



**THE AFRICAN
SELF HELP
ASSOCIATION**

W.O. No. 1499

THE AFRICAN SELF HELP ASSOCIATION

OFFICE BEARERS

<i>LIFE PRESIDENT</i>	Mrs. Margaret Ballinger
<i>LIFE VICE-PRESIDENT</i>	Mrs. Doris Binswanger
<i>CHAIRMAN</i>	Mrs. D. Haggie
<i>VICE-CHAIRMAN</i>	Mrs. P. Newton-Thompson
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<i>ORGANISING SECRETARY</i>	Mrs. D. Stewart
<i>ASSISTANT ORGANISERS</i>	Mrs. A. Fergusson
	Mrs. M. Nokwe
	Mrs. H. Silgee
<i>TREASURER</i>	Mrs. D. Coulton

The aim of the African Self Help Association is to help and encourage African women in urban areas to do voluntary social work amongst their own people.

The Association has over 2,000 African members who are divided into Service Committees. Each Service Committee establishes, runs and finances its own project.

Thirty one Service Committees are at present running Day Nurseries, in which approximately 2,200 children are cared for. Other groups are running clubs for young people and poor relief schemes for the aged. Service Committee members have helped with the work of the African Children's Feeding Scheme since its inception.

Members also work for improved conditions in their own areas, and have been instrumental in procuring better facilities such as street lighting, ambulance services and more efficient transport.

The Association employs two European and two African organisers, who visit and inspect Service Committee projects and help and advise the groups running them. The Treasurer of the Association instructs members in book-keeping and supervises their accounts.



LEFT: Mrs. Helen Silgee, a member of the association since its earliest days.

Our 2,000 African members are ordinary women, some nurses and teachers, others simple housewives who do washing in Johannesburg, but all of whom have developed a sense of responsibility to the community. When a visitor recently asked Mrs. Silgee why she did Service Committee work, she replied, "Because my heart tells me to."

BELOW: There is a tremendous need for supervision of small children in the townships. In nearly all families both parents have to work to make ends meet.





More than 2,000 small children are looked after in the Association's Day Nurseries, from 7 a.m. till whenever their mothers get home from work. They are given three meals a day and are supervised, in most instances, by trained African Nursery School teachers.





ABOVE: A number of the Association's Day Nurseries are running in temporary premises like this. We are working to get them all properly housed in buildings like the one below, of which we already have eleven.

BELOW: The Margaret Wettstein Day Nursery run by Orlando East Service Committee.



**How does
the future
look?**

We are confident that the work done by the Association is fulfilling a twofold purpose. On the one hand much needed places of care for children and other services have been provided in the African Townships. On the other, there is an appreciable growth of self-reliance and enterprise amongst Service Committee members which encourages us to believe that African women are capable of and ready for social work amongst their own people. We feel that the Association is tackling some of the problems of urban life in South Africa in a new way.

NEEDS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The greatest need, of course, is for money to start and to carry on Service Committee projects.

It costs approximately R4,000 to build a Day Nursery. This does not include any fittings or equipment such as stoves, cupboards, shelves and simple nursery school furniture. There is always a shortfall between the amount paid by the parents (R1 per child per month) and the amount it actually costs to feed and keep a child for five days a week. The City Council makes grants-in-aid to most Service Committees, but in no case does the Service Committee get enough money to run its own project without further fund-raising and donations.

Those Service Committees running Poor Relief schemes have to try and find the money to buy food and comforts for the very needy people they help, but this is desperately hard in a community where nearly everyone is finding it difficult to get enough for their own needs.

