

MMM

Rooted and founded in love



MEDICAL MISSIONARIES of MARY

SUPPLEMENT TO HEALING & DEVELOPMENT — VOLUME 78 — EASTER 2017

**Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb
of Mary our Mother;
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world
with human eyes.**

**Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.**

**Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly
joined to everything that is.**

**The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light;
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.**

Praise be to you!

(From Pope Francis, Laudato Si)

We wish all our supporters joy and peace during the Easter season.

A journey of the heart: Farewell to Rwanda

On 6 April 1994 the genocide in Rwanda began. By May of that year, MMM leadership was discussing how we could respond to the catastrophe. Soon Trócaire, the development agency of the Irish Church, asked if we could put together a medical team. This led to our involvement in relief work at Cyanika, which had 20,000 displaced persons.

A member of the MMM team described the scene. 'In Chynika the air was thick with smoke and the smell of eucalyptus wood being used for firewood. The people were in living squalor and desolation. They were seen but not heard. When we started organizing relief many people came asking, "Please give us something to do." Our arrival brought them hope.'

We remained until June 1995, when the refugee camps were closing. Because the situation continued to be very fragile, missionary groups met to consider the possibility of longer-term commitments. Eventually two MMM communities were established.

In **Butare**, we were involved in health and rehabilitation for women and children and in teaching in the University Medical School and Hospital. This work was handed over in 2009.

In October 1996, MMM went to Gikongoro Diocese at the invitation of the bishop. We established our first house in rural **Kirambi**, where there were historically marginalized groups, poor small scale farmers, orphans and many people living with HIV. After a time of insertion, in May 1997 we took over the running of Kirambi Health Centre. With the support of Trócaire,



A camp for the displaced in 1994

a baseline survey was conducted, which showed that in the catchment area malnutrition in children under five years of age was 39%. In response, in November 1998 the Kirambi Community Health and Development Programme (KCHDP) was started and integrated with the health centre.

Through KCHDP/Kirambi Health Centre, many families have improved their lives with capacity development in health and nutrition and with economic empowerment through agriculture.



MMM Sisters and staff at the health centre

They learned good farming practices to increase food production, growing vegetables on artificial land, known as kitchen (sack) gardens. They shared their knowledge, so that today literally every family has a kitchen garden. They harvest vegetables close to home and the plots are economical in water consumption. KCHDP installed rain water harvesting technology into semi-underground tanks and introduced water recycling infrastructures. This means families can grow vegetables even in the dry season.

In all our projects we have collaborated with local government and committees elected by the community, ensuring that what we started will continue in a sustainable way.

Sharing in a gift of healing

MMM Kirambi has retained experienced and dedicated staff members. Among them are two Associate MMMs, committed to our healing mission. Social worker Xavier Bizimana has been with KCHDP for nineteen years. Aloysie Mukamana, KCHDP assistant coordinator, has been with us for fourteen years.

In 2012 KCHDP/Health Centre was one of four programmes chosen by MMM leadership as centres of excellence. The team spirit helped the programme to place fourth in Nyanza District in 2013; third in 2014; and second in 2016. By December 2016, malnutrition in children under five years of age in the catchment area had been reduced to 1.4%.



Hearts begin to heal from trauma through Capacitar while gardens begin to grow.



Sack gardens helped to improve nutrition.

Our dream is always for the people to be empowered to take responsibility for their own health. With the government now able to run the programme with the diocese and the local community, after much discernment, we decided that it was time to hand over.

On 31 January 2017, we transferred the MMM programme to the Diocese of Gikongoro. It has been a gift to be part of the story of the brave and resilient Rwandese people, witnessing the power of the Holy Spirit at work as they moved from hatred, fear and mistrust to reconciliation, collaboration and self-reliance.

As the Sisters said goodbye to the people and to the beautiful hills and mountains, a man on his bicycle, his hoe on his shoulder, rode beside the car. At the top of his voice he sang, *'Urugendo rwiza inshuti z'Imana!* (Safe journey, friends of God!) The MMMs responded, *'Murakoze cyane.* (Thank you so much.)

We thank God for protecting and guiding us and our friends and supporters, who enabled us to be present for over twenty years. The journey is far from complete but we leave Rwanda with grateful hearts.



Aloysie accepts the prize for placing second in Nyanza District.

