

Church of Sweden report on collaboration with Fredens Hus regarding the exhibition *Stitched Voices*, August 2018 – 21 April 2019

Introduction

Representatives from the international work of Church of Sweden (CoS) met with Roberta Bacic and her team in March 2018 when they visited Uppsala to plan for the exhibition *Stitched Voices*. The meeting took place on alert by a CoS partner in Zimbabwe, with whom Roberta has been working.

The planning of the exhibition caught the CoS interest for various reasons. One was an *arpillera* made in Zimbabwe by women in a programme run by a partner organization that would be part of the exhibition. Another was the textile methodology in itself that seemed to offer a safe space for word-less sharing amongst participants regarding difficult memories. A method that paved the way for testimonies to take shape through textile narratives regarding experiences of state sanctioned violence and lack of social cohesion due to fear and past atrocities.

Activities by Church of Sweden

CoS participated in *the opening of the exhibition* (see picture at the end of this report) and also met with Roberta Bacic in the morning.

In co-operation with Fredens hus, CoS arranged *two guided tours in October*. The first one, 10th of October, was organized for smaller group of CoS staff (10 people). The second one, 31st of October, was offered to a group of delegates (25) who participated in an international conference, the General Assembly of ACT Alliance, (<https://actalliance.org/>), hosted by CoS in Uppsala.

The latter group of participants represented societies from various countries and from all the continents of the Globe. Their experiences from working as civil society organizations to address poverty, oppression and displacement connected well to the theme of the exhibition. Those who came from Latin-America recognized the *arpilleras* as a technique from their region and could by a quick glance at the *arpillera* "read" and understand all the symbolics inbedded in the textile.

The Zimbabwean textile at the exhibition was a piece called "*The day we will never forget*" and was a collective work by girls and women affected by the event depicted on the textile. For the international group on the 31st of October, Fredens Hus had made a special arrangement by moving the Zimbabwean textile to a separate room with more space, where the group gathered as the final stop on the guiding tour. This gave an opportunity for people to have a closer look on this specific textile and by facilitation of the Programme Officer of Church of Sweden also discuss the workshop set up of creating these kind of *arpilleras*. There was also some "fika" served, i.e tea/coffee. This contributed to a friendly atmosphere and one of the Zimbabwean participants, who was familiar with the event illustrated by the Zimbabwean piece of textile, was able to share details regarding the textile narrative. The arrangement worked very well and was highly appreciated by the participants as well as by CoS.



In front of the textile from Zimbabwe, at the opening of the exhibition *Stiched Voices* at Fredens Hus, Uppsala, August 29, 2018. To the left Anna Andersmark, Programme Officer (Zimbabwe), Church of Sweden, International Department, and to the right, Roberta Bacic.

Photo taken by Lorentz Forsberg, Church of Sweden.

List of meetings/events:

- March 4 CoS meets with Roberta Bacic and team at Akademihotellet in Uppsala
- August 29 CoS meets with Roberta Bacic
- August 29 Grand opening of the exhibition *"Stiched Voices"* at Fredens Hus
- October 10 Guided tour of the exhibition for CoS staff
- October 24 CoS, preparatory meeting with Fredens Hus, for the tour with the international group
- October 31 Guided tour of the exhibition for the group of ACT Assembly participants

November 20 Briefing in CoS office focussed on the cooperation with regards to the exhibition