



# THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary

## MMM Worldwide News



### *News from MMM Areas*

**Tanzania - Singida:** In Faraja Centre, the anti-human trafficking department (AHT) in conjunction with the JUKWAA platform and community health workers were able to rescue 18 trafficked victims and 14 victims of Gender Based Violence and Child violence. They have also formed AHT clubs in 46 schools, succeeded in organising a school club day which brought together 1015 students and pupils from 21 schools including some teachers to explore issues around trafficking.

*Dear Friend of the MMM's,*

It is hard to believe that the end of 2023 is upon us already. We have been busy sharing the stories of our MMM Sisters and staff at work in the world. This year there were many bright moments and also many difficult and challenging ones. We are looking on and praying for peace in the world which seems unlikely for this Christmas, but we continue to light a small candle rather than curse the darkness.



We are grateful that we were able to create our 2023 Annual Yearbook. If you would like a digital copy of this, you can find it here: <https://mmmworldwide.org/mmm-yearbooks/>. If you would like to sit down with it and read it cover to cover, then you can email me and I will post one to you.

This month, we are excited to host our Christmas Craft Fair at the Motherhouse in Drogheda. Last year's Fair was great fun and we raised €6,500 which went to support a maternity clinic in an impoverished slum area in Malawi. Our talented MMM Sisters, staff and friends who can knit, crochet, sew and make any number of crafts have been busy for months now getting ready for the day. If you live anywhere near us we hope you will come and visit us, have a lovely cup of coffee or tea and a seasonal treat.

As 2023 wraps up, we are grateful to you readers who share our world with us. We are happy to have shared our MMM Blogs and social media posts with thousands of you. Your generous donations, no matter how big or small, allow us to bring everyday miracles to people in some of the poorest areas of the world. When I was out in Tanzania this summer, I was amazed and delighted to see our MMM Sisters and staff making the world a better place.

I will see you next year!

With blessings,

*Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM*

## News from MMM Areas contd.

**Tanzania - Nangwa:** New scanning services are now available for all pregnant women registered with the dispensary. This service has helped many women achieve better and healthy pregnancy outcomes.

**Ireland:** The Motherhouse has been a film studio recently! A film production company, Scratch Films, are making two documentaries for RTE, the Irish television channel, which will be shown early next year. One documentary is on the state of priesthood in Ireland in the present day, and the other on religious life and Sisters. We are one of a few Congregations being interviewed. So, watch out for it in 2024!

**Ireland - Drogheda:** The Christmas Craft Fair will be held in the Auditorium of the Motherhouse on Saturday, 25th November. All are welcome!



## Our New United Nations Venture



By Sr. Carol Breslin, MMM

On September 13, 2023, I travelled to New York City from our MMM house in Somerville to present our MMM story to the board of directors of UNANIMA International. UNANIMA International non-governmental organization with consultative status at the United Nation, representing 22 congregations of women religious, comprising 25,000 people in 85 countries. They advocate for those, especially women and children, who are homeless or displaced, migrants and refugees, victims of human trafficking, and those whose lives have been affected by climate change.

I had been delegated to do this to support our application for UNANIMA membership. Representatives of twenty-three other congregations of women religious would be voting on our request. No pressure! It was also an opportunity to meet these representatives in person as I began my work with the organization.

The three-day meeting was held at Thomas Berry Place, a conference and retreat center named for the Passionist priest and cultural historian who was at the forefront of much thinking about cosmology and world religions.

Ces Martin, a Sister of Notre Dame de Sion, president of

the executive committee, chaired the sessions. After our opening prayer on Thursday, several women who were beginning their terms on the UNANIMA board and the new executive assistant were introduced and welcomed. I was also welcomed as representing a potential new member.

We then participated virtually in a parallel event prepared by UNANIMA International on the occasion of the 2023 UN SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) Summit. The theme was "Rethinking Multilateralism: Responding to Interconnected Crises from the Lens of the 'People' SDGs, Partnerships, and Civil Society". We looked at some of the factors that interfere with countries working together to deal with common challenges. Rich countries sideline poorer countries in resource allocation and large corporations act without accountability in how they make profits. Government policies are often reactive in dealing with homelessness instead of looking at preventive measures, e.g. combatting violence against women and evictions. At the same time, civil society has had success in advocating for changes in policies and attitudes at a global level. There was a great emphasis on a collaborative approach, including religious groups.

That afternoon, UNANIMA Executive Director Jean



## Our New United Nations Venture cont'd.

Quinn, a member of the Daughters of Wisdom, presented the annual report and answered questions. I then presented the MMM story to the group, beginning with a summary of Mother Mary's life and inspiration. I spoke about our current membership and ministries, our emphasis on the health of mothers and children, and our involvement in emerging needs such as human trafficking, domestic violence, mental health, refugees, and the environment. I also talked about the work of our MMM Associates, and how we collaborate with them in living the healing charism in our daily lives.

While the vote was taken on our MMM membership I waited outside with two other non-voting participants. During an interesting conversation about our mutual work in Uganda, one of the women said had been a good friend of our late Sister Maura Lynch! Soon I was welcomed back into the meeting room to applause from the UNANIMA International Board. MMM was elected an official member of UNANIMA! We then listened to stories about the ministries of some of the other congregations before the meeting was closed for the day.

On Friday we participated in a Zoom session in which congregational leaders of UNANIMA members expressed their support for the future of the organization. They emphasized that UNANIMA International advocates priority issues for member congregations. After a group photo, the organization's 2024 budget was presented and approved. Jean Quinn then gave us feedback on the recent High-Level Political Forum at the United Nations, at which governments reported on their progress towards the achievements of the SDGs. Unfortunately, progress is only at 15%, so we have a lot to do in terms of advocacy.

We voted for the recipient of this year's Woman of Courage award. The award honors women from around the world who have exhibited exceptional courage and leadership to make a difference in their communities, especially for the betterment of the lives of women and children. We decided to give the 2023 award to Sister

Brigid Arther, a Brigidine Sister who works with migrants and refugees in Australia. In 2000, she co-founded the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP). Her passion to see the human dignity and rights of all people respected has compelled her to stand beside those who experience incredible hardship and vulnerability, especially refugees and asylum seekers. She has visited refugees and asylum seekers in detention, listened to their stories, and supported them in their applications for residency and citizenship. Upon their release from detention, she accompanied them as they began life in a new country away from family and familiar surroundings. Brigid has been a constant advocate for asylum seekers at their assessment and court hearings and has been the litigation guardian for minors. She has also worked with young people on climate justice.

On Saturday morning, we broke into committees: development, finance, communications, bylaws,

regional, and an ad hoc committee in preparation for the World Social Summit. For the moment, I am on the bylaws committee, which will help me to become familiar with the policies and guidelines of UNANIMA International. Back in the larger group, the committees reported on their work during the previous year.



Then it was time to say goodbye to all the wonderful, committed women I had met. While the next in-person meeting will be in New York, in February 2024, in the meantime I will be doing my committee work virtually from Somerville – thanks to Zoom! The other committee members are based in Georgia and Wisconsin, not very close to each other.

Apart from the advantages of meeting in person, the February UNANIMA gathering coincides with the meeting of the Commission for Social Development (CsocD), which advises the UN Economic and Social Council and governments on a wide range of social policy issues. UNANIMA board members may attend some of the sessions.

## Malaria - The Forgotten Disease



As the world concentrated recently on the prevention and elimination of Covid-19 other diseases can be forgotten. Malaria is one of these. Recent good news from WHO (October 2021) on a malaria vaccine for children can bring great improvement to the global picture. However, disruption in services due to the Covid-19 pandemic threatens the progress made in the last two decades.

### According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

· In 2021, there were an estimated 247 million cases of malaria worldwide. This is an increase on the 2019 figure, 229 million cases.

· The estimated number of malarial deaths stood at 619, 000 in 2021.

· Children aged under 5 years are the most vulnerable group; in 2021 they accounted for 80% of all malaria deaths in Africa.

Sister Nkeiruka Edochie works in Lagos, Nigeria, in a poor urban area called Amukoko. She explains the situation in her district. "Malaria is a major disease burden in the area. Children and pregnant women are the most vulnerable. Plasmodium falciparum is the dominant malaria species. The densely populated slum area where we are is a high-risk area for malaria." One case Sister Nkeiruka relates is of a three-year-old child brought to the clinic by his mother. The child had fever, coughing, and catarrh, as well as feeling cold for a week. The child looked weak and dull. The mother had tried to medicate the child herself but with no result. The clinic immediately took steps to reduce the child's temperature and diagnosed malaria with a blood test. The child received treatment with anti-malarial drugs. She also started an antibiotic for an accompanying respiratory infection. The mother came back a week later with the child for review. She was cheerful and grateful to God and to the Clinic for the child's full recovery. The temperature was normal, and the child looked healthy and was playful with smiles.

Prevention of malaria is the key factor in the control of the disease. In Amukoko, there is health education

both within and outside the clinic on how to prevent the breeding spaces of mosquitoes. This helps the elimination or reduction of the transmission. Environmental cleanliness is very important to prevent the growth and development of mosquitoes. In a slum area, the disposal of waste and basic sanitation are huge problems. The clinic staff encourages the use of insect repellent and treated mosquito nets. Potholes on the roads are filled and cans and buckets are not left uncovered. Bushes are cut and grasses are trimmed to prevent breeding grounds. People are advised to seek medical advice if they notice malaria symptoms like fever and chills, headache, weakness, bitter taste, body aches etc.



In Mile Four Hospital, Abakaliki, Nigeria, Sister Chiagoziem Onwuzuruike is a medical doctor. Set in a rural area, patients coming to Mile Four are at a higher risk than urban dwellers. The children she sees on a daily basis are also from low-income families. These are more at risk than children from wealthier families. Sister Chiagoziem also talks about prevention. Health education happens at outpatient and antenatal clinics. There is early treatment and prophylaxis of pregnant women. The Government provides the treated mosquito nets, and the hospital distributes them.

In Tanzania, East Africa, Sister Maria Borda worked as a doctor in Makiungu Hospital for many years. Currently, she is working in Nangwa. She explains the situation in Tanzania and the government schemes for prevention. Malaria infection during pregnancy is a major public health problem in Tanzania. Pregnancy reduces women's immunity. Thus, they are more susceptible to diseases, including malaria infection. Maternal malaria increases the risk of spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, maternal anaemia, premature delivery, intrauterine growth retardation, severe disease and death.



# Climate Change - Students Letters to Future Generations



By Sr. Prisca Ovat, MMM

Coming to the end of my mission in Kenya, global warming was my last topic with the group of high school students I mentored. I asked them each to write a letter to future generations. What would they like to say? It is quite fascinating to read their thoughts on this global menace. I found them emotional and worth sharing as we are drawing to the close of another year.

*"We are sorry for your suffering. It is not that we do not know but the world tends to assume everything told until it comes upon us. Maybe in time to come, you are not going to have a place to live, or a life to enjoy due to the mess that we did. Please take care of the environment. Planting trees may be seen as an outdated thing but very important in human life. Please be generous to the environment."*

*"Hey there future, I would like to talk to you about many several things, but first, our world is in danger right now. May you find peace and may God grant you good health."*

*"I am writing this letter to inform you, our future people, about what is coming. There will be an unusual earth, but I would like you to take care."*

*"I wish the world can change the way it behaves now to avoid global warming. I really don't want to see you suffer because of our deeds."*

*"My dear future generation, there are a lot of things happening right now in our world. The world is changing, and we are the cause of it. It may somehow feel like we are ignorant of it, but it is due to our lack of consciousness. We do not know who or what you might turn out to be, but don't worry, it's all going to be okay."*

*"Take care of yourself and the future for a better tomorrow."*

*"There will be direct sunlight due to the destruction of the ozone layer leading to drought and famine. People would develop skin cancer from direct UV rays."*

*"Rapid growth of industries has led to excess emission of CO2 which destroys the ozone layer leading to global warming. The scientists should look for a better way apart from the use of industries to produce goods else everything on the beautiful earth will be destroyed, and where will the next generation live?"*

*"Hey, I would just wish that we live exemplary lives because the world keeps changing and we don't know what may happen next. Remember that challenges are what makes life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."*

*"My concern is that I don't know if we will continue to live for long because of the things we do. We continue to ruin our world with earthly things, and I do not know what the future will be like. If I get to have children in the future, I would like to encourage them not to destroy our world because they will not have a place to stay. Let us continue protecting our world."*

*"Take care of yourselves because the world might be ending very soon."*

*"The world is changing rapidly. How will you survive this chaos and drama?"*

*"Let us use our today to change our tomorrow. Every deed has its consequences. The desired change starts with you. Nothing changes when nothing changes. The world is a dangerous place to live in because of those who do nothing about the evil committed against it."*

With love  
From the Form 4's



## Meet the Sisters - Sr. Maria Borda



Sr. Maria Borda, MMM

Sr. Maria considers herself as a fish caught by the MMM Magazine and by the late Sr. Ruth Carey's 'Diary of an MMM', which reached her in her secondary school in Malta, before she ever met an MMM Sister in person. As an economics student, she took the opportunity in 1969 of a 2-month traineeship in Belfast City Public Libraries, from where she would travel every weekend to an MMM community. By the end of that time, having met in person several MMMs - from pioneers or veterans on the mission field, to those fresh from novitiate or from college, straining at the leash to 'go out to the missions' - she was sure that this was the life to which God was calling her.

Her early years of formation followed by her student

years in MMM were spent in Clonmel, Drogheda, Waterford and Dublin. When her mother, who had trained as a nurse with Irish Blue Sisters in Malta, used to break into singing 'It's a long way to Tipperary...' while going about her housework, none of the family dreamt that Maria would be starting her life as an MMM in that very same Tipperary. During those years, she came to know the hospitality of the Irish, and also discovered the joy of living as a member of an international and multicultural community, working shoulder-to-shoulder with Sisters from at least 3 continents.

As a Medical student in Dublin, she experienced again the friendliness of Irish students, who have invited her to every 10-year reunion since her class qualified in 1980, and many of whom still keep regularly in touch. After further studies and experience in Obstetrics/Gynaecology, Paediatrics and Tropical Medicine, she was missioned to Tanzania, where she reached in 1984. Maria has been working there since, starting with 4 months studying KiSwahili, then in MMM Hospitals in Kabanga, Dareda, Makiungu, right up to the present, where she works as a semi-retired Obstetrician/Gynaecologist at Nangwa Village Health Programme, under the shadow of the beautiful Mount Hanang, Manyara Region.

She is thankful for these 50 years as an MMM, to her MMM Sisters, who modelled for her what she might aspire to be like, to her most supportive family, friends and mentors, who have become part of her life over this half-century, which feels to her just like a happy dream.





# Inspiration



***“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”***

*- Robert Frost*

Thank you for your continued support.  
We hold you in our prayers.  
**[www.mmmworldwide.org](http://www.mmmworldwide.org)**