Headlines

**Kenya’s President pledges support for Adventist education**
*In speech at university, Kenyatta calls Adventist Church ‘exemplary partner in transforming Kenya’*

**Adventist Church’s Ebola response highlights coordinated effort**
*Initiatives focus on clinical, community impact*

**In Egypt, Adventist Church distributes tens of thousands of books at major book fair**
*Church seeks to clear up local confusion over whether it is a Christian denomination*

Kenya’s President pledges support for Adventist education
In speech at university, Kenyatta calls Adventist Church ‘exemplary partner in transforming Kenya’

February 24, 2015 | Nairobi, Kenya | Philip Baptiste/ECD/ANN

Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta visited the main campus of Adventist University Africa (AUA) on Sunday to support the construction of a new Health Sciences complex.

In a speech to a crowd of nearly 4,000, Kenyatta pledged his financial support for the initiative and commended the Adventist Church for being an “exemplary partner in transforming Kenya.”

“The Adventist Church has been a vital part of uplifting our communities, empowering our citizens and building our nation,” Kenyatta said, referring to the numerous churches and schools throughout the East African nation.

The Adventist University of Africa’s main campus is based at the denomination’s East-Central Africa Division, located in Ongata Rongai, a region on the outskirts of Nairobi.

Though based in Kenya, AUA is directly affiliated with the Adventist Church’s world headquarters offers Adventist graduate-level education throughout Africa. Doctoral programs are taught at the main campus, and other programs—such as theology and business—are taught with revolving faculty at other Adventist campuses on the continent.

Kenyatta, who was accompanied by Vice President William Ruto and other officials, additionally highlighted the Adventist university for having a progressive vision while occupying a niche as Kenya’s only university focusing solely on post-graduate studies. He also commended the Adventist Church’s educational system for its caliber and scale of educational services.
Kenyatta concluded his remarks by thanking the Adventist Church for demonstrating exemplary discipleship, compassion and philanthropy.

“By touching hearts, improving minds and healing the sick you bring the word of God to life as a light to humankind,” he said.

Blasious Ruguri, president of the Adventist Church’s East-Central Africa Division, thanked the nation’s president for coming to show support for the project. Using the story of Jesus asking the disciples to find two donkeys to untie for use in the triumphal entry, Ruguri encouraged the audience to “untie their donkeys,” meaning to release some of their funds for mission.

President Kenyatta was the first to donate, contributing more than 2 million Kenyan shillings—nearly US$22,000—toward the Health Sciences Building project. Hundreds of government and Church leaders also contributed to the project.

Philanthropist Simeon Nyachae also addressed the crowd. While introducing the President, he praised the Church for saving the life of his mother because of a needed surgical procedure she received at an Adventist hospital in 1942. Nyachae said she lived to be 102.

Adventist Church’s Ebola response highlights coordinated effort

Initiatives focus on clinical, community impact

February 20, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s coordinated response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa includes eradication projects in the affected countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as support for several hospitals and more than two-dozen schools, most of which still remain closed.

Support has come from throughout the denomination’s international network, including its world headquarters, Health Ministries department, Loma Linda University, Adventist Health International, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Hope for Humanity, as well as schools, hospitals, churches and individual donors.

In December, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) established a position to coordinate response efforts among Adventist entities worldwide.

“ADRA and other Adventist entities haven’t worked together in quite this way before, but there hasn’t been a crisis like the Ebola crisis before,” said Elizabeth Foulkes, ADRA’s Ebola Response Coordinator. “Obviously everyone together can do more than everyone alone.”
“The Adventist Church in particular, as a global church with congregations and institutions around the world, has somewhat of an advantage over other [non-governmental organizations] in that almost anywhere you go, there are already people on the ground, be they from the churches, divisions, unions, conferences, missions, schools, hospitals or ADRA,” Foulkes said.

“Contributions are making a difference on the ground,” she added.

