

# Healing & Development

2021 Edition

MEDICAL  
MISSIONARIES  
of MARY



MMM



**‘Give thanks to God in everything’**

(1 Thess 5:16).



**Medical Missionaries of Mary**

Founded in Nigeria in 1937 by Dublin-born Mother Mary Martin, today MMMs number about three hundred Sisters, who come from nineteen countries.

A growing number of men and women around the world are Associates.

The three words in the Congregation's title carry the inspiration that gives us energy to become engaged in healing some of the world's pain.

**Medical:** 'Be with those who suffer, the oppressed, and those on the margin of life. Heal the sick, excluding no one... Let your particular concern be the care of mother and child' (MMM Constitutions).

**Missionaries:** 'You are missionaries... Work with all people of good will. Join resources with them especially in the field of health, so as to bring about a world of justice and peace, where true human development is fostered, and human dignity and rights are respected' (MMM Constitutions).

**Mary:** 'Ponder in your hearts the mystery of the Visitation. Be inspired by Mary's selfless love, her simplicity and faith, as she goes in haste to answer a human need, bringing with her the light that is life' (MMM Constitutions).

**Our Motto:**  
Rooted and Founded in Love (Eph. 3:17)

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**Leader's Letter**



Dear Friends,

When we first heard of COVID-19, probably few of us would have predicted that our world would still be so affected by the pandemic. In many places where our MMMs live and work we are now seeing its longer-term consequences. These include malnutrition and an increase in gender-based violence and trafficking.

I am pleased to send you our yearbook, *Healing and Development*, which will give you an idea of how our Sisters, Associates and co-workers are enabling local people to deal with these and other realities.

Our theme for 2021 is: 'Give thanks to God in everything' (1 Thess 5:16). Despite many challenges we have much for which to be thankful. New technologies have made it possible for us to reach out to people needing hope and encouragement. We have begun new projects in response to local needs and requests. We are especially grateful for your interest and support, which help to make our work in health and healing possible in these uncertain times.

We are inspired by our MMM Associates, who share in living our charism (gift) of healing and live our MMM Core Values in their daily lives. Many continue to live MMM spirituality in countries and ministries where we have handed over our programmes, such as Rwanda; Capim Grosso, Brazil; and Dareda, Tanzania.

We have welcomed many women into our formation programmes as they discerned if God is calling them to become Medical Missionaries of Mary. We rejoiced with those who made first and perpetual profession in the last year. In 2021, five Sisters marked fifty years of commitment as MMMs and one celebrated twenty-five years.

You are part of the MMM story described in this yearbook, helping to bring healing, hope and compassion to areas of great human need. Thank you for your prayers, support, encouragement and financial assistance.

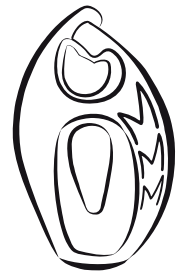
In October we take inspiration from Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, a woman for whom love and gratitude were central to her life. I pray that we will continue to support each other as we navigate the days ahead. We remember you each day when we gather at community prayer, asking that you and your families experience God's love and healing as we continue to live with COVID -19.

*Sister Siobhán*

Sister Siobhán Corkery, MMM  
Congregational Leader

Front cover: Mary Abuk and her daughter are very proud of their garden in South Sudan. As the result of a seed project, they have learned to raise vegetables, improving their nutrition and general quality of life.

**MEDICAL MISSIONARIES of MARY**



**MMM**

Rooted and founded in love



St. Thérèse of Lisieux  
Patroness of the Missions

In her autobiography Thérèse described her struggles with mental health issues. Traumatized by the early loss of her mother, she also experienced bullying at school and what was probably an obsessive compulsive disorder. Suffering great inner turmoil as an adult, she learned that she could not overcome these issues on her own and centred her life on a relationship with a loving God. Her prayer may help us in our own difficult times: 'Jesus, help me to simplify my life by learning what you want me to be – and becoming that person.'



# ANGOLA

## The Importance of Empowerment

The Mother Mary Martin Health Centre has been providing services in Viana for 10 years. It is located in an expanding urban area with limited infrastructure. There is no water drainage system or proper waste disposal. There are high rates of youth unemployment and teenage pregnancy. The programme therefore focuses on issues such as maternal and child care and improving sanitation and hygiene.

During the lockdown in 2020 with COVID-19, many health centres and clinics closed. Hospitals that were open attended only emergency cases. The staff in the Mother Mary Health Centre saw all who came, so patient numbers increased. Unfortunately, it was not possible to do outreach work in the villages, give school health talks or visit homes.



Mothers and babies in the immunization area

The centre offers many HIV-related services, including voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). Of special concern was the increasing number of new cases. HIV still greatly impacts the lives of those affected despite the benefits of treatment. Education about HIV/AIDS is given at the health centre, and during consultations patients are encouraged to have a HIV test. Staff plan to increase awareness about the importance of VCT for people to learn their status and to access treatment: in 2020, 80 new clients were registered and 128 people were receiving antiretroviral treatment (ART). The government supplies ART to the health centre. People with a positive result are encouraged to bring their partners so the couple can receive counselling together.

There are also measures to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the virus: 20 mothers received preventive therapy in 2020.

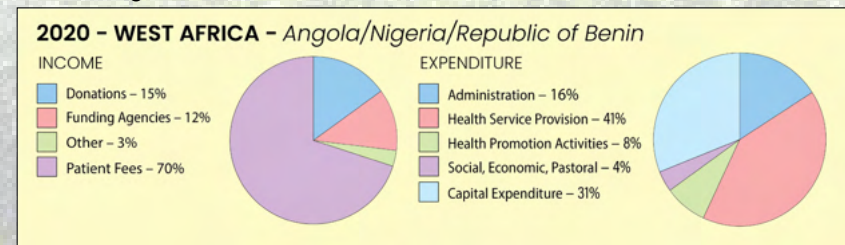
### Growing together

There is also a support group for people living with HIV/AIDS. With stigma still associated with HIV some people fear rejection by their families. They often hide their diagnosis. Group members had been meeting monthly to share their hopes and fears, for health talks, and to receive their medicines. With COVID-19, meetings were reduced to three-monthly and participants received a three-month's supply of drugs. The 128 members, 93 women and 35 men, came from far and near. Many of them helped with counselling.

Staff nurse Alice Gloria da Felicidade Alvaro is responsible for the HIV/AIDS programme and attends ministry of health workshops. She gives talks to the support group on a variety of topics. Then each group member freely shares how life has been for him/her since the last meeting. Some members volunteer to visit those unable to attend. Afterwards they enjoy a nutritious fruit juice called *mukua*. The group is bringing about invaluable self-empowerment for the participants.

### Help with the essentials

Five NGOs have been financing HIV/AIDS programs in Angola for the past seven years. They continue to supply the health centre with HIV testing kits and ART.



Plenty of ventilation in the weighing area



A consultation with staff



Sr. Stella meets a patient.



Nurse Alice Gloria



A baby being immunized

# BRAZIL

## Present to the Peoples of Today

In the last year the COVID-19 crisis affected our Sisters in Salvador in a variety of ways. They told us how life has changed for them and for the people with whom they work.

**Sister Jacintha Mahakwe** said, 'The outbreak is having far-reaching consequences. There are a lot of unemployed people who can no longer provide themselves and their families with basic needs.'

'At the same time, crisis is a strong driver of creativity and innovation. We offer online listening services and emphasize wellness. We pay for medications, counselling sessions and food parcels, distributing them to children, adults and the elderly. We participate in parish counselling and family ministry, give English lessons, and are involved in youth and vocation animation ministry.'

Since **Sister Maria José da Silva** returned to Brazil from Uganda in 2018 she has divided her time between her MMM community and care for her elderly mother. Home care is very expensive.

At present, while helping her sibling at home, she offers her time daily to listen to people in her parish. She wrote: 'This has been a precious experience for the people and me. I hope whoever we are, by taking precautions, each of us is able to offer some kind of concrete solidarity to people who are suffering in our world today.'

**Sister Miranilza Nascimento dos Santos** works with youth who have been badly affected by the pandemic. Depression, self-mutilation, and no future prospects are part of their lives. In early July 2020, a team of committed lay people and members of religious congregations was formed to reach out to them.

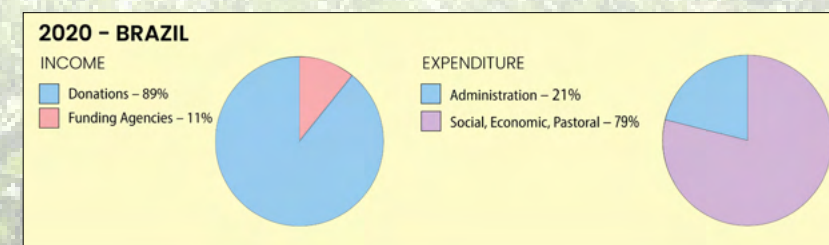


Ana and Carlos Castro help to find needy families.

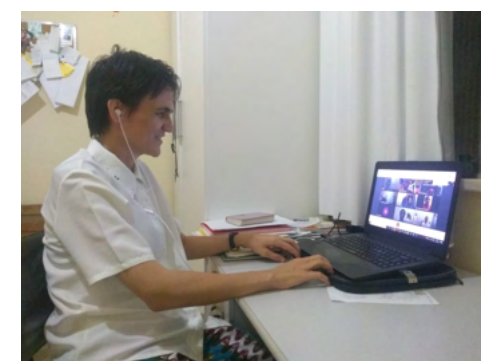
Nilza explained, 'We organize weekly virtual workshops on various themes and accompany them through listening and spiritual and psychological support. Approximately 200 young people have participated in the programme so far, with an average of 35 participating weekly. We also ran a capacity-building programme for parish leaders to gain skills in accompanying the youth: 35 participated - from 5 states and 7 dioceses.'