The liberating power of the Gospel

In July 2011, South Sudan became the world's newest country. Recovering after Africa's longest-running civil war, over two million people had been displaced. Earlier that year, an MMM team had undertaken an exploratory visit to decide how we could respond to a real and urgent need. Rudolf Deng Majak, Bishop of Wau (RIP), was looking for medical personnel for his diocese, covering 160,000 square kilometres.



Beginning health care at community level: houses near Eastern Bank

Despite poor infrastructure and continuing insecurity, there was a feeling of hope as local people, missionaries, and other organizations worked together to build a new country. Sister Kay Lawlor wrote, "It will not be an easy mission but it will be a real one."



Srs. Irene, Josephine and Magdalene: present to the people of South Sudan

Our Congregational Leadership Team decided to establish an MMM presence in Wau Diocese, which had many settlements for the displaced. We would provide community-based health care for almost 25,000 people.

In March 2013 the pioneer MMMs left Nairobi for Wau, the third-largest city in South Sudan. From their house they could hear people shouting, their minds disturbed - an aftermath of the war. They visited Eastern Bank, where people were living in

grass-thatched houses under scorching sun. An assessment to determine health needs and priorities showed that an inadequate clean and safe water supply and poor nutrition were critical issues. They said, 'People walk long distances and queue for hours before they are able to fetch water at one hand pump.'

Despite nearby unrest, by 2014 the people of Eastern Bank began to implement their action plan. Sister Irene said, 'Prayer was the hinge of the day and kept us going.'

Activities started with WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) and a malaria campaign. All was done with the involvement of the local people. 'We could feel their enthusiasm to pull together to solve the water problem.'

Since then seven boreholes have been drilled and hand pumps constructed, giving access to clean water to over 3,000 people. Eleven mechanics completed training and are responsible for repairing pumps at Eastern Bank.' Water committees were established.



Drilling a borehole to bring much-needed clean water

With clean water for proper hand washing, sanitation and hygiene there is less gastrointestinal disease. Water means crops can be irrigated. With less money spent on medicine more is available to buy food.

Poor nutrition was addressed with the introduction of sack and kitchen gardens, improving family diets by adding fresh vegetables. Hundreds of people have benefitted. Some were able to sell their surplus.

Working with the Ministry of Health, the Sisters started immunizations and gave health education in all Eastern Bank divisions. A *rakouba* (round hut) was built for health education, vaccinations, and nutrition demonstrations.



Getting acquainted with the neighbours

In July 2015 the foundation stone of the MMM Healing Centre was laid, with building funds coming mainly from the Malta Mission Fund, HoPE and other donors via our MMM General Mission Fund. Equipment was provided by Maltese donors. Sadly 'construction has been most challenging and unpredictable with fighting breaking out in June 2016.'



Working together to build a healing centre and a country

There is ongoing participation with other NGOs and stakeholders in monthly cluster meetings to discuss service delivery for WASH, health concerns, humanitarian issues, protection, gender-based violence, nutrition, social services and human development.

Giving ourselves to the struggle

Last September the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that the number of South Sudanese refugees fleeing the country had passed the 1 million mark (CISA, 20 Sep 2016). In February, Pope Francis appealed for humanitarian assistance to South Sudan where famine is threatening the lives of millions (CISA, 24 Feb 2017). The South Sudanese pound continued to be devalued and prices have sky-rocketed.

Yet in the midst of the tensions there have been joyful moments. In July 2013, the Sisters' chapel was blessed and Mass celebrated for the first time. In December 2016, the community rejoiced as Sister Josephine Nabisere made Perpetual Profession in MMM.

Today MMMs of three nationalities live in community in Wau, bringing God's healing love and compassion. During the food crisis in November and December they supplied provisions to over 200 internally displaced people. At Christmas they played and sang carols in the cathedral compound, where over 8,000 people were living in camps. The people told them, 'We know Christmas has come and Emmanuel is really with us because you are here.'

In the midst of recurrent conflict they continue to work with the people to bring about a better quality of life – as MMMs have always done.

Mutual learning about nonviolence

Sister Ito Etokakpan, from Nigeria, is based in Salvador, Brazil. There, as in too many other places in today's world, trauma and violence are everyday realities. Ito attended a meeting that encouraged participants to look at their experiences in new ways - together.

