

NEWS

Outgoing MEDA president led an era of growth

■ Successor is first woman and first person of African descent to lead organization

By MIKE STRATHDEE

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

INDIANAPOLIS — As Allan Sauder retires from Mennonite Economic Development Associates in December after 16 years as president, he will leave behind an organization that reaches much further than it did when he joined.

MEDA set new records in donations and clients served for the second consecutive year, Sauder noted in his final address to the organization's annual convention in Indianapolis Nov. 8-11.

In the year that ended June 30, MEDA received \$8.2 million in private donations from supporters in North America and Europe, up 31 percent from a year earlier.

MEDA worked through 401 partners in 62 countries, helping almost 103 million families realize healthier, more economically sustainable lives through its work to create business solutions to poverty, he said.

When Sauder became president, MEDA was reaching about 200,000 clients, with annual revenue about one-seventh of current numbers.

His successor, Dorothy Nyambi, brings a range of expertise and life experience to MEDA.

The first woman in the role, she is the first person of African descent to lead the international development charity. She comes from a Presbyterian background.

Nyambi, a dual citizen of Canada and Cameroon, worked as a physician for seven years before moving into international development. She has worked with the U.S. Peace Corps, Right to Play, the Canadian Executive Service Organization and the African In-



Steve Sugrim/MEDA

The outgoing and incoming MEDA presidents, Allan Sauder and Dorothy Nyambi.

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stitute for Mathematical Studies.

"MEDA has a really winning approach" to sustainable development, Nyambi said. She hopes MEDA will become a household name and leader within the development industry.

Sauder expressed pleasure about MEDA's work in promoting gender equality and environmental sustainability. But he also wished the organization's sensitivity to environment and climate change issues had been equally strong back when he joined MEDA in 1987.

"We are probably at least 31 years late," he said. "But that doesn't mean it is too late, or that there is nothing to be done."

Nyambi, a married mother of three adult children, said she welcomed the opportunity to re-imagine what MEDA has done in the past and explore what to add.

"The best work happens when we know that what we do is not just work but we are doing some-

thing that will improve other people's lives," she said. "This is the opportunity that drives each of us at MEDA, and this is the opportunity that really drives me."

Empowering women

Several African women entrepreneurs told of their partnerships with MEDA and work to empower small-scale farmers, many of them women.

Rose Mutuku of Smart Logistics in Kenya sources beans from 10,000 small growers. She recalled getting a call from a woman who could finally afford a proper roof for her house through selling produce to Mutuku.

Tanzanian Sarah William Kessy of Halisi Products told of her efforts to convince subsistence farmers and her company employees to form credit circles, so they can get loans to expand farms, market their produce and start other side businesses.

Getting access to loans remains a major challenge for women, Mutuku said.

Another highlight of the weekend was MEDAx, a conference track for people under 40. The gathering of 100 young adults included a panel discussion and a \$5,000 pitch competition where four groups presented their business ideas.

Lack of money can't brake love of racing

By MIKE STRATHDEE

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

INDIANAPOLIS — David Richert views his racing career as a God thing.

He has no other explanation for how he has spent 16 years competing in a prohibitively expensive sport.

"Ultimately, racing is what allowed me to experience God," he said in a presentation to Mennonite Economic Development Associates' annual convention.

Raised in a Mennonite Brethren family on a farm in Manitoba, he had no interest in cars before seeing a Formula One car race on TV. After visiting Indianapolis and viewing a race from the speedway's upper deck, he decided he wanted to be behind the wheel.

Told that racing was an impossible goal for a farm kid, he did some research and discovered most racers start out with go carts. In 2002, at age 20, he bought a go cart and won rookie of the year honors.

Encouraged by that success, he attended a racing school in Quebec, then a racing test in Savannah, Ga. Despite being told by a team owner that he had the most talent and ability, he quickly learned that being fast meant nothing without major financial backing, which he lacked. Richert



Despite notching wins in German races, David Richert spends most of his time developing partnerships to raise money to compete.

chose to put all his money into his racing career.

His big break came in 2008 when Volkswagen chose him as one of the top 30 young race-car drivers in North America. Six years later, he was racing full-time in Europe.

In 2016 he headed to Monaco, designing his own car because he couldn't afford to pay anyone to do it.

"More Canadians have been in outer space than have completed a circuit in Monaco," he said.

Despite notching wins in German races, he spends most of his time developing partnerships to raise money to compete.

Prize money in Europe is minimal to nonexistent, perhaps 100 Euros, he said. Pursues are larger in North America, but only a fraction of the costs of racing. Still, he is happy to pursue his dream.

"I'm excited for what the future holds, as long as God is at the controls," he said.