**Sister Bernadette Fadegnon** hopes to return to Salvador after making her perpetual profession in her hometown in the Republic of Benin. About her ministry in Brazil she said, 'I meet online weekly with the family pastoral group. We begin with a relaxation exercise and then reflect and share on the gospel and what is happening in prayer. We offer after-school online English lessons for children. This is exciting for them. They are able to use their free time well and avoid being influenced negatively by their peers, many of whom are affected by drugs and teenage pregnancies. Amid all the struggles, we have found time to celebrate and renew our energies.'

Despite challenges that at times can seem overwhelming, our MMM community in Salvador continues to reach out to bring hope and holistic healing to people in need.



Self-empowerment and healing



Nilza reaches out to young people through the Internet.



Engaging in capacity-building training online



Celebrating Maria José's birthday





Srs Mary McKearney and Renée Duignan with Mary Egan & Sr Rita Higgins at a parish celebration in Marcala



Mary Egan in the 'Teacher at Home' project



Children build their self-esteem and learn about dental health.



A home pharmacy with natural medicines



Sr Margaret on a home visit in Siguatepeque

# HONDURAS

## What We Are About

**MMM first went to Honduras in the aftermath of the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch. Now our Sisters share their reflections as they hand over our programmes after a generation among a strong and resilient people.**

'As MMM prepares to leave Honduras in 2021, we reflect on 22 years of an extraordinary adventure that began at the 1997 MMM Chapter, when a decision was made to open a new mission in Latin America. Sisters Mary McKearney, Renée Duignan and Rita Higgins, and lay woman Mary Egan, were assigned to Mexico from the USA. MMM USA had done research on possible ministries in Mexico City and, after language school, the group entered a process of discernment to explore these possibilities. They found that the reality had changed. During the discernment, a call came from the Congregational Leadership Team, alerting them to the situation in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch. Two Sisters went to Honduras from Mexico to do research and they saw the devastation firsthand. They also contacted NGOs and the Honduran Conference of Religious. On their return to Mexico it became clear that God was calling MMM to Honduras. On 1 May 1999 the group arrived there to establish a new mission in Marcala in the Diocese of Comayagua.

### Beginnings

'We joined the parish pastoral and social ministry and established an integrated health and development project among the indigenous Lenca people, who live in isolated mountain communities. We were involved in natural medicine, home pharmacies, stove making and training traditional birth attendants. Mary Egan started a "Teacher at Home" programme, providing education opportunities for students from marginalized families. MMM continues to support this programme.



Staff and volunteers in Marcala

'As levels of trust increased we worked more with the most vulnerable groups. We developed an integrated health programme in schools and formed women's groups. The project raised awareness by building capacity and self-esteem. We encouraged women and children to recognize and break negative cycles of behavior and provided information on health, human development and human rights issues. Participation in the groups helped children to develop their creative skills and build their confidence. We also supported women with Pap smear screening.

'We promoted formal education and collaborated with like-minded organisations. In Marcala Parish, a pastoral care team was formed to visit the sick and the elderly in their homes.

### Moving on

'After 15 years in Marcala, Sisters Bernadette Heneghan and Cleide Daniela Silva moved to Siguatepeque and began working in the Meámbar Parish, 40 km northeast. The project focuses on capacity-building in health and human development, awareness-raising on human rights issues, and care of the environment.

'Sister Margaret Nakafu arrived in 2016. She works in Siguatepeque Parish in pastoral, social and youth ministries.'

### An urban ministry

'In 2004, Sisters Renée Duignan, Joanne Bierl and Rosalinda Gonzales opened a new mission, *Casa Visitación*, in Choloma, in the Diocese of San Pedro Sula. The emphasis is on integrated health care and human rights issues. In response to emerging needs and through the generous contribution of benefactors, a new centre was constructed. We provide services through an outpatients' department, complementary therapies, counseling, dental services, income-generating activities, workshops, nutrition, home-based care, community pharmacies and pastoral-social work with community volunteers. *Casa Visitación* has networked with the diocese, parishes, NGOs, the ministry of health and other organizations, sharing resources with them. Sisters Maria Gonzaga Namuyomba and Danielle Darbro also contributed to that mission.

### Sharing the gift

'From the beginning we have been immersed in the daily lives of the people. This has been a blessing, enabling us to share the MMM charism of healing. We have been enriched by the people's openness, generosity, trust and hospitality. We are grateful for the mutual relationships with our co-workers that enabled the Sisters and staff to fulfill our mission. We appreciate the collaboration of the many volunteers and benefactors who have been our partners.



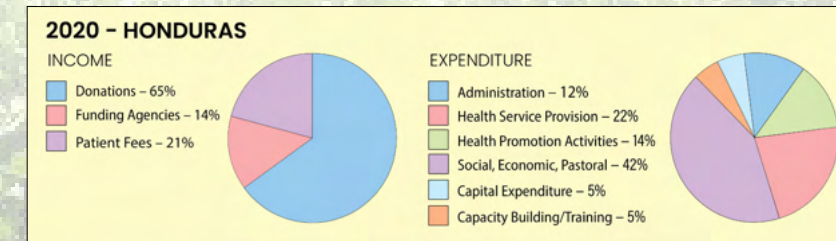
Leading a group in Tai Chi in Choloma

'One of the joys of getting to know the local people was that some were attracted by our spirituality and wanted to have a deeper relationship with us. There are now 20 MMM Associates in Honduras and many are involved in our projects. To our delight they are committed to continuing to live our MMM charism into the future, with the support of MMMs and AMMMs.



Ear wax therapy

'It is difficult to move on from a place in which we have invested so much of ourselves, and again it is a matter of discerning when it seems the time has come. As we leave so much of our hearts behind us in Honduras, "in hope and love we are ready to walk in paths that are new" (MMM Constitutions 2.6).'



A women's empowerment workshop



A consultation in Choloma



With MMM Associates in Marcala



The MMM community in Honduras: (F) Srs. Rosalinda, Margaret, Renée, Cleide, (B) Sr. Bernadette, with visitors Srs. Joanne and Kathie





Assessing a child with malnutrition



Youth engage in *Taka ni Pato*.



Community participants in Training for Transformation



Food baskets at a GBV awareness session

# KENYA

## Community Empowerment in Mukuru

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in spite of considerable challenges, Mukuru Health Centre (MHC) has continued to provide quality, affordable health services for a population already in stressful life situations. In its eight-zone catchment area in the middle of the Nairobi slums, MHC offers maternal and child health services, outpatient clinics, a nutrition project, TB and HIV-related services, and home-based care. It takes a human rights-based approach in finding sustainable solutions for issues responsible for poor health.

In the past year, Sisters and staff have witnessed the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, including increased hunger and poverty. Teenage pregnancy, with attendant health risks and effects on girls' education and future employment opportunities, increased by 71%. MHC was also a focal point for assisting people affected by human trafficking (HT) and gender-based violence (GBV). The health centre rescued 19 HT victims in 2019; there were 31 in 2020. Staff dealt with 164 cases of GBV in 2019; there were 264 cases in 2020.

Dealing with HT involves many partners and raising awareness is critical. Trained community health workers (CHVs) help to gain the trust of the local people, encouraging them to notice possible victims and report new means of deception by traffickers. A legal resource foundation trained some CHVs to be paralegals, serving as a link between the community, the foundation and MHC.

The police, the voluntary children's officer and other authorities help meet the needs of survivors of HT and GBV. Sister Mary O'Malley, based in Mukuru, began Counter Human Trafficking Trust-East Africa, offering holistic support for victims.

### A multi-sectoral approach

The stress of unemployment and malnutrition makes families more vulnerable to GBV and HT. Many are managing on one meal a day. MHC activities build the capacity and resilience of community members.

This year our MMMs plan to train 140 more youth in the *Taka ni Pato* (Garbage Is Income) initiative. Through garbage collection they earn money to support themselves. The resulting cleanup improves local sanitation. A Training of Trainers programme enables young people to take initiatives and work with older leaders.

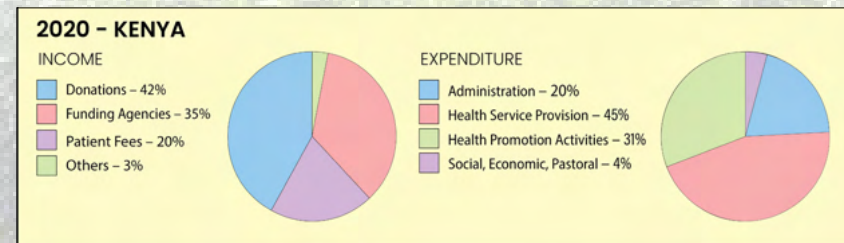
High malnutrition rates in Mukuru are associated with impaired growth in childhood and vulnerability to illness. Older malnourished people experience weight loss, fatigue and mood changes. The ministry of health and others have tried to address the problem, with little result.

For the present, social workers and health professionals at MCH determine those in need of food assistance. Food baskets also contain a facemask and soap and sanitary products for females. Support is given for 3 to 6 months. Cooking utensils are included and clients learn how to prepare nutritious meals.

With these initiatives, many community members are moving to independence.



A neighbourhood cleanup activity



# MALAWI

## A Gift for Collaboration

Malawi was relatively unscathed by COVID-19 in 2020 but now faces a new, fast-spreading wave. When outbreaks occur, hospitals and clinics are closed and people are quarantined. This is crippling the health system in general. There is a vaccination programme in this country of over 18.6 million people (World Bank, 2019), but there seems to be insufficient knowledge about immunity and the need for vaccination.

MMM has developed critical interventions in the two programmes in which we work: Kasina Health Centre in the mountainous Dedza District and St. Kizito's Integrated Health Centre in Mtsiliza, a slum area of Lilongwe.