'In January, the Ecumenical Service Center for Popular Evangelization (CESEEP) and the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP) organized a workshop in São Paulo for people who live and work in the periphery of Brazil. The theme was: *To educate for peace in times of injustice and violence*. Our staff at Project Consolation were invited to share their experiences of caring for mothers and families whose children have been assassinated. 'There were 501 people from Brazil and beyond, from a variety of religious backgrounds. Mapping out the reality of violence in the country was a time for celebration and one way of dealing with trauma. We ritualized most activities. The simple fact of sharing and that there was always enough for everyone showed that the wealth of the world could be shared with all.'

'We were divided into groups called "tents". Mine was on creative dance. Using our personal experiences of coming face to face with violence we formulated ways of dancing that really shake the body. When we meet, please remind me to show you a little bit!'

Making connections

Ito learned that the greeting in African traditional religion is *axé*. The greeting of the indigenous people of Amazonas, Brazil is *awere*. Their meaning is similar to the [Hindi] word *namaste*: 'The God in me recognizes and greets the God in you.'



Facing the experience of violence and trauma together

'I became more aware of the vastness of Brazil when a young person from Amazonas described travelling for five days by boat to get to Manaus. A priest there paid for his flight to São Paulo.

'The most important learning was about making contacts - sharing ideas and experiences with like-minded groups and individuals. These include people who have fought all their lives in small but very meaningful ways to preserve their indigenous land, like Casique Baiara.'

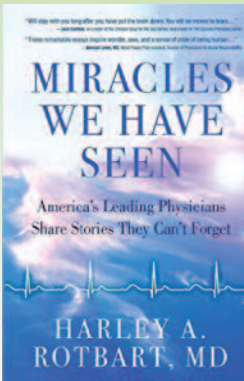


Rita Silva Nascimento, AMMM and Casique Baiara with Sr. Ito (R)

Shocking statistics

'We learned that one person is assassinated in Brazil every nine minutes and that there were 125 victims of rape per day in 2015. The media, police, injustice, corruption, drugs, impunity, etc. help to increase the level of violence.'

Itoero concluded, 'Someone asked which religion was the best in helping to reduce violence. We decided that it is the one that allows a person to be human, to do good and be in solidarity with their neighbor, to be just, to be compassionate, to be merciful, to be sensitive, to be honest, and to love unconditionally, with a spirituality that produces internal transformation. If we all put these into practice, violence will be reduced.'



For your bookshelf – and reading!

Sister Bernadette Kenny, MMM, has spent many years in Clinchco, Virginia, USA, bringing health care to a poorly-served area of Appalachia. Her faith-filled efforts have led to empowerment of the people and real changes in access to health systems. A new book has been published, entitled *Miracles We Have Seen*, by Harley A. Rotbart, MD, Professor and Vice-Chair Emeritus, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine. Chapter 6, page 36 is called "When Sister Bernie prays for you", and tells some of her story.

The book is available online and in bookstores in the USA. Royalties will be used for the RAM/Health Wagon, which serves the people of Appalachia.

'At the last...I shall see God' (Job 19:25,26).




Sister Kathleen Donnelly, MMM

Sister Kathleen was born in Newpark, Co. Tyrone in 1935. She trained as a nurse-midwife and worked as a lay missionary in Zambia before joining the Medical Missionaries of Mary in 1971. After profession her first assignment was to Leon, Spain for a year.

She then worked in Uganda for 2 years, followed by 2 years helping in the guest department and infirmary in the Motherhouse. After final profession she was assigned to Kenya, where she served for 27 years in community health projects in rural and urban environments.

Sister Kathleen returned to Ireland in 2007 and lived in the Motherhouse community for 9 years. She was transferred to the nursing facility, *Aras Mhuire*, at the end of 2016 and died there peacefully on 10 January 2017.



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- Pray with us.
We remember you each day.
- Make a donation by mail or online at www.mmmworldwide.org
- Join us as members of MMM or as an MMM Associate.
- Remembering us in your will or giving a donation in memory of a loved one will help us to plan for our work.

You can specify how and where your gift will be used.

Please include: "the Congregational Leader, for the time being, of the Medical Missionaries of Mary."

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When a donor specifies a country, project or special need (e.g. women's development, AIDS), 100% of that donation is transferred to the specified country or project. We allocate non-specified donations to the most urgent needs overseas or add them to our General Mission Fund, which pays for airfares, professional training of Sisters, and emergency needs overseas.

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