

MMM

Rooted and founded in love



MEDICAL
MISSIONARIES
of MARY

SUPPLEMENT TO HEALING & DEVELOPMENT — VOLUME 79 — EASTER 2018



*'Arise, work of my hands. Arise,
you who were fashioned in my image.*

*Rise, let us go hence, for you in me and I in you,
together we are one undivided person' (Ancient Holy Saturday hymn).*

Milestones

Sister Irene Balzan, from Malta, is based in Wau, South Sudan. March 2018 marked five years of MMM presence in the world's newest nation. Irene provided an update on the activities in Wau and expressed our deep gratitude to our friends and supporters who have made the work possible.

'The MMM Community-Based Health Care (CBHC) programme is located in Jur River County, on the eastern side of the Jur River on the outskirts of Wau. The main catchment area is Eastern Bank, with a population of between 20,000 to 25,000 people, living mostly in grass-thatched huts.



A preventive health intervention: Sr. Josephine gives tetanus toxoid to a pregnant woman.

'We work in camps of informal settlements of war returnees. There are two private primary schools, an agricultural school, and one government primary health care centre in the area.

'We are present in the reality of political instability and sustained violence that have been pervasive in South Sudan for most of its almost six years of independence. The resumption of widespread fighting leaves civilians at risk of further mass atrocities. Almost 4 million people have been forced to flee their homes (WHO/ OCHA, 2017) and 1.9 million people are internally displaced (UN/OCHA 2017).

'The spread of cholera, malaria and kala-azar worsens the situation. The October analysis of food security stated that nearly half of the population - 5.1 million people - would not have enough to eat between January and March 2018 (UNOCHA 2018). Our overall aim is to help the community to have a better quality of life.'

'Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can' (Arthur Ashe).

'We continue to hold health education sessions on personal and environmental hygiene, the importance of immunisation, key household behaviours, cholera prevention, malaria, tuberculosis, first aid, breastfeeding, antenatal care, and preparation of oral rehydration solution. These are integrated with our expanded programme of immunization (EPI) outreach sessions.

'In 2017 we gave 3,336 immunizations in the outreach programme and noted an overall increase in the number of mothers attending. The outreach means they don't have to travel to town for vaccinations. We also gave vitamin A supplements and soap and distributed insecticidal nets from the Ministry of Health (MOH).

'In collaboration with the MOH, UNICEF and others, we participated in a cholera awareness campaign in the camp for internally displaced people.

'In October and December we provided food for 121 internally displaced families.'



Sr. Magdalene vaccinates a child during an outreach session.



Sr. Irene finds that working with the community is one way to promote health education and empowerment.

Monitoring and evaluation for sustainability

'We meet twice-yearly with chiefs, sub-chiefs, community mobilisers and vaccinators. Follow-up with hand pump mechanics ensures that water pumps are working properly and are being maintained.

'We also participate in networking meetings on health and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); cholera preparedness, and meetings organised by the MOH.

'There are challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, who can get better pay elsewhere. We are coping with the general environment of insecurity. And we are sometimes frustrated when people, including our staff, have a different concept of time! Still, preparations are going ahead for the opening of the MMM Healing Centre in March/April 2018.'

Just being there

'An important aspect of our ministry is simply being present to the people. The sense that someone cares about their welfare has an effect on people's mental well-being because many suffer from a sense of hopelessness and despair.

'With other religious congregations, we organized a Christmas party for about 400 children in the internally displaced people's camps. We provided food from donations you gave.

'We sometimes reflect on our MMM Core Values during internal management meetings. We discuss their implementation in our daily experience, especially in offering hospitality and in our commitment and solidarity with the poor – "sticking with something even when times are rough" (MMM CLT 2016). The values of compassion and creative fidelity challenge us to seek new ways of responding to the changing reality of South Sudan and how best to be bearers of our healing charism. We want to share these values with newly-employed staff when the healing centre opens.

'As we mark our fifth anniversary in Wau, we say "thank you" to everyone who has helped us to bring hope and healing to the people of Eastern Bank.'

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'

And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way' (Minnie Louise Haskins).



With your support the MMM Healing Centre is close to completion.