In 2020 a *Misean Cara*-funded emergency project was undertaken and in January 2021 the Ministry of Health (MoH) designated Kasina Health Centre as a COVID-19 testing centre. However, space in the outpatients' clinic and laboratory is limited. Currently, over 2,700 people use the laboratory each month for other tests.

### Increasing capacity and awareness

A building is being renovated at Kasina to allow the continuation of high quality laboratory services and reduce the risk of people contracting COVID-19. The new larger laboratory will have improved ventilation and increased patient access. Additionally, health talks are given daily in Kasina and St. Kizito's on protecting oneself from the virus and preventing spread. Patients practice social distancing and hand washing and wearing of masks is emphasized. Unfortunately these are not always practiced in the community.



Observing the rules of hand washing at Kasina

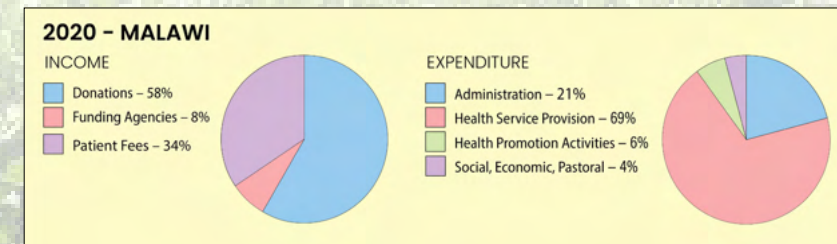
Our MMMs in Malawi plan to target over 70 villages in Kasina and 7 outreach posts near St. Kizito's with information. They want to give refresher workshops to staff, chiefs and volunteers, focusing on how vaccination enhances immunity. On outreach visits they would like to distribute buckets, bowls with stands, and soap.

Using a collaborative approach, people diagnosed with COVID-19 are managed with the district health officer. Those not severely ill are sent home with government guideline advice and are visited daily by home-based carers and primary health care staff. Clusters are followed up by the MoH, which sends in teams for testing and treatment. Those with severe disease are transferred to treatment centres in the MoH ambulance.

### Ongoing concerns

High inflation due to COVID-19 means hunger, especially for the frail elderly and children with disabilities. Rural areas depend on subsistence farming and some people supplement their income with prostitution, which may result in contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Nutrition support will be given to 100 vulnerable persons.

Good nutrition is essential for frontline staff and home care givers, who also need adequate personal protective equipment. Providing these is now a priority for our MMMs in Kasina and Mtsiliza as they cope with another challenge.



Kasina chiefs receive buckets for hand washing for their villages.



Mothers receive food at St. Kizito's.



Nutrition awareness and food distribution at St. Kizito's



Preparing the new building





Archbishop Akubeze blesses the new building.



The waiting area at the clinic



Giving an explanation in the pharmacy



Working in the records department



A health consultation

# NIGERIA

## Promoting the Right to Health

The Medical Missionaries of Mary Medical Centre Uselu, Initially known as MMM Healing and Wholeness Centre, is located in Benin City. It began in 2000 as a home-based and mobile outreach clinic serving five local government areas. It offers services for maternal and child health and the elderly, health education, palliative care and complementary alternative therapies. Health education in six schools addresses issues such as mental health, gender-based violence and care of the environment. Students actively share information with their families.

A needs assessment in 2018 highlighted the need for a static clinic offering free or affordable health services. While 40% of the population are students and staff at the teaching hospital and the University of Benin, the remainder are socio-economically vulnerable. The main source of income is seasonal petty trading, mostly for women with poor literacy. COVID-19 has increased unemployment, already high among youth and men. Reallocation of funding to COVID-19 interventions means less is available for other health needs, which exceed local government capacity to manage.

### Focusing on holistic health

A new clinic building was officially blessed and opened on 27 April 2021 by Archbishop Akubeze of Benin City. While services will increase and help ensure programme sustainability, the building was funded from local in-kind and monetary sources. *Misean Cara* has allocated resources for purchasing medical and laboratory equipment, which is necessary for registration of the centre with the Ministry of Health (MoH).



Vaccination against preventable conditions

The new centre will offer mental health counselling, health education for youth, and increased childhood immunisations and laboratory tests. Antenatal care will include ultrasound scanning to detect high-risk pregnancies. There will be training for nurses who assist with complementary therapies.

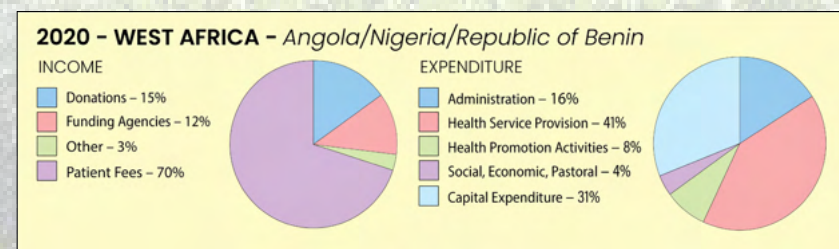
To promote access to health services through increased participation, trained voluntary health workers liaise between the health centre and the community. This has encouraged good relationships with government authorities, the MoH and other stakeholders.

### Community concerns

As hunger has increased some people have been provided with food baskets. Changing demographics in Nigeria, resulting in the breakdown of family structures, along with the absence of a social security system, present challenges to the elderly. Many suffer abandonment by relatives.

MMMs and staff encourage support of widows and people with disabilities, educating the local people on the value of the human person. They assist home-bound elderly people and very ill patients through home-based care, reintegrating them with their families.

Ultimately the new centre will promote everyone's right to good health.



# Benin

## Why Do You Need a Staff House?

One of the indicators of the quality of health care in a country is the number of doctors per 1,000 of the population. According to the World Bank, in 2018 the ratio in the Republic of Benin was 0.079. In Ireland it was 3.3. In 2017 in the USA, it was 2.6.

MMM began a community-based health programme in Zaffé, a village in the heart of Benin, in January 2000. Services in this rural area emphasize prevention, with nutrition education, screening for common conditions, maternity and child welfare, and visits to schools. Local people are enabled to take responsibility for their health. Business administrator Sister Celine Anikwem reported that COVID-19 preventive measures were adopted and there have not been any cases in the clinic, but with the lockdown it was difficult to purchase drugs. Sister Celine is aware that health care involves more than providing drugs and equipment.

She explained one of the challenges often faced by rural health facilities. 'The ministry of health requested that all clinics in the Republic of Benin have at least two doctors. It mandated that consultations be done only by doctors. We have not been able to get a second doctor because most of them prefer to work in big cities like Cotonou. So we started looking for funds to enable us to provide better accommodation for the doctor currently working with us.'

'He informed us at the end of last year that he would be relocating to Glazoué town. His wife and child wanted to join him here but the one room in which he lives in our staff quarters was too small for the family. This dedicated man has worked with us for three years. After discussion he told us that he would be happy to continue in Zaffé if there was better accommodation. We asked our MMM Congregational Leadership Team (CLT) for support.'

### Finding funding

When MMM receives donations that are not specified for a particular mission or project, we allocate them for other needs.

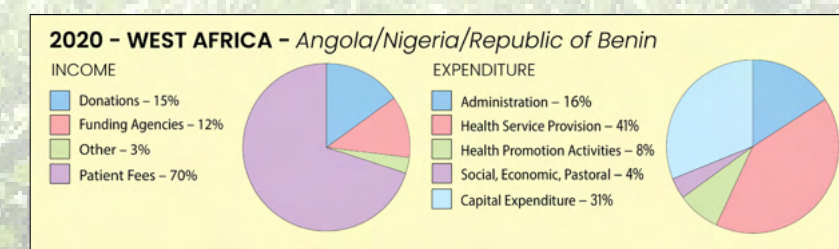
Our General Mission Fund pays for expenses such as professional training of Sisters and helping with emergencies.



Staff Gloria and Fidelia attend to a woman.

Sister Celine continued, 'Without providing incentives, recruiting experienced staff in remote areas is difficult. The CLT allocated us funds from our General Mission Fund to construct the doctor's house. We started building as soon as we received them in April 2021. The building has been roofed and is nearly finished. We hope that good accommodation will serve as an incentive to retain doctors who are willing to work in a rural area like ours.'

'We are grateful to the Congregational Leadership Team, Area Leadership Team, *Misean Cara* and all our donors whose support enables us to carry out our mission here in Zaffé. May God bless you all!'



A mother and child at the clinic



The new doctor's house - roofed and plastered



Sister Celine admires a newborn in the maternity.



Sr Brigid Egbuna takes stock in the pharmacy.



## Sowing the Seeds of Empowerment

The MMM Healing Centre at Wau in Eastern Bank (*Bahr el Shiriki*) marked two years of service in 2020. It offers primary health care to the local population and to people from distant villages of Jur River County. There is an outpatient clinic with a laboratory and pharmacy. Staff engage in health education and antenatal care, and immunizations are offered to mothers and children. A social department is concerned with social transformation and sustainable development of communities in Eastern Bank.

With COVID-19, mobile clinics had to be stopped and fewer mothers attended for antenatal care: in 2019 there were 333 mothers but only 57 in 2020. Mothers who completed their visits were given a bar of soap and a packet of maternity pads as an incentive. It is challenging to convince mothers to attend clinics or even deliver in a health facility. Most prefer to be attended by traditional midwives, only going to a clinic when problems arise.

### The reality of hunger

While limited information is available about the prevalence of malnutrition in South Sudan, the Sisters' experience in Wau has shown that about 60% of patients are malnourished. A number of factors are responsible. COVID-19 has increased the level of poverty. The area has suffered repeatedly from ethnic violence, so people cannot farm easily. The soil is poor and water is limited.