This week representatives from ADRA International, Adventist Health International, and the Loma Linda University International Behavioral Health Trauma Team met in Loma Linda, California, United States, to discuss how they can best work together in responding to the Ebola crisis and future emergencies.

Clinical response provides care to Ebola patients and others

In Sierra Leone, ADRA is managing decontamination teams to spray homes and replace infected mattresses and bedding in neighborhoods on the outskirts of Freetown, the nation’s capital.

Waterloo Adventist Hospital in Sierra Leone continues to operate as an Ebola Treatment Center supported by the World Health Organization and the Cuban Medical Brigade, according to a recent ADRA Ebola Situation Report.

Waterloo is in need of major plumbing repairs due to the effects of chlorine used to sanitize the facility. The hospital is also in need of clothing for patients, as Ebola patients must surrender their clothing to be burned. The hospital has had to discharge some Ebola survivors in clinical scrubs.

An ADRA network proposal is being drafted to address needs at Waterloo.

In Liberia, Cooper Adventist Hospital closed in quarantine for a month last year after two staff members contracted Ebola. It has since re-opened and is one of the few operational hospitals in the region to serve as a non-Ebola treatment center, Gaede said.

Several volunteer U.S.-based physicians have served several-month stints working at Cooper.

ADRA Canada and ADRA UK are supporting the Masanga Hospital in Sierra Leone’s Tonkolili district. The hospital is using virtual reality gaming technology to teach safety protocols for dealing with Ebola, such as wearing protective equipment and burial procedures.

Nearly 23,253 people have been infected and nearly 9,380 people have died from Ebola since the outbreak last March, according to a February 18 update from the World Health Organization (WHO).

A WHO representative last week emphasized that containment efforts are crucial over the next month in order to stay ahead of the rainy season.

“If we can’t substantially reduce the geographic extent of this outbreak within the next two months, before the rainy season begins in late March or April, we will be in a particularly difficult situation,” Bruce Aylward, the WHO’s special representative for Ebola Response, wrote on a UN blog last week.

Ebola is spread through direct contact with bodily fluids and tissue of an infected person. Those most at risk are healthcare staff and family members caring for someone infected with the virus,
according to the WHO. Case fatalities range from 25 percent to 90 percent depending on the amount of treatment available.

Adventist health leaders urged members not to forget the lingering epidemic that still wreaks havoc in West Africa despite declining news coverage.

“Even though it is far away, continued interest in the Ebola epidemic leads to people joining together to help those in need,” said Donn Gaede, secretary of Adventist Health International, which oversees hospitals in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

ADRA is also implementing food security programs and other initiatives that will aid others who are indirectly affected by Ebola. ADRA is partnering with the World Food Programme to distribute food in several counties in Liberia.

**Adventist schools prepare to open**

Many schools in Liberia resumed operations Monday after a seven-month closure due to the Ebola virus, but most Adventist schools remained closed because they lack required washing stations and chlorine.

Of the Adventist Church’s 24 schools in Liberia, only one opened Monday, said Theresa Dweh Sheriff, Education director of the Adventist Church’s South-West Liberia Conference, based in Monrovia.

Sheriff said schools could re-open if they had proper sanitation buckets and chlorine for students to wash their hands before heading in and out of classrooms. Staff must also be trained on preventive measures.

Schools are reopening on a rolling basis as supplies are delivered, training is completed, and students are registered, Foulkes said.

ADRA has secured funding from Germany’s relief coalition Aktion Deutschland Hilft to provide and distribute 115 non-contact thermometers and 115 handwashing stations to Adventist schools, the ADRA Situation Report stated. The project also includes back-to-school kits—such as backpacks and notebooks—for 500 students.

The 24 Adventist schools are attended by more than 7,600 students at full enrollment, she said.

Sheriff said up to 90 percent of students in many of the Church’s schools are not Adventist.

Adventist schools will also soon receive a food shipment from the NGO Stop Hunger Now, which will provide students school meals for approximately two months.