‘Freely You Received; Freely Give’ (Mt. 10:8).

Important aspects of our life as MMMs are ‘reading the signs of the times in a rapidly changing world’ and being ‘alert to new needs and opportunities’ (MMM Constitutions). In 2015, after twenty-four years in Makondo, our Sisters began a process of discernment



Our MMM Sisters in Uganda

about the need for our continuing presence there. In what was previously an underserved area of great need, there had been great development, with shops, houses, schools, and other health facilities. The local government had trained village health workers. The government also wanted Grade II health facilities to offer a wider range of services, which posed a challenge for sustainability.

In the reflection process, the Sisters were guided by our MMM Resource Team and involved the diocese, the health unit

management committee and staff of the Makondo complex, local leaders and the local parish. After considering the resulting reports, proposals and suggestions, the MMM East/Central Africa Area Team recommended to our Congregational Leadership Team that we hand over the Makondo complex to the Diocese of Masaka.

The Congregational Leadership Team responded positively and our Congregational Leader informed the bishop, Rt. Rev. John Baptist Kagwa, about the decision in August 2016. Sr. Maria Gonzaga, the area leader for East/Central Africa, met Bishop Kagwa to discuss the steps in the transition and to fix the date for the official handover. He was asked to find a group to take over the management of the complex and the Daughters of Mary Sisters generously accepted. The resource team returned in September 2017 to follow up the planning with all involved and an assessment of the financial system was completed.

Time to say farewell

Sr. Maria Gonzaga wrote about the day of the handover on 27 February 2018.

‘It was a beautiful day, blessed with rain until around 9.30 a.m. We had arranged to have Mass in the open, so this delayed us a bit as we waited for those who had to travel over the bad roads.



Handing over to the Daughters of Mary

Handing on in Makondo, Uganda

'Bishop Kagwa celebrated the Mass with Fr. Ssekabanja, the chancellor; Fr. Katabaazi, the diocesan health coordinator; Fr. Paschal, the parish priest of Makondo; and Fr. Henry, his assistant. Daughters of Mary Mother General, Sr. Noeline Namusoke, and her council also attended, with the Sisters assigned to the new community. Our Makondo staff were there, as were representatives of our partners. The parish choir sang beautifully.



Praying together in remembrance

possible to continue the work and even do more. He prayed especially for those who contributed to the work and have gone before us: Srs. Benedicta Nannyondo, Cate Nakintu, Maura Lynch, Dympna Hannelly, and Rita Hand.'

Stewardship: Sharing God's blessings

'After the Thanksgiving of the Mass the official signing of the handover report and the trustees' agreement took place. The MMM Area Leader presented the bishop with copies of the handover report, the financial reports, and the keys to the buildings. Bishop Kagwa emphasized that MMM had not sold the property and assets to him but had given them free of charge and openly. He thanked us for the wonderful, well-written, detailed and transparent handover report they had given him and for the open and beautiful handover ceremony.

'Representatives of the various groups spoke after Mass. Following lunch with the visitors there was a tour of the compound with Bishop Kagwa. When everyone had gone, we went back to the convent. Led by the parish priest, we prayed with the new Daughters of Mary community. We said good-bye to the Sisters and the staff, and freely left Makondo.'



Bishop Kagwa and MMMs sign the documents.

Here Is My Life.

There were scenes of great joy in Orlu, Nigeria on 24 February 2018 when three women made their perpetual commitments as Medical Missionaries of Mary. Responding to God's call, they committed themselves to follow Christ, the One sent to heal (MMM Constitutions).



*Committed for life in MMM:
Srs. Chibuzo, Jacinta, and Augusta*

Sister Chibuzo Aloka, 39, studied applied microbiology before joining MMM. After profession she worked at several of our missions in Nigeria. In 2012 Chibuzo went to Nairobi, Kenya to study Sustainable Human Development in Tangaza University College. The course offered her opportunities to work with young people and brought her much closer to the real situation of the poor. At the time she commented, 'I have become aware of the need to direct efforts towards the transformation of hearts and ways of thinking to achieve sustainable human development rather than focus on structures.'

