | Part time | 8                   | 0                     | 8                  |
| <b>SU: South Africa</b>                              | Full time | 13                  | 6                     | 19                 |
|  | Part time | 4                   | 1                     | 5                  |
| <b>ZTC: Zomba, Malawi</b>                            | Full time | 10                  | 1                     | 11                 |
|  | Part time | 4                   | 2                     | 6                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | Full time | <b>95</b>           | <b>21</b>             | <b>116</b>         |
|  | Part time | <b>66</b>           | <b>19</b>             | <b>85</b>          |
|  |           | <b>161</b>          | <b>40</b>             | <b>201</b>         |

**Table 4: Staff qualifications**

Question: How many lecturers have as their highest degree a master's and how many have as their highest degree a PhD / DTh? (The number after > is the total number of lecturers from previous section)

| NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES |           | M + D<br>> TOTAL MEN | M + D<br>> TOTAL WOMEN | Total Staff |
|---|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| ABC: Lilongwe Malawi                      | Full time | 7+4 >17              | 4+0 >6                 | 17          |
|   | Part time | 1+1 >8               | 1+0 >3                 | 11          |
| Hefsiba: Mozambique                       | Full time | 2+0 >6               | 0+1 >1                 | 7           |
|   | Part time | 1+0 >7               | 0+0 >2                 | 9           |
| ISEU: Huambo, Angola                      | Full time | 3+0 >5               | 0                      | 5           |
|   | Part time | 0+0 >4               | 0+0 >1                 | 5           |
| ISTEL: Lubango, Angola                    | Full time | 3+1 >4               | 3+0 >3                 | 7           |
|   | Part time | 4+0 >4               | 0                      | 4           |
| JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi                      | Full time | 3+0 >5               | 0                      | 5           |
|   | Part time | 0+0 >2               | 0                      | 2           |
| JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia                     | Full time | 0+8 >8               | 1                      | 9           |
|   | Part time | 4+4 >12              | 0+0 >6                 | 18          |
| MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe                  | Full time | 1+1 >4               | 0                      | 4           |
|   | Part time | 0+2 >2               | 0                      | 2           |
| NETS: Windhoek, Namibia                   | Full time | 3+1 >5               | 0+0 >1                 | 6           |
|   | Part time | 1+3 >9               | 2+1 >3                 | 12          |
| RITT: Eldoret, Kenya                      | Full time | 2+1 >4               | 0+0 >2                 | 6           |
|   | Part time | 0+0 >2               | 0+0 >2                 | 3           |
| RTS: Nigeria                              | Full time | 12+3 >20             | 0                      | 20          |
|   | Part time | 3+5 >8               | 0                      | 8           |
| SU: South Africa                          | Full time | 0+13 >13             | 1+4 >6                 | 19          |
|   | Part time | 0+4 >4               | 0+1 >1                 | 5           |
| ZTC: Malawi                               | Full time | 5+3 >10              | 1+0 >1                 | 11          |
|   | Part time | 1+1 >6               | 0+0 >2                 | 6           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | Full time | <b>41+35 &gt;95</b>  | <b>9+5 &gt;21</b>      | <b>116</b>  |
|   | Part time | <b>15+20 &gt;66</b>  | <b>3+2 &gt;19</b>      | <b>85</b>   |

**Table 5: Number of students**

Question: How many theology students do you have enrolled in your seminary?

| NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES | 1 M        | 1 W       | 2 M        | 2 W       | 3 M        | 3 W       | 4 M        | 4 W       | T M        | T W        | T ALL      |
|---|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| ABC: LILONGWE MALAWI                      | 44         | 37        | 41         | 28        | 36         | 38        | 34         | 9         | 155        | 112        | 267        |
| HEFSIBA: MOZAMBIQUE                       | 6          | 1         | 9          | 0         | 5          | 0         | 3          | 0         | 23         | 1          | 24         |
| ISEU: HUAMBO ANGOLA <sup>26</sup>         | 0          | 0         | 1          | 0         | 1          | 0         | 4          | 2         | 6          | 2          | 8          |
| ISTEL: LUBANGO ANGOLA                     | 9          | 1         | 7          | 2         | 5          | 4         | 10         | 1         | 31         | 8          | 39         |
| JMTI: NKHOMA MALAWI <sup>27</sup>         | 8          |           |            |           |            |           | 8          |           | 16         |            | 16         |
| JMTUC: LUSAKA ZAMBIA                      | 6          | 3         | 10         | 2         | 18         | 1         | 11         | 2         | 45         | 8          | 53         |
| MThC: MASVINGO ZIM                        | 7          | 3         | 6          | 1         | 6          | 1         | 6          | 0         | 25         | 5          | 30         |
| NETS: WINDHOEK NAM                        | 7          | 4         | 3          | 1         | 4          | 3         | 4          | 0         | 18         | 8          | 26         |
| RITT: ELDORET KENYA                       | 11         | 1         | 12         | 3         | 11         | 2         | 0          | 0         | 34         | 6          | 40         |
| RTS: NIGERIA                              | 61         |           | 34         |           | 60         |           | 45         |           | 200        |            | 200        |
| SU: SOUTH AFRICA <sup>28</sup>            | 31         | 15        | 23         | 17        | 16         | 8         | 18         | 10        | 88         | 50         | 143        |
| ZTC: ZOMBA, MALAWI                        | 23         | 4         | 22         | 2         | 23         | 5         | 21         | 7         | 89         | 18         | 107        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>213</b> | <b>69</b> | <b>168</b> | <b>56</b> | <b>185</b> | <b>62</b> | <b>166</b> | <b>31</b> | <b>730</b> | <b>218</b> | <b>894</b> |

26 ISEU experienced internal problems, which were sorted out during 2011. The school will quickly regain a strong and vibrant student population.

27 JMTI is the post-BTh ministry training school of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, where the theological candidates who have completed their training at ZTC are prepared for ministry in the Nkhoma Synod. ZTC cannot house and train enough theological candidates for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. JMTI has

previously and is now again using the ZTC curriculum to train first-year students, who will most probably do their subsequent BTh years at Nkhoma. The exams and degree are those of ZTC.

28 Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology focuses predominantly on postgraduate students and research. In 2011 it had about 500 students, of whom 352 (71%) were postgraduate students. 20% (71) of the postgraduate students were women. 51% (36) of the postgraduate women were White; 49% (35) were other than White. 60 of these postgraduate students are from other African countries (excluding South Africa). Those from South Africa total 234 and those from other continents 58.

## Abbreviations

ABC: African Bible College (Lilongwe Malawi)

CCAP: Church of Central Africa Presbyterian

DRC: Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa)

Hefsiba: Hefsiba Christian Institute for Higher Education (Vila Ulongue, Mozambique)

IERA: Igreja Evangelica Reformada de Angola

IRM: Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (The Reformed Church in Mozambique)

ISEU: Instituto Superior Emanuel Unido (Huambo, Angola)

ISTEL: Instituto Superior de Teologia Evangelica no Lubango (Lubango, Angola)

JMTI: Josophat Mwale Theological Institute (Nkhoma, Malawi)

JMTUC: Justo Mwale Theological University College (Lusaka, Zambia)

MThC: Murray Theological College (Masvingo Zimbabwe)

NetACT: Network for African Congregational Theology

NETS: Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary (Windhoek, Namibia)

NKST: Nongo Kristy Sundan Tiv (The Reformed Church among the Tiv in Nigeria)

RCEA: Reformed Church in East Africa (Kenya)

RCZ: Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

RITT: Reformed Institute for Theological Training (Eldoret, Kenya)

RTS: Reformed Theological Seminary (Mkar, Nigeria)

SPU: St. Paul's University

SU: Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch, South Africa)

ZTC: Zomba Theological College (Zomba, Malawi)

## (Footnotes)

1 ISEU experienced internal problems, which were sorted out during 2011. The school will quickly regain a strong and vibrant student population.

2 JMTI is the post-BTh ministry training school of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, where the theological candidates who have completed their training at ZTC are prepared for ministry in the Nkhoma Synod. ZTC cannot house and train enough theological candidates for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. JMTI has previously and is now again using the ZTC curriculum to train first-year students, who will most probably do their subsequent BTh years at Nkhoma. The exams and degree are those of ZTC.

3 Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology focuses predominantly on postgraduate students and research. In 2011 it had about 500 students, of whom 352 (71%) were postgraduate students. 20% (71) of the postgraduate students were women. 51% (36) of the postgraduate women were White; 49% (35) were other than White. 60 of these postgraduate students are from other African countries (excluding South Africa). Those from South Africa total 234 and those from other continents 58.