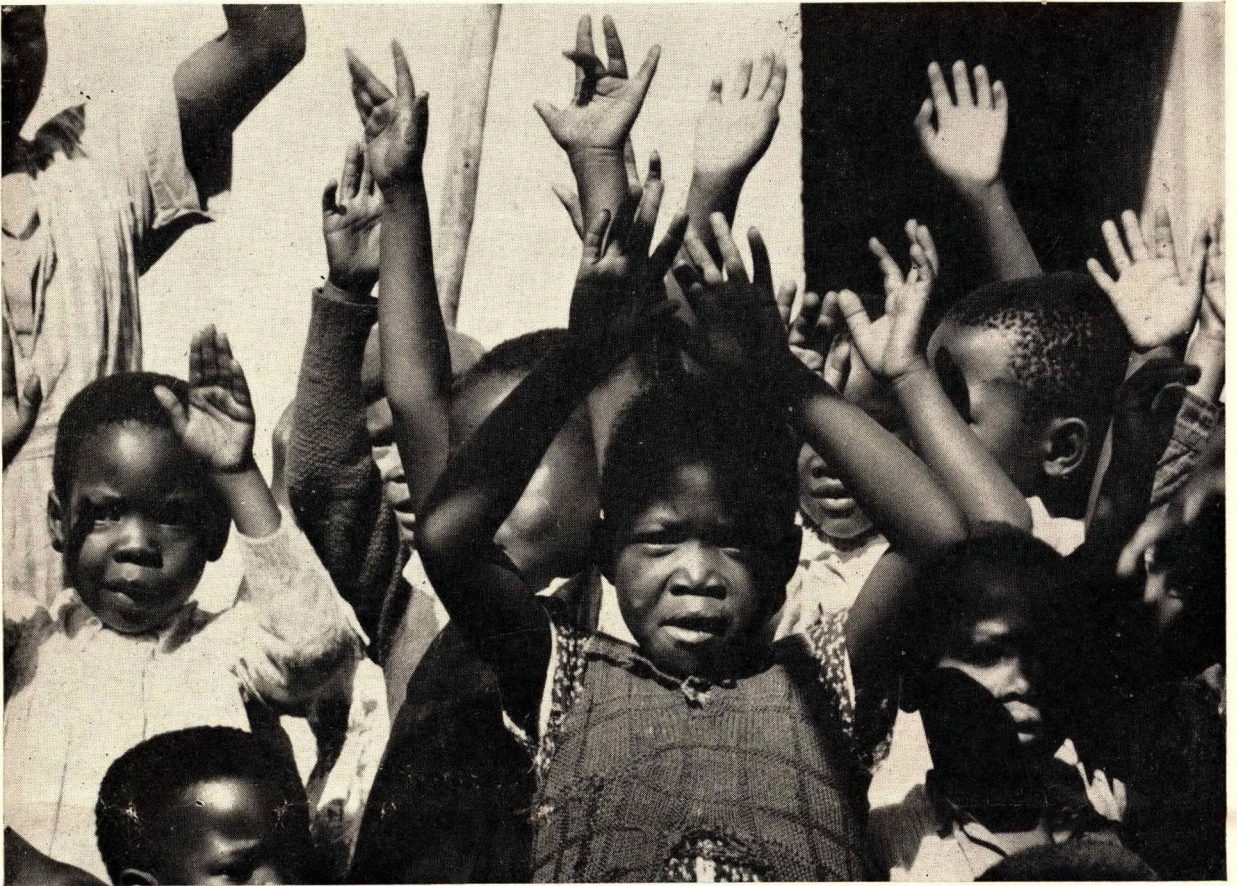
The central organisation of the Association has considerable expenses such as salaries, transport, office expenses etc. which are administered quite separately from the Service Committee accounts.

There is further need for all sorts of new or second-hand articles, from clothing to nursery school equipment, books, furniture, pots and pans, scraps of material, wool and all household goods.

Finally European women are needed to "adopt" Service Committees. This entails visiting and advising them and, which is most important, making the African women feel that there is someone who understands their difficulties and really wants to see them make a success of their undertakings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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All other photographs by Michael Joseph



PLEASE BRING HAPPINESS WITHIN OUR REACH

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