The Sisters have started a variety of activities to deal with poor nutrition. People are shown how to use sack and kitchen gardens to grow vegetables, supplementing family diets. A demonstration garden and a seed bank were started. Produce is sold to assist the elderly, the homeless and people living with physical and mental disabilities. Nutrition sessions are held for those who come for immunizations.

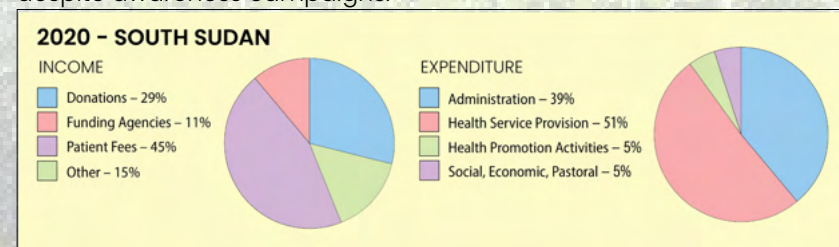
In 2020, a new group of 10 people and 25 individuals were given seeds to grow several kinds of vegetables. Three other groups of 15 people were also given seeds. They sell the surplus to pay for other needs such as medical fees.

Food is given to those with moderate to severe malnutrition. In 2020, 67 malnourished children were supported and 57 were discharged. Nine elderly people were given food baskets.

### Reducing dependency

To improve food security in the long term, women need to be empowered socially and economically. The Sisters plan to continue enrolling women in vegetable growing and seed saving so they can support their families and build their self-esteem. They learn about their rights, how to deal with domestic and gender-based violence, and how to engage in small businesses.

With the challenge of COVID-19 Sister Odette said, 'We are grateful to organisations such as UNICEF, WASH and OXFAM, that supplied us with personal protective equipment. Many do not believe that COVID-19 exists, despite awareness campaigns.'



Assessing nutrition in a local village



Visiting Mary - given a mattress for relief of a fractured hip



Women say thanks with song and dance.



An elderly neighbour who receives help from local children



Women water their gardens and see the results.

## Saying 'Yes' for Life

When a woman feels a call from God to become a member of MMM, she begins a journey of mutual discernment to discover 'in freedom and openness the authenticity of her vocation'. In the Republic of Benin, Bernadette Fadegnon felt that call and began her novitiate in 2012. This year, with great joy, we celebrated the perpetual profession of our first Beninese Sister.



Sister Bernadette signs her formula of perpetual profession.

Sister Bernadette learned that she had been granted admission to perpetual commitment in July 2020, while on mission in Brazil. She wrote: 'I learned that the news of the perpetual profession of their daughter was a thing of great joy for my people. It was celebrated with drums, cymbals, and trumpet blasts amid dancing in my home church in Zaffé.'

'I received the news in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. I thought that by the time we started planning for the ceremony, the pandemic would be a thing of the past. Unfortunately the situation had not changed much with second and even third waves... Up to a couple of hours before my departure to the Republic of Benin [for the profession], COVID-19 was still a worldwide public health issue.'

'I have been nourished by a serene joy and hope to being able to travel home. Taking a leap of faith from Mother Mary Martin, "If God wants the work, God will show the way." I am so excited.'

### A dream fulfilled

And so on 29 May 2021, dancers led the procession into St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus Church in Zaffé. The Mass was live-streamed to MMMs, Associates, family and friends around the world. In welcoming those assembled, the parish priest referred to Sister Bernadette as 'a daughter of our community, our diocese, our country, the whole world and all people.' Songs and readings were in several languages, with the Gospel sung in French.



Welcome into the Medical Missionaries of Mary!

Mgr. François Gnonhossou, Bishop of the Diocese of Dassa-Zoumé, presided. In his homily, he said that Bernadette had found the treasure for all of her life. 'In spite of our weaknesses God has called us for [God's] mission... Her profession is a total unconditional commitment, expressed not only in words but in living her vows each day.' He welcomed the guests who had come from far and near. 'For the first time we are celebrating the vows of one of us.'



Srs. Bernadette & Justina with Bishop Gnonhossou, other MMMs & celebrants

Sister Justina Odunukwe, MMM, Area Leader for West Africa, received Sister Bernadette's vows. After she received her ring, the other perpetually professed Sisters present welcomed her into the MMM Congregation. A radiant Bernadette danced with happiness.

The Eucharist concluded with the 'Magnificat' and expressions of thanks for this special celebration in Zaffé.



The procession gathers at the church.



Dancers in brilliant colours lead the procession.



Standing between her parents, Sr. Bernadette is called forward.



'What do you ask of God and of God's church?'



Receiving her ring, a sign of love and fidelity



# Golden Jubilees

**We congratulate five women who fifty years ago committed themselves to follow Christ and to bring healing to others as members of the Medical Missionaries of Mary.**



Ann with Sister Eleanor Donovan & workers at an irrigation project in Brazil

**Sister Ann White** is from Slane, Co. Meath, the seventh of nine children. After leaving school Ann worked in a solicitor's office. There she met MMM and was attracted to them because they were medical and went abroad. After profession, Ann did general nurse training and midwifery. In 1978, she was assigned to Brazil, first to São Paulo, then to Paraná State, and finally to Bahia State. She loved her time in Brazil and admired the people's great courage and strength as they sought better lives for themselves and their families.

Back in Ireland, Ann now cares for our elderly and infirm Sisters, bringing them for medical appointments. She enjoys gardening, reading and walking.

Sister Ann says, 'I am grateful that my life has been blessed in so many ways.'



Sister Ann and friends in Brazil

**Sister Anne Carr**, born in Dublin, attended school in Cork and Mayo. After profession she trained in nursing and midwifery. Her first assignment was to Malawi, where after less than a year a car crash left her badly injured. After further treatment in Ireland, she returned to Malawi. Responding to requests, she developed a Natural Family Planning ministry, eventually forming a national team.

In 1986 Anne trained in clinical pastoral education (CPE) in the USA. Realizing how helpful CPE would be in Malawi, Anne began a CPE training programme there. Its interdenominational nature attracted dedicated people for training as hospital chaplains. Since returning to Ireland, Anne has been involved with mission awareness, telling our MMM story in Ireland and Scotland. She loves to read, enjoys photography and loves being by the sea.



Sister Anne buys vegetables along the road in Malawi.



Starting CPE in Malawi: Srs. Ursula FINDER, MSOLA; Patti Amadi, MMM; Anne Carr, MMM

**Sister Catherine Young**, from Borrosleigh, Co. Tipperary, worked briefly with the Irish Civil Service before joining MMM. After profession she trained as a nurse-midwife and was assigned to Nigeria. Because of frequent malaria she returned to Drogheda. She looked after our sick and infirm Sisters until her next assignment, in 1994, to Ethiopia, which was greatly affected by HIV.

After eleven years Catherine returned to Ireland. Since then she has helped Sisters returning home - assisting with medical appointments, contacting families, and guiding those transitioning to life in Ireland. Catherine has also served in MMM leadership. She enjoys walking, swimming, reading and doing crochet. Sister Catherine says, 'I am grateful to God, to my family and Sisters for all the support and love I have received and continue to receive each day.'



With young friends in Miqe, Ethiopia



With Sister Bernadette Freyne assessing a patient in Ethiopia



With mothers and children at an outstation in Chipini, Malawi

**Sister Mary Ellen Sambuco** grew up in Irwin, PA, USA. After training as a licensed practical nurse she worked in Pierre, South Dakota on a reservation with the Sioux people. Here the idea of 'missionary' was planted; connections with Benedictine Sisters planted the idea of religious life.

Mary Ellen joined MMM in Winchester, MA. After profession she obtained a nursing degree and did midwifery training in Ireland. Her first assignment was to Malawi, where she 'appreciated how simple life can be'. Mary Ellen returned to the US in 1992 and helped to begin a mission in San Ysidro, CA. She worked with mothers and children in migrants' camps. After several other assignments she moved to Somerville, MA, in 2008. She visited the elderly and more recently has been doing music therapy with non-verbal autistic children.



Missioning ceremony to San Ysidro with Sr. Paula Smith (RIP) on R



Top: Speaking at a rally for International Women's Day in Capim Grosso, Brazil



Left: In São Paulo, Thérèse checks a neighbour's blood pressure.

**Sister Thérèse McDonough** is from Boston, MA, and was working as a secretary when she joined MMM. After profession she obtained a nursing degree and went to Ireland for midwifery training. In 1979 she was assigned to Brazil, where she served for twenty years. Thérèse says, 'I was literally turned inside out, viewing and understanding the world from a completely different perspective!' During this time she obtained a master's degree in pastoral counseling.

Returning to the USA, Thérèse did pastoral work with Brazilian immigrants and trained in CPE. She then worked at the Maryknoll Office of Cross Cultural Services in New York. Assignment to Angola in 2011 brought her to yet another culture as well as an introduction to prison ministry.

Now back in the USA, Thérèse is involved in MMM leadership and until recently volunteered at a jail in Boston. She now helps at the nearby VNA, where seven of our Sisters live.

## Silver Jubilee

Our first MMM from Angola, **Sister Laurinda Bundo**, was born in Huambo in 1965. She completed nurse training before joining MMM in Nigeria. After profession she did vocation ministry in Angola and further training in nursing, midwifery and community health in Uganda and Kenya. Laurinda returned to Angola in 2004 and set up community-based health care in Huambo. She did further training in nursing and was also involved in vocation and youth ministry.

Sister Laurinda has used her talents in building a health project in Luanda and in MMM leadership. Since returning to Huambo in 2011 she has also been nurse in charge of the clinic and a mentor for our Associates in Angola. Laurinda celebrated her silver jubilee in Huambo on 30 May. Many religious and friends joined her family for the Mass, which was celebrated by her mother's cousin, Father Bento Katchingango, CSsR.