**Groups around the world support**

Many schools and churches around the world have held benefit concerts and other fundraisers to combat Ebola. Next month, the lifestyle club at an Adventist church in Mysen, Norway, will host a sponsored fun run. Up to 100 people are expected to participate.

“[The club] came up with the idea to support ADRA and requested a health project. We in ADRA
immediately thought about ADRA’s work to prevent Ebola and the upcoming network project in Sierra Leone,” said Britt Celine, a program officer for ADRA Norway.

In Egypt, Adventist Church distributes tens of thousands of books at major book fair

Church seeks to clear up local confusion over whether it is a Christian denomination

February 18, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Seventh-day Adventist staffers distributed tens of thousands of copies of "Steps to Christ" and other Adventist books at the biggest book fair in the Arab world as they shared their love for Jesus and sought to dispel misinformation that the Adventist Church is not a Christian denomination.

Kleyton Feitosa, president of the Adventist Church’s Egypt-Sudan Field, said the Church made significant inroads by organizing the booth at the 16-day Cairo International Book Fair, which attracted 2 million visitors and is considered the most important annual event in the Arab publishing world.

“The results were just phenomenal,” Feitosa said Monday. “It was very important to have visibility among thousands of Egyptians—Christian and Muslim alike—during a time when many are still wondering whether we are Christians or not.”

Local Adventist leaders are especially keen to clear up confusion after the Egyptian government considered legislation late last year that would classify the Adventist Church as a non-Christian religious denomination. The new civil law for non-Muslim minorities was drafted by some segments of Egypt’s Christian minority without Adventist participation.

Adventist leaders asked for the prayers of the world church in late November as they reached out to the government and the media to stop the legislation.

The government has responded favorably, putting the bill on hold and promising to include Adventist representatives in future discussions of it, Feitosa said, citing a letter from Egypt’s Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.

Adventists face an unusual situation in Egypt in which they need to share their beliefs with both Muslims and Christians of other denominations.
Many Muslims believe that all Christians eat pork, drink alcohol, pray to saints, and live life like a Hollywood movie, said Homer Trecartin, president of the church’s Middle East and North Africa Union.

“As a Church we have the delicate balancing act of helping our Muslim friends and neighbors understand that we are not like what they think of when they think of Christians,” he said. “At the same time, we have to help our Christian friends and neighbors understand that we are indeed followers of Jesus who believe that salvation comes only through faith in Him.”

At the book fair, the Adventist booth generated considerable buzz as apparently the only vendor that offered books for free. Adventist staffers handed out about 25,000 copies of "Keys to Happiness," the Arabic version of Ellen G. White’s "Steps to Christ."

“This was one of the highlights of our booth since no other organization, as far as we know, was giving books away for free,” Feitosa said.

A total of 55,000 books were printed through the contribution of a private donor in the United States.

The booth also distributed 15,000 flyers titled, "Get to Know Your Adventist Friends." The bestsellers were health books and a book on church doctrines called Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

Visitors came from all walks of life: Muslims, Christians, and atheists. Staffers spoke with students from Al-Azhar University, the main Islamic learning center in Egypt, and sold books to students from the seminaries of various Christian denominations.

“We had the chance to discuss our doctrines and share our faith with thousands of people,” said Ranya Maher, who co-managed the booth. “The Lord greatly blessed us as we attempted to correct the wrong ideas and misconceptions that many people had about Adventists and their faith.”

One of the directors of the Bible Society of Egypt came to the booth and praised the Adventist presence at the second day of the fair, which ended February 12.

“Many people don’t know who you are,” the director said. “It is good that you are here to answer questions about your beliefs and faith.”

Amgad Nageh, another co-manager of the booth, said he had met many young people searching for Jesus, and he had felt compassion for them.

“They asked me questions about Him, and they wanted to get books that talked about Him,” Nageh said. “I could see a deep desire in their eyes—a longing to know Jesus—and that made me tear up for them.”