

Two successful trips have already been made this year. The first one was to the North East of Namibia, where we visited the towns of Tsumeb, Grootfontein, Rundu and Katima Mulilo. In these towns women are involved in projects such as community creches, gardening, bread baking and sewing.

We spoke to the women of the oKapana project in Tsumeb who seemed to be doing a good job with their small businesses. In this town there were no other women's groups apart from church groups and women's wings of political parties.

Women are involved in a build together project in Grootfontein and Swapo Women's Council is the only women's organisation in this town. Here it was difficult to find places to sell Sister magazine because women managing shops said they did not have the authority to make the decision to sell the magazine without clearing it with their husbands first.

Rundu is a busy place with women involved in different activities in and around the town. The Namibia National Women's Organization (NANAWO) is active here. We spoke to member Rachel Nathaniel, the regional representative for NANAWO who took us around to see women's projects.

The Community Development Office, seated in the offices of Local Government and Housing, and headed by Ms Alfrida Kalila is doing just fine to help develop the community.

CANAMCO is another strong project in Rundu that helps with agricultural and other projects in the area.

Katima Mulilo seems to have been forgotten as far as development is concerned. Women here said they did not know where to apply for financial assistance for their projects.

Reporting on Sister's outreach work

By Maila Nghidinwa

Sister Namibia has embarked on a program of outreach work in the regions. This program involves travelling to towns and villages, meeting with women's groups, visiting women's projects and finding places and women to sell Sister magazine.

They said they needed information about other women's groups and how they operate, as well as whom to request for training. So far, they have started with gardening and bakery projects which are successful.

Our second trip led us to the towns of Rehoboth, Maltahöhe, Mariëntal, Keetmanshoop, Lüderitz, Kalkrand, Schlip, Berseba and Tses.

It seemed that there were more women's groups in the South than the North East of Namibia. Some funding came through the Department of Women's Affairs. Some of the projects have managed to sustain themselves while others have died away.

We spoke to Spendu Onesmus, chief community liaison officer in

the Directorate of Community Development in Rehoboth. According to her it was problematic when donors poured money into projects without giving proper training in bookkeeping and supervision of funds. People should be taught to be responsible, she said.

We also spoke to Pauline Kanases, an active member of the Women's Association of Keetmanshoop (WAKE). WAKE is running a centre that can be hired by other women for functions and women who wish to rent space for business purposes.

Kanases mentioned that the biggest problem in the area was alcohol abuse. However, the Ministry of Health has established a rehabilitation centre in Keetmanshoop, which is one of only two in the country, to help curb this problem.

In Mariëntal, there is a praiseworthy housing association known as /Khara-Tsasib which is initiated and run by women. They have succeeded to build several houses. This project received a donation from Oxfam Canada in 1991 to buy a cement mixer, pipes and a brickmaking machine, and they have also recently made a loan with the Ministry's Build Together programme.

In Lüderitz we visited all the fish factories to see women at work. Paulina Maherero from the Food and Allied Workers Union (NAFAU) was our friendly host. We held a meeting with women activists and factory workers. Women in this town are not much involved in projects and there is only one group making bricks.

There used to be a branch of Women's Solidarity whose aim was to do counselling of rape victims, but the branch does not exist anymore because women have been threatened by men not to belong to this group, one of the women told us. ●