Top: Sr. Laurinda (C) celebrates her jubilee with family and friends.

Right: Sr. Laurinda at the clinic in Huambo







Sr. Zita speaking at a graduation ceremony



A view of the new classrooms



The compounding pharmacy laboratory for students



Resources available for students at the school

# TANZANIA

## Empowerment in Tanzania

MMM is setting up a training course for pharmaceutical assistants in Ngaramtoni, Arusha, Tanzania. The aim is to provide qualified pharmacy personnel in-country, meeting employment needs as well as helping to combat the increasing problem of fake drugs. The World Health Organization (WHO) says that 42% of all fake medicines reported between 2013 and 2017 were from Africa. Fake pharmaceuticals are also a global problem, making up the world's largest fraud market, worth over \$200bn per year (<https://www.pharmaceutical-technology.com/features/anti-counterfeit-packaging-pharma/>).

Since 2005, MMM Sister Zita Ekeocha, a pharmacist, has been involved in a joint programme with Purdue University/Kilimanjaro School of Pharmacy to train pharmaceutical personnel to certificate, technician, and postgraduate levels. Training is done in keeping with government plans.

Officially known as Capacity Building Program in Biotechnology Innovation and Regulatory Science (BIRS) in Africa, it has also been offering courses at degree level since 2014 to provide knowledge that will enable development and manufacture of quality medicines. Many of the graduates of these programmes have gone on to the regulatory bodies of their respective East African countries, helping to spot and seize counterfeit medications.

### Looking at the local situation

MMM in Ngaramtoni has been examining the problem of counterfeit drugs for some time. In the Arusha Region, while many people prefer to use local herbs as first line treatments, attitudes are changing. With increasing education and urbanisation more people are using pharmaceutical products.

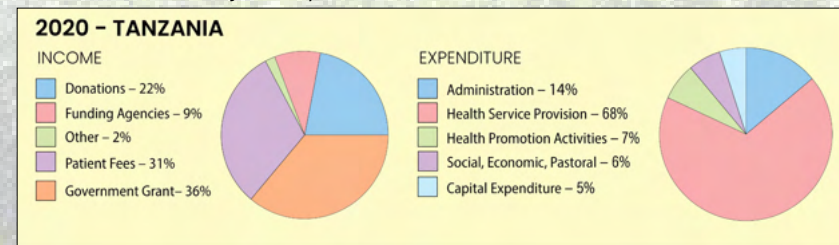
Problems have arisen because there are not enough qualified personnel to dispense medicines in health centres, dispensaries, and hospitals. Unwritten government policy is for all pharmacies to have at least one trained staff at the appropriate level in order to be registered.

We decided to help meet the needs identified by the government and complement its efforts by establishing a school for pharmaceutical assistants to certificate and diploma level. There is no similar training facility in Arusha Region and neighbouring regions of Manyara.

MMM Associate Dr. Eamonn Brehony, who has taught development and project planning in our training centre in Ngaramtoni, is responsible for building and equipping the MMM School of Pharmaceutical Sciences. The school has passed government inspections and is preparing for its first intake in October.

### First steps in a larger project

These programmes are the first steps in a much bigger scheme to improve and implant good health care in Tanzania. With other organizations, universities and church authorities, MMMs are exploring ways to help young people move from basic level education into higher academic qualifications. Congratulations to MMM in East Africa for the vision and the courage to embark on this journey!



MMMs, Eamonn Brehony (2nd from R) & inspectors outside the MMM School of Pharmaceutical Sciences

# UGANDA

## The Long View

Sisters Jacquelline Nalubega and Juliet Ezekwere manage the MMM Kansiira Community Health Programme. Kansiira has suffered from prolonged drought, leading to famine and deaths of animals. Trees cut to produce charcoal for an income are not replaced, which probably contributes to the lack of rain. The Sisters wrote, 'We have sometimes been left helpless as people tell us about the effects of the drought on their lives and families.'

In the past year, our MMMs continued house-to-house visits with village health teams (VHTs) for COVID-19 sensitization and monitoring. The district health officer gave permission to carry these out during lockdown, provided people did not gather in groups. The ten local chairpersons welcomed the initiative.

The Sisters and VHTs reached 922 households. They demonstrated how to arrange for hand washing and afterwards each household received two bars of soap and information in the language of their choice. Four languages are spoken in the area.

The MMMs had received funds through our Congregational Leadership Team to carry out the activities. During the visits they learned which households did not have radios. They used some of the funds to provide radios for 65 households, giving priority to families with students because there were classes on the radio during lockdown.

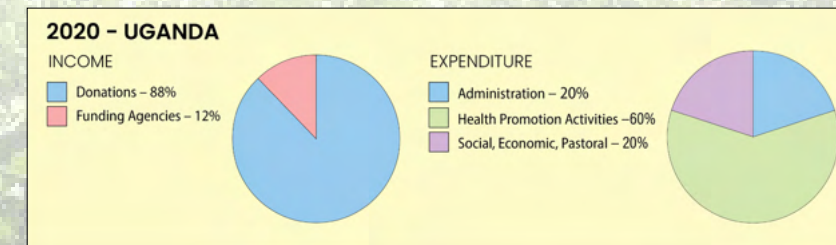
### Widening the circle

Sister Jacquelline described some interesting outcomes. 'The mother of a six-year-old boy told us that her son always listens to the radio and likes music. During the sensitization session, S.E. was very attentive. When we finished, he told us that he had a song to present about coronavirus information that he had heard over the radio.'

He sang this song while dancing with his sister, age thirteen. When we went back for the monitoring visit, we found an inscription on one of the doors of their house: "Wash your hands frequently." There was a hand washing arrangement nearby and he demonstrated how to use it.

'A single mother and her three children whom we visited had some knowledge about the pandemic that they heard from their neighbors who had a radio. The neighbors were among those that received a radio after our house-to-house sensitization. We later visited them and they were happy as they narrated how it has helped them.'

'With the radio they are now informed about what is happening in the world. They were able to follow the campaigns and the outcome of elections at different levels. They were excited to tell us that the president had launched a trial for a COVID-19 drug that had been manufactured by scientists in Uganda. They are happy to know the developments on COVID-19, which they said is increasing. They continue to take precautions to avoid contracting the disease.'



Sister Jacquelline gives hand washing materials to a VHT.



A volunteer and a local woman arrange a hand washing site.



Six-year-old S.E. shows how to use a tippy tap.



Sister Juliet washes her hands during a monitoring visit.



Sister Juliet gives a radio to a family.



# One Hundred Years Young

In 2021, four MMMs in our Europe Area are marking 100 years of life. Three of them reside in Ireland, so the Motherhouse has a lot to celebrate!



Sister Pauline seeing patients in Anua, Nigeria

**Sister Pauline Dean**, from Liverpool, England, is a medical doctor and paediatrician. She completed her training and worked in the USA before joining MMM in 1953. She spent many years in Nigeria and Kenya, where she was often called upon as a general doctor and surgeon.

Pauline is a very creative person. A founding member of the Irish and American Paediatric Society, she published *Practical Care of Sick Children*, a wonderful guide in resource-limited situations. In the 1980s, she wrote a series of primary health care pamphlets called 'The Link', still relevant in developing countries. She worked in pastoral care for several years when she returned to England in 2002. She now resides in *Áras Mhuire*.



Sister Pauline discussing health care in Nairobi



Sr. Majella in the pharmacy in Angola

**Sister Majella McKernan**, from Dundalk, Co. Louth, completed pharmacy training before joining MMM in 1944. She later obtained her pharmacy tutorship. Majella worked in Nigeria and Angola and in the hospital in Drogheda for many years. After 'retiring' in 1990 she went to Liberia and again to Angola. A multi-talented woman she also obtained a certificate in TV production. When Majella finally returned to Ireland she took over and directed the stamp department in Drogheda for many years. Her hobbies are craft making and gardening. She has a gift for flower arranging and still manages to practice the art in *Áras Mhuire*. She is always ready for a chat.



Sister Majella with students in Angola



Sister Jude (2nd from L) visiting a family in Taiwan

**Sister Jude Walsh** was born in Sligo, Ireland, and trained as a pharmacist in Dublin before joining MMM in 1947. After profession she was assigned to Nigeria and was in charge of the pharmacy, first in Anua and then in several other hospitals. From early on her leadership qualities emerged and she was appointed Sister-in-charge in most assignments. She served as MMM Congregational Leader for 12 years. She then went to Uganda as a pharmacist before finally returning to Ireland.

'Retiring' is not a word to be used of Sister Jude. She has a terrific outreach to people through phone calls and correspondence from her base in *Áras Mhuire*.



Sister Jude in the pharmacy in Uganda



Sister Bibi at work in the London Apostolic Delegation

**Sister Adalbert (Bibi) Simakova** was born in what is now the Czech Republic. After World War II, many people left the country, hoping to return. During Bibi's nurse training she was in a youth group and learned about MMM. She travelled to Ireland just before borders closed. Mother Mary met her and the future Sister Caritas at Dublin Airport.

Sister Bibi worked in the apostolic nunciature in Dublin and the apostolic delegation in London, using her cooking skills. She later went to Rome to assist Bishop Skarvada in work with Czech refugees. In 1992 she was able to return to her homeland, where she helped the poor to cope with the new political situation. Currently she lives in Prague.



Sr. Bibi meeting Pope John Paul II

## Caring for Our Resources

### OUR PROMISE TO OUR DONORS

Donations specified for a country or special need (e.g. palliative care) are sent to the country or need. We allocate other donations to the most urgent needs overseas or to our General Mission Fund, to pay for e.g. training and airfares.



Practicing hand washing in Honduras

Many generous friends made it possible for us to continue our work in the past year. We are grateful, especially with the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. We could not carry out some activities or had to adjust them. When it was not possible to meet clients directly our Sisters used a variety of means to keep in touch with patients and their families, provide training, facilitate support groups and attend meetings.

We also appreciate the support of those with whom we collaborate, especially the governments of the countries in which we work. Their much-needed contributions are included under funding agencies.

Unspecified donations received by our Congregational Business Administration are allocated to places in most need.

We greatly value our partnership with donor agencies and the generosity of our other friends who have supported us so constantly over the years. We thank them for their interest and encouragement, which is bringing God's love and healing to countless thousands in need.

We also wish to thank the dioceses that supported us in the past year through Mission Awareness. For this report, these are the dioceses in the United States that welcomed us through the Mission Cooperative Plan. Unfortunately it was not possible to carry out mission awareness in Ireland in the past year.

### Pie charts

The first set of charts shows the breakdown of income and expenditure for the overall work of the MMM Congregation during 2019; the second set shows the breakdown for 2020. It has been challenging to obtain complete financial reports but the proportion of income provided by funding agencies and other donors amounted to almost half of our overall income for 2020.

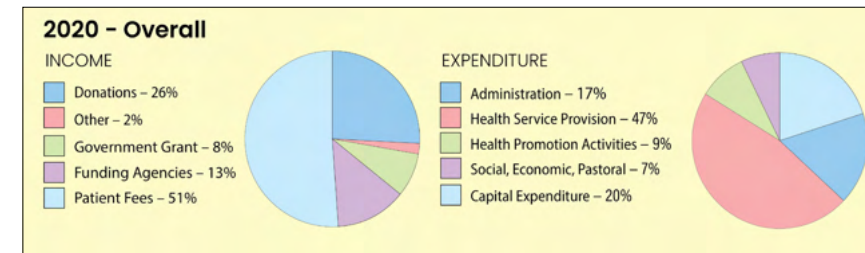
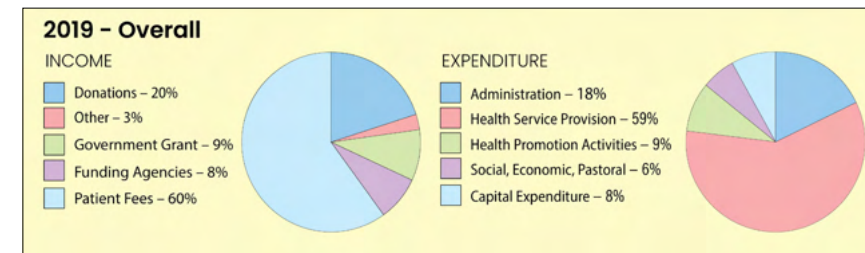
Please note that under Health Services Provision we included all expenditures involved in curative health services. Health Promotion Activities include activities involved in preventative health services.

Upgrading and capacity development for our staff and clients have a high priority. While charts for some countries lack a specific category for capacity development or training, many staff members avail of training and updating provided by our donors or by governments. These costs do not appear in our own expenses.

Under individual country reports, West Africa includes Nigeria, the Republic of Benin and Angola.

Funding for those in initial formation in the international novitiate in Ibadan, Nigeria, and for MMM students in the East/Central and West Africa Areas and Europe is accounted for under the MMM Congregational Centre.

MMM has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure transparency and accountability in our financial reporting.



### How you can work with us ...

- ◆ Pray with us. We remember you each day.
- ◆ Join us as members of MMM.
- ◆ Share our charism as MMM Associates.
- ◆ Donate by mail or online at [www.mmmworldwide.org](http://www.mmmworldwide.org)
- ◆ Leave an enduring gift of health and healing in your will.

Remembering us in your will or giving us a donation in memory of a loved one helps 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."

**Data protection** information is available in our Privacy Statement on our MMM website at [www.mmmworldwide.org](http://www.mmmworldwide.org).



## Moving House – and So Much Else!

Transition is an experience taken for granted in MMM life and our ministries in Ireland are no exception. Sister Sheila Campbell, assigned to take over as coordinator of MMM publications in January 2022, described a number of transitions this year, affecting houses in Dublin and Drogheda. Though it seemed the time was right, planning for these changes had to take into account restrictions due to COVID-19, and we had to be patient with delays.

‘This summer we moved our MMM Communications Department from Booterstown, Dublin to the Motherhouse in Drogheda. Amidst boxes of files, photo albums and yards of computer cables in the Booterstown office, or while working from home, Sister Carol Breslin passed over tasks to our new communications coordinator, Nadia Ramoutar, and me, soon to be our publications coordinator. Sister Carol has been involved in the department for over ten years and has developed a wide set of skills that eased the transition. The newcomers learned a lot while waiting for restrictions to be eased.



Preparing the drone for takeoff

‘The weather in Dublin was fine for outdoor shots, but when the day came for Drogheda, it was one of those wet and blustery days with little hope of showing off our garden to its best effect. In the late afternoon the rain stopped and the weather cleared. With the help of a drone we were able to take a picture of the original statue of Our Lady on the top of the Lourdes Hospital. There were gasps of astonishment as Sisters watched the “little airplane” take off and land.

‘Photographer Dan arrived a week after the film crew. Our hairdresser in Drogheda, Sally Reid, was busy for a few days before the photo shoot there. Sisters were anxious to have their “lockdown hair” tidied up for their pictures and interviews. As is typical in Ireland, the weather was bright with lots of sunshine the day before but on the actual day the rain returned! Nevertheless, our first roses were blooming and Sister Ruth was talking about the importance of developing a wild flower section.

### Starting a new home

‘We are also planning to have a new multicultural MMM community in Drogheda. Visas are still to be processed as this goes to press, but watch out for more good news in the future!’

### Building a new website

‘Another change this year has been the building and launching of our revamped website. We wanted it to be more visual and interactive than the previous one. So Dublin and Drogheda became our film studios. With the help of Dan Murphy, a Limerick-based photographer, and Luke and Jake Morgan, from Galway, we had a few exciting days of film-making, video interviews and photography.



The photo session in Rosemount



The pop-up photography studio in Drogheda



Nadia interviews Sr. JoAnne Kelly, who spent many years guiding our newer members.



Interviewing Sr. Brigid Archbold, who spent many years in Angola



## New Life for MMM

‘Work with all people of good will. Join resources with them, especially in the field of health so as to bring about a world of justice and peace where true human development is fostered, and human dignity and rights are respected’ (MMM Constitutions).

Sisters Joanne Bierl and Kathie Shea, based for several years in Chicago, said that this past year has brought many changes to MMM life in the USA.



Our MMM house in Somerville, MA

‘We sold our house in Chicago and moved the Mission Development Office to our residence in Somerville, MA. We have had an office and residence in Chicago since 1970 but we realized it was time to move. We leave behind wonderful memories. We have been blessed and continue to be blessed

with many people of good will who share our healing charism and want to spread it across our hurting world.

‘Our house in Chicago was a base from which MMM Sisters and Associates visited parishes all over the contiguous United States and Canada for mission and vocation awareness. The development office was a center for fund-raising. Our generous friends have made it possible for us to build and staff many hospitals and health centers, respond to the needs of people affected by wars and disasters, train health care workers and families, and educate our Sisters and staff.

‘We have come to understand the deep value of collaboration – of sharing values and pooling resources. We are very grateful. Even during this year of pandemic, with many additional demands, we have been held and supported. While there has been pain and loss, there has been kindness and compassion.

### Making better use of resources

‘So we now have one home base in the United States. From our house on Highland Avenue in Somerville, we are involved in several ministries. We continue to tell the MMM story in parishes through the Missionary Cooperative Program. We update our partners on our work and raise funds for our projects to develop the mission of MMM. This work began when we first came to Boston in 1950. Along with our Associates, we advocate for those affected by the injustice of human trafficking, promote vocations to religious life, and engage in parish work. We care for each other’s needs and those of our neighbors.

‘A few Sisters volunteer at the VNA Senior Living on Highland residence across the street. Seven MMMs live at the VNA and some of them also volunteer to care for other residents. MMMs also live in three other facilities in the Boston area; one continues her ministry in Clinchco, VA.

‘We continue to honor and develop our relationships with the wonderful people who share our passion for healing that is so badly needed in our world.

‘We pray that our community will continue to be “a sign of hope, a manifestation of the Kingdom which has already begun” (MMM Constitutions).’



Our MMM house in Chicago



The Mission Development Office in Chicago



MMMs visiting ‘across the street’ at the VNA on Highland



Sister Nina contributed to a book about women of faith today.



## Sharing Our Core Values

MMM began to invite interested lay women and men to share our spirituality and healing charism in a more official way after our 1997 Congregational Chapter. Medical Missionaries of Mary Associates (AMMMs) live their own unique life calls, choices and commitments as part of the missionary thrust of the whole Church. There are AMMMs in 17 countries around the world, illustrating a great diversity of gifts.

### In Honduras

MMMs in Marcala started meeting with people interested in becoming Associates in May 2013. They were employees and volunteers. Many worked with MMM in Marcala from the beginning. In November 2015, they made their covenants at a very beautiful prayer service in Siguatepeque. Most Marcala Associates now work in pastoral care. Later, in Choloma, more people made their covenants. Some are on the staff of *Casa Visitación*. The Marcala and Choloma groups had their first meeting together in April 2018.

Two strong and confident groups of MMM Associates have developed in Honduras - 8 in Marcala and 12 in Choloma. As we hand over our programmes in the country, our dream is that they will continue to bear our MMM charism, based on the values that influence our discipleship.