In October 2015 Chibuzo helped to pioneer a new community in Torugbene, Nigeria. Despite being in an oil-rich area, most of the people live in great poverty and there is a high level of unemployment and illiteracy. (See MMM e-newsletter November 2015.) The Sisters are involved in home visits, basic health care and screening, and life skills sessions for girls.

Sister Jacinta Mahakwe, 37, is also a microbiologist. After obtaining a BA in Theology in Tangaza University College, she was assigned to our mission in Abuja, Nigeria. Since 2003, MMM has had an outreach programme to 14 villages in a remote area in the north of the country. There are no other services to provide immunizations, give health education, or treat common illnesses. Local roads are in poor condition, making access to trained health care providers difficult. The Sisters began a comprehensive maternity service in February 2017.

Jacinta has now arrived at her new assignment in our MMM community in Salvador, Brazil. She will be involved in an equally challenging ministry, this time in overcrowded urban surroundings where violence is an everyday reality. She will soon be starting language school.

Sister Augusta Ubaegbonwu, 40, is a nurse-midwife and has worked in our mission in Mukuru, Nairobi for several years. The MMM dispensary is located in an informal overcrowded settlement, where poverty is widespread and challenges to health are many. Houses are poorly-structured with little ventilation. There are no paved roads, drainage systems, or proper facilities for garbage collection and solid waste disposal. Fires break out easily because of poor construction materials.

In this difficult environment, MMMs provide basic health services. Augusta works with antenatal women and babies and with TB patients. There is also nutrition education, support for malnourished children, cervical cancer screening, HIV-related services, help for children living with disabilities, and a school health programme.

Editor: Sister Carol Breslin, MMM

Designer: Judi Lennon, Photo credits: MMM Sisters

'That they may have life' (Jn 10:10)



Sr. Aengus Campion was born Ellen Campion in Co. Laois in 1927. Trained as a pharmacist, she joined MMM in 1963. Very adaptable, she worked in Uganda Tanzania and Ethiopia before doing mission awareness in England and Ireland. She was also vocation directress. Assigned to Malawi in 1989, Aengus served as a pharmacist and guided women in their early years in MMM.

In 2003, Aengus returned to Ireland. She worked in pastoral and prison ministry and with MMM Associates. She moved to the Motherhouse in 2011 and transferred to *Aras Mhuire* in 2013. She died there peacefully on 25 January 2018.



Sr. Clair O'Leary was born Annie Clair in Cork in 1928 and joined MMM in 1951. Trained as a nurse-midwife and nurse tutor, she worked in Nigeria in nurse training and as matron. In 1982 Clair moved to Chicago for mission awareness and fundraising. She was a hospital matron in Tanzania and trained nursing personnel.

In Ireland, Clair was chairperson of *Aras Mhuire* Board of Management and served in MMM leadership. She was manager of an international students' hostel in England. Sr. Clair moved to the Motherhouse in 2003 and to *Aras Mhuire* in 2017. She died peacefully on 21 January 2018.



Sr. Marita Kerins was born Innocent Kerins in Co. Cork in 1932 and worked as a pharmacist before joining MMM in 1960. After a 5-year assignment in Nigeria, she returned to Ireland in 1968 and served in various duties in Drogheda.

In 1974 Marita returned to Nigeria and was pharmacist in Anua and Urua Akpan for almost 20 years. In 1995 she returned to our Motherhouse because of illness. She helped in various duties in the Motherhouse, in *Aras Mhuire* and in the hospital. Sr. Marita moved to *Aras Mhuire* in 2015 for nursing care and died there peacefully on 4 February 2018.



Sr. Maura Lynch was born in Co. Cork in 1938 and joined MMM in 1956. After qualifying in medicine she spent over 14 years working in Angola. She trained in surgery and in 1987 was assigned to Uganda. There Maura established a programme for treating women with obstetric fistula. It became a centre for training medical personnel.

Sr. Maura and the staff received many awards and medical colleges began to discuss recognition of obstetric fistula surgery as a sub-specialty. In December 2017, Sister Maura sustained a fracture after a fall. She developed complications after surgery and died in Kampala Hospital on 9 December 2017.

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