

COUNTRY REPORTS - AFRICA

SOUTHERN AFRICA - News

The last 24 months have seen the region very busy indeed. With Denys Whitehead (Anglophone Africa area co-ordinator) boldly organising a southern Africa area conference in Malawi in October 2003 attended by Zimbabwe, Botswana, Southern Africa, Zambia and 7 representatives of Malawi. Then those National Secretaries gained funding to attend the July 2004 conference in Barcelona, Spain. More activity than has been seen in almost a decade! Negotiations at the Barcelona conference led Servas groups in the Scandinavian area to be 'linked' to those in the Southern African and gave us all an energy boost to get growing and strengthening. It is hoped that members' youth/children will make pen-friend contacts with their likewise youth in their link country and each will gain moral support via email/letter contact with each other.

In particular Malawi reports that: "We have started a new special 'community-project-support-link with a local orphans day school, through which it gained a local paint sponsor and gathered its local members to paint child friendly murals on the school walls. With few travellers coming through Malawi it is important to organize events that enthuse and 'bond' members to keep up their interest and membership in Servas. It is hoped this link also would be interesting for travellers to possibly visit and enable Servas Malawi to support its local community and appeal to its 'youth members', giving them something practical to get their teeth into."

The area newsletter is expected early 2005 from its area co-ordinator Demelza BENBOW in Malawi and it is in the process of putting together an area host list for our travellers, which is great news. Botswana and Malawi membership is growing and South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe membership remain reasonably stable. National secretaries warmly welcome travellers and encourage exploration of this unique and exciting part of the African continent.

Demelza BENBOW N/S Malawi.

Tunisia

To our Servas tutors

First we would like to thank you for reading these words coming from the Tunisian group, who are at the moment trying to set up Servas Tunisia.

In effect, one of us had the chance to become a Servas member and to know about the usefulness of this network. we live in North Africa, more precisely, in Tunisia. We recognise that your country is but a small place in the world. This year, to give it greater importance in your eyes, we had the idea of setting up Servas in Tunisia.

After many tries we are throwing up our arms in frustration. We started by researching how to start up an association in Tunisia. We found that the Minister of the Interior needs to have a letter written to him. And to do this it needs many years work to contact the young people throughout the country in the different towns who know nothing about the project.

I hope that you now understand our position with our dream. Our dream that we wanted to see to but which is almost impossible without some external help.

It is for this that we would very grateful for you to recommend some astuteness or some counsel on how to do this. To be able to give you the opportunity to get to know our charming country and to appreciate another culture which you do not know about and for us to also be able to take part in some agreeable times and to learn more about the world around us.

Thank you for your listening and understanding, with respect and friendship from

the Tunisian group.

Zimbabwe

We in Zimbabwe, a possible 16 of us, were disappointed that we had had no visitors for nearly 4 years. Then I got an American couple whom we took to see the poorer section and the rich on Nob's Hill; the Ballet which was pronounced "absolutely professional" and a horse ride round a game farm. Very unfortunately, we had no water or more than 4 days each week in July and often no electricity either. "Don't flush the loo, don't leave the water running, wash in a tiny bowl, no bath or shower, just flannel wash". Quite a culture shock. But the thing that really upset them was the complete impossibility of changing U.S. travellers cheques so they could not go on a big safari. They enjoyed the warmth of the reception at the three houses they

stayed at in Harare, however, but said they thought visitors should avail themselves of the Sheraton at \$US110 a night. Is that what Servas is all about?

We'd like to advise travellers to bring plenty of cash, no Traveller Cheques, as our banks have no foreign currency at all. Also that, though we have a 1st world lifestyle, our economy is that of a 3rd world, so bringing home a pizza or chicken is much appreciated, as well as a few litres of petrol.

The security situation is no worse than in many European countries so we do beg all travellers to come and pay us a visit.

Susan Evans, Zimbabwe