MMMs and AMMMs in Choloma



Celebrating birthdays with our Marcala Associates



Connie Saldivar, AMMM, in Chicago, USA



Hedwig and Andrew with Sr. Teresa Ugwuliri at Mother Mary's anniversary celebration

### Developing strong connections

**Connie Saldivar**, an AMMM in the USA, visited the Honduran Associates in 2015. In September 2020, Connie facilitated the Zoom meeting for Associates of Choloma, Marcala and Brazil.

We hope that Connie will be the liaison AMMM for the Associates in Honduras, Brazil and the USA.

### In Kenya

MMM Associates **Hedwig Nafula** and **Andrew Otsieno** run Wholistic Leadership, an organization that gives support to leadership teams, including those in religious ministry. They responded to the difficulties posed by COVID-19 by launching an online bulletin that offered guidance, encouragement and reflections.

In a reflection titled 'What Will You Leave Behind?' Hedwig challenged us to choose to let go of what no longer serves us. We can choose to let go of worry and choose to trust in a higher power. In choosing to let go of comparing ourselves to others we can appreciate what we already have. 'Choose to do it now.'

### In England

Associate **Mary Bradley** belongs to an ecumenical justice and peace group. She reminded us that in our prayer for our upcoming MMM Chapter, we desire to 'choose directions that lead to life in all its fullness for all peoples'.

### In Uganda

**Josephine Namutebi**, AMMM, was in the midst of research for a master's degree when COVID-19 arrived. Choosing to respond creatively, she and her children learned about farming methods so they could grow food to share with neighbours in need. The family also gave shelter to a mother unable to feed her six children.

Our MMM Associates inspire and encourage us as we work together to bring healing to our world.



Josephine Namutebi (L) at her passion fruit project to improve child nutrition

## A Flexible Approach

**Misean Cara** gives regular support to our health and development programmes in several countries. Recently COVID-19 has had serious health consequences for the communities in which we work. Its longer term impacts include continuing unemployment, poverty and malnutrition.

In the past year, *Misean Cara* provided additional funding for COVID-19 mitigation interventions. We were able to provide personal protection equipment; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities; hand sanitizers, soap and water points; awareness-raising; and to set up isolation units for suspected cases.



Hand washing materials for the community



PPE used by clinic staff



Food baskets for distribution in Mukuru

They supported Makiungu Hospital in Tanzania and our health centres in Malawi and Kenya. In Nigeria, they assisted our hospitals and three of our health centres. They also helped our health units in Angola and in the Republic of Benin.

## A Fitting Legacy

**SHARP (Staff of the Health Service Executive [Cork and Kerry] Association for Relief of Poverty)** was founded 'in memory of those who suffered and died in the Irish Famine, to seek to relieve poverty and suffering both in Ireland and abroad.' In the past year they supported two MMM programmes in Nairobi, Kenya.

- At **Mukuru Health Centre**, funds from SHARP made it possible to give food to 250 families with malnourished or sick children. Eight-year Abigail became severely malnourished when her mother was unable to obtain work to support herself and her 4 children; factories in Mukuru remained closed because of COVID-19. Abigail is now doing well with food support.
- Support was also given to **counter human trafficking (HT)**. Traffickers take advantage of poverty and unemployment to attract people with promises of jobs and a better way of life. Sr. Mary O'Malley and staff at CHTEA work to prevent trafficking and assist victims (See page 24). SHARP helped with micro-finance and counselling for victims of HT; with the rescue and repatriation of children; and with education of children of HT victims.



Interviewing a victim of trafficking

## Doing All with Love

In 2020 the **Little Way Association** in England helped the **Family Life Centre/VVF Hospital** in Itam, Nigeria. The centre provides free surgical repair of birth injuries and runs a rehabilitation unit where women post surgery or living with complications of birth are trained and re-integrated into society.

The association paid towards the costs of replacing solar batteries to provide an alternative, dependable electricity supply. The hospital has struggled to carry out operations, use equipment, and provide adequate security because of power fluctuations. Little Way also paid for materials for 30 women to learn sewing, hairdressing and soap making, and to set up in business.

Currently 10 women are training at the rehabilitation centre. They receive counseling to prepare them to start independent living and to help them make choices about residence, basic needs, etc. Relatives are encouraged to support them.



A sewing class in Itam

This has all been possible because of you!



# MMMs Counter Human Trafficking

On three Saturdays in April 2021, a conference entitled 'Revitalizing Counter Human Trafficking (CHT)' was beamed from Nairobi, Kenya through a Zoom link. Participants were MMMs, Associates and MMM programme staff around the world.

Inspired by previous MMM gatherings that addressed HIV-related issues, the main aim of the CHT conference was to spur actions among MMMs to deal with trafficking. It was organized by Sr. Mary O'Malley, who began raising awareness about human trafficking in 2006 in the Mukuru slums, where MMM has a health centre. Mary built up considerable experience and in 2018 she collaborated with a group of Catholic laity to found Counter Human Trafficking Trust-East Africa (CHTEA). She and her staff reach the public through interactive awareness workshops and assist victims of trafficking with a variety of services.



Sister Mary and Francis with a CHT banner

Sister Mary saw an opportunity to train MMMs and programme staff in Africa and beyond so they in turn could become trainers in CHT, mainstreaming it in their work. They face similar situations that encourage the spread of trafficking within countries and across borders: poverty, racial discrimination and gender inequality, as well as forced marriages, prostitution and child labour.

To increase participation, educational videos, guidelines and questionnaires were circulated in advance. Sister Mary facilitated the sessions, assisted by Francis Nguli. A variety of media and real life stories were used to describe the human trafficking situation in East Africa and new and emerging trends. Participants learned about methods of detection, victim identification and care, and a referral mechanism. Also described was the Palermo Protocol - the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime - and the teachings and global efforts of the Catholic Church.

## Providing leadership

Speaking on behalf of the MMM Congregational Leadership Team, Sr. Ekaete Ekop urged, 'Let knowledge transform us to make choices to end human trafficking - one person, one family, one village, one street at a time.'

Srs. Catherine O'Grady and Natalia Mashalo shared the CHT story at our mission in Faraja, Tanzania. In 2018 Catherine invited Sr. Mary to train CHWs at Faraja Centre CBHC. Follow-up training targeted diocesan and municipal staff, security agencies, government and other civil society organizations and Interpol. Later, a platform for CHT activities was established in the diocese with great success.

Misean Cara provided funding for the conference. Paul Gichuki, *Misean Cara* Eastern and Central Africa Development Mentor, said that CHT is a priority for *Misean Cara* and that the participants were key players who would help reduce the problem, assist survivors, and make sure their rights were respected.

There was consensus to mainstream CHT as an essential MMM concern in all our ministries.



Raising awareness about human trafficking in Mukuru



MMMs and Associates participated in a CHT conference in the USA.



Training for leaders in Faraja, Tanzania



An awareness-raising session for the general public

## Congratulations to Our Students

In July 2021 **Sisters Nwanneka Uduh, Cecilia Kanolor** and **Chinenye Imoh** completed their studies for a BSc in nursing (Hons) from University College Cork (UCC). They arrived in Ireland in September 2020 and because of COVID-19 restrictions they had to do much of their studies online. Their graduation was also held virtually and the Sisters in our Motherhouse in Beechgrove were delighted to host the occasion.

During their studies Sister Nwanneka Uduh received an award for online volunteer work for Nurture Africa, an Irish NGO offering health services in Uganda. The students' coordinator, Dr. Helen Mulcahy, asked Nwanneka to give an online presentation to the Nurture Africa staff on behalf of the School of Nursing and Midwifery at UCC. Nwanneka's topic was 'Improving Patients' Experience through Interpersonal Relationships-Respectful Communication'.



On the Heritage Tour: the church where Mother Mary was baptised

Nwanneka said, 'It is my desire to see that patients' experience in healthcare improves. As an MMM, I feel that every contact a patient has with a health professional should bring healing to the patient.'



The graduates at our Motherhouse in Drogheda

Before leaving Ireland the nursing graduates spent two months in Beechgrove, where they helped in the clinic, at liturgies and in many other ways around the house. They were also able to visit a number of sites associated with our MMM heritage.

## New Community in Ireland

Since our 2017 Extended Leadership Meeting, our European Area has been proposing to start a new MMM community in Ireland with a ministry to youth and families. There is a growing ministry to youth in the country and it fits well with our special MMM gift of healing and our focus on multicultural living. The initiative has been welcomed by the Archdiocese of Armagh. We hope that the community will be in the town of Drogheda and four Sisters are pleased to accept assignment to this exciting venture.

## Born to Eternal Life

### In Nigeria

**Sister Fidelia Adigo** was born in Mgboma Alike Ikananzizi, Nigeria in November 1949. She was a trained nurse-midwife with a speciality in orthopaedics, and worked as a nurse-midwife for 10 years before joining MMM in 1991. Her first assignment was to Tanzania, where she served in Kabanga. In addition to nursing duties she helped children with disabilities to access services.

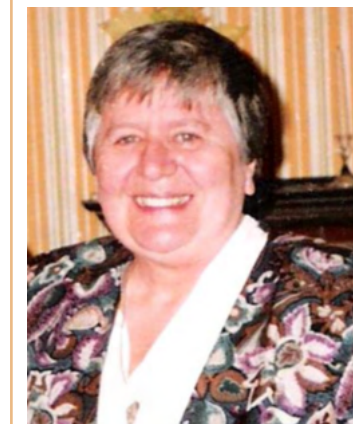
In 2005, Sr. Fidelia assisted at our formation house in Nairobi before obtaining a Master of Arts in leadership and pastoral care in Dublin. She returned to Nigeria and after a short time at St. Mary's Hospital, Urua Akpan, she was assigned to our Family Life Centre in Itam. She was matron of the VVF unit and was deeply committed to the care of women affected by obstetric fistula.



Fidelia was appointed directress of our formation house in Itam, where she guided women in their early stages of MMM life. She became ill in 2021 and was brought to Zenith Medical and Kidney Centre, Abuja. She died there peacefully on 13 June 2021. Her funeral was held in Benin City and she is buried at our MMM cemetery there.

### Memorial in the USA

A liturgy for **Sisters Mary Donato** and **Paula Smith** was held on 18 September in Somerville, MA. Family and friends gathered with MMMs and Associates at the VNA across from our house on Highland Avenue to remember these two MMMs who died in April and July 2020, respectively. Because of COVID-19 restrictions it was not possible to bring a larger group together until recently.



Sister Paula Smith



Sister Mary Donato



## Our New Look!

Visitors to our MMM website will soon notice a new look. We are excited about its updated and interactive style. In addition to background information and photographs there are short videos with interviews with our Sisters. You can click on a map that brings you to the places where we work around the world. Our prayer section has been expanded to include a variety of intentions. So please come and visit us at [www.mmmworldwide.org](http://www.mmmworldwide.org)!

## We've Moved!

After much consideration, we decided to relocate our MMM Communications Department from Dublin to our Motherhouse in Beechgrove, Drogheda. The move was made over the past few months and is now complete. You will now see our new address on our publications. **Please note:** our phone number has not changed.

Also, in visioning for the future of the department we held a review. In light of its recommendations, we restructured the unit and employed a communications coordinator.

Our new coordinator, **Dr. Nadia Ramoutar**, has great international experience in communications, with much that is relevant to our MMM work. She has already demonstrated this with the development of our new website with the help of Sister Sheila Campbell. She has arranged workshops for our Sisters (online, of course!) on photography and social media. All of this will ensure that our communications are fit for purpose in today's world and will reflect our MMM ethos.

## MMM Congregational Chapter

On 3 March 2020, MMM Congregational Leader Sister Siobhán Corkery announced that our 11th Congregational Chapter would take place in Tanzania in April 2021. A chapter is an assembly representing the whole congregation, and its reflections and decisions mark a new stage in MMM life. Little did we know as we embarked on a journey of preparation that COVID-19 would so greatly disrupt our plans. Times and venues have had to be changed. As we go to press we ask your prayers for a safe and successful meeting, now planned to take place in Accra, Ghana this October.



Dr Nadia Ramoutar



Sister Mariagoretti



Sister Mariagoretti signs her formula of perpetual profession.

## Perpetual Profession

Many of us were able to be part of the ceremony in which **Sister Mariagoretti Anozie** made her perpetual commitment. The event was live streamed from Benin City, Nigeria on 14 November 2020.

Mariagoretti is from Nigeria and trained as a laboratory technologist before joining MMM in 2006. After first profession she obtained a BSc in accountancy. She served in Nigeria and Kenya and after her perpetual profession was assigned to our MMM community in Wau, South Sudan.



L - R: Sisters Chinyere, Eunice, Lucy and Linda

## First Professions

The first profession of vows of **Sisters Chinyere Ikeji, Eunice Ewerinde and Linda Ugwu**, from Nigeria, and **Lucy Gasper Salema**, from Tanzania, took place in Ibadan, Nigeria, in March 2020. They have since taken up their first assignments in Nigeria and Uganda.

## New Postulancy

Going to press, we are pleased to say that we are opening our new international postulancy programme in Riara, Nairobi, Kenya in September 2021. Twelve women who have already begun their postulancy are moving to Nairobi to continue this part of their formation.

## Receptions

In March we were also pleased to welcome six women into our international novitiate in Ibadan. From Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria, they have begun a two-year programme introducing them into our MMM way of life.



The new novices in Ibadan

## Our MMM Spirituality

In March, **Sister Ekaete Ekop**, from our Congregational Leadership Team, facilitated three sessions via Zoom titled 'Living the Healing Charism with COVID-19' for our Sisters and MMM Associates. Up to thirty Sisters and Associates were able to attend each session.

## Telling Our Stories

**Sister Nina Underwood** contributed a chapter called 'The Adventure of Faith' to a book titled *A Place to Belong: Letters from Catholic Women* by Corynne Staesinic. Described as 'a stunning anthology of deeply personal letters, wisdom from women saints, inspiring quotes, reflection questions, art, photography, and prayers', the book explores what it means to be a woman of faith today. Sister Nina tells her life story as a missionary. The book is compelling reading and is available on AmazonSmile. See page 21.

## Part of the Conversation

Preparations are being made over the next two years for the Armagh Archdiocesan Assembly in 2024. There is also a consultation for the Synod in Rome in 2023 and for the National Assembly or Assemblies in 2026.

**Sister Ursula Sharpe** was appointed as the Synod Diocesan Representative for Female Religious in the Armagh Archdiocese.



Handing over the keys to Makiungu Hospital



Participants in the handover event

## Special Mention

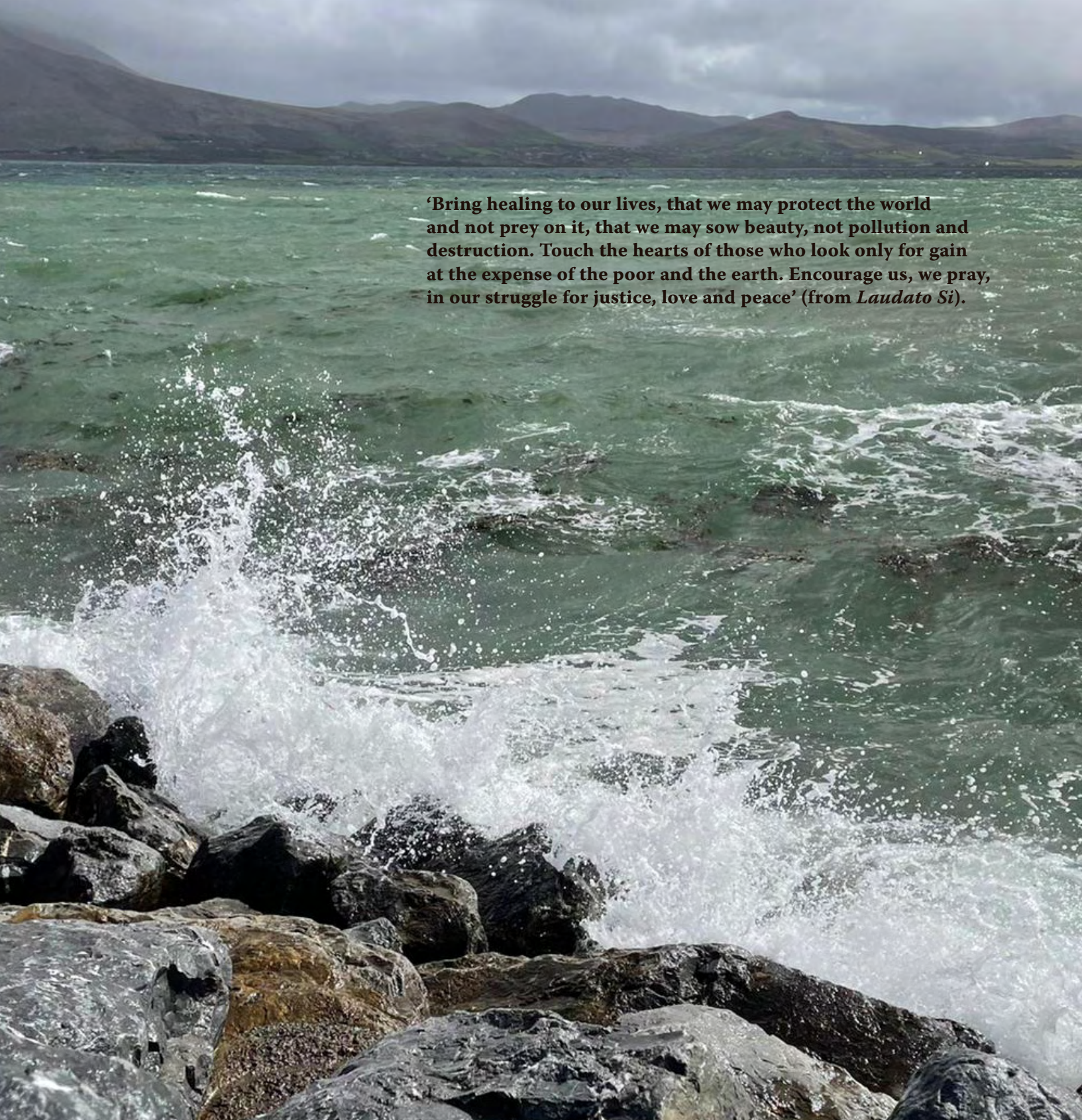
MMM contributed to the provision of health care in the Diocese of Ogoja, Nigeria from 1945, when we began services for people affected by Hansen's disease (leprosy), to 2003. To help mark the centenary of the diocese in 2021, **Sister Isabelle Smyth** collated a great deal of archival material to contribute to the background for the celebrations. The diocese itself especially highlighted the contributions to Ogoja of **Sisters Margaret Anne Meyer, Maria Pia Parlato and Alice Ashitebe**.

## Handover of Makiungu Hospital

In 1954 MMM began health services in Makiungu, a village in a semi-desert area of Tanzania. Today Makiungu Council Designated Hospital for Singida District (Rural) covers the needs of the population within a radius of about 31 kilometres and employs about 200 local health workers. The development of the original dispensary to the present-day hospital is a testament to the many MMMs, AMMMs, staff, students and volunteers from many countries, donors both internal and external, and government representatives, who worked closely with us. Its reputation was built up as a facility providing reliable quality services to people from different groups, religions, and backgrounds.

More recently, after much prayer and reflection, MMM leadership felt that the time had come to handover the hospital to the Diocese of Singida. The event took place at a special ceremony on 31 March 2021.





**'Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace' (from *Laudato Si*).**

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