



THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary

MMM Worldwide News



News from MMM Areas

Final Professions: During February we had the great joy of the celebration of final vows of Sr. Celestina Aganyi in Nairobi, Kenya; Srs. Mary Dakom, Lucy Agbese and Nneka Nwanze in Benin City, Nigeria; Srs. Natalia Mashalo and Oliver Tarimo in Tanzania and Sr. Anne Mary Nakanjakko in Uganda.

Ireland, Drogheda: A photo exhibition called “Daring to Hope”, promoted by AMRI (Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland), came to Drogheda between January 24th – 27th. On the Saturday afternoon Sr. Brigid Corrigan gave a talk on the pioneering work of MMM. This talk is available on the MMM Facebook page. Well worth a watch!

Dear Friend of MMM,

Thank you again for joining us for the MMM Newsletter as we bring you news and updates on our activities and share stories from our Sisters.

It is always a joy to see the return of Spring in our hemisphere in March. We have brighter, longer and warmer days and flowers are starting to appear after a long and dark winter in Ireland. We had some very cold days and strong storms which are a reflection of global climate crisis change.

In this edition, you will meet an amazing MMM Sister who tells her story with such authenticity and sincerity I found it very moving. I am fascinated that women come from all walks of life and all types of families to be MMMs. We benefit greatly from the inclusion and diversity that has always been part of the MMM culture and community.

We share news with you from Uganda as our MMM Sisters bravely tackle two major challenges for the local people – a lack of safe maternal births and a lack of safe water. We know that humans deserve to have access to these fundamental and essential aspects of being alive. We are working to bring both to the area so in need. It is not easy work, but as Mother Mary taught us, if God wants the work done then God finds a way.

In Ireland, we had a wonderful celebration of Mother Mary’s anniversary in January while hosting a photo exhibition of the contribution of women religious in Ireland that was coordinated by AMRI. It is great to commemorate our past while still actively working for our future.

We are grateful for your kind feedback on the last Newsletter and we hope you will find this one just as interesting. Easter is coming early this year and we hope that you will have a wonderful celebration this year.

With blessings,

Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM



Daring to Hope Exhibition



MMM hosted the AMRI **Daring to Hope** exhibition on Saturday 27th January. There was a full house at The MMM Auditorium in Drogheda, Ireland. Sr Brigid Corrigan gave a talk on memories of Mother Mary and other pioneering Sisters. The event also honoured the anniversary of Founder Mother Mary's death.



Sr Brigid Corrigan, MMM, speaks to the crowd about Mother Mary Martin



The full auditorium at Beechgrove, Drogheda

Part of the Daring to Care exhibition



Sr Rita Kelly, MMM speaks with one of the exhibition attendees



Taking it all in



Sr Mary McNamara, MMM



Sr Denise Boyle, FMDM

Empowering Women in Brazil

By Srs. Margaret Nakafu, MMM and Maria José da Silva, MMM

Sowing seeds of hope and joy, and the fruits of being empowered with practical skills for the journey...

It is with a great sense of joy and hope that the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Salvador rejoices with more than 100 women who were empowered with skills in the courses of cut and sewing, catering, hairdressing, manicure and pedicure, art craft and baking. These courses were offered during 2023 in collaboration with the Parish Pastoral Center (Casa da Juventude Anna Sironi).

MMM Salvador is working in collaboration with three women volunteers who are entrusted and committed to the daily management of Casa da Juventude Anna Sironi. In a society that tends to find more reasons to exclude those who are poor, vulnerable and different, Casa da Juventude Anna Sironi offers a space where each woman feels accepted and loved as she is. It is a place where each woman rediscovers her inner wisdom and freedom to share her life experiences, to be creative, learn new skills, make supportive friendships, grow in self-confidence and know that she is respected.

Sr. Maria Jose da Silva MMM facilitated group therapy sessions. These sessions have created sacred grounds where the women have an experience of mutual trust and support. Appreciating this environment of mutual trust and unconditional love, the women shared their fears, aspirations, their pain and search for healing. They shared their experiences of God's healing love. Group therapy sessions were indeed circles of healing where the women felt empowered and helped increase



Sr. Maria José with student

their self-esteem. During the initial sessions, some women shared that they were suffering from depression, and they were on medication. In the group therapy sessions, these women experienced themselves as supported, listened to and respected. These positive and affirming experiences encouraged the women to become committed to their healing processes. Towards the end of the courses, most women expressed deep gratitude for having discovered their potential and having developed their sense of purpose and self-worth.

Several women who benefited from the catering course are already earning an income from the acquired skills. They prepare and sell snacks. From the cut and sewing group, many women are making dresses for themselves and family members. All these achievements bring joy and encouragement to us and to the collaborators.

In addition to offering our skills and creating circles of healing with the women, MMM Salvador also contributes with financial support to the activities of the Casa da Juventude Anna Sironi. The funds are used to buy materials for the courses and to pay course instructors. We are grateful to our donors and the prayers from our MMM family. Let us continue sharing with joy and hope what our healing charism has as one of the most creative values is the way to empower many women throughout our ministries.

The Christmas Craft Fair proceeds are going towards this project.

Update from Uganda

In Uganda, MMM have a base in Kansiira, a remote rural area, 180 kms from the capital city, Kampala.

It is an area that includes ten villages, with mud houses and thatched roofs. The people are poor, with subsistence farming, cattle rearing and fishing in nearby Lake Kyoga as the main sources of income. Most people have one or two meals a day, but the main problem is the lack of clean, safe, drinking water and electricity.

There is no piped water; sources are primarily Lake Kyoga & hand dug holes (dams) serving people & animals. Neither are safe for drinking. Previously small boats allowed people to go 1km inside the lake to fetch cleaner water, but in 2019, these boats were destroyed by the military. People were provided with big boats which are too heavy for women and children. There are only five functional hand pumps in the area. Women and children suffer as fetching water is their responsibility and involves long journeys.

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The infant mortality is 43 per 1000 live births (in UK, under 4 per 1000). ”

MMM has always had the care of mothers and children as one of their principal concerns. In



New clinic being built in Kansiira

Kansiira, the maternal mortality rate is 368 per 100,00 live births (in UK & Ireland it is about 5 or 6 per 100,00). The infant mortality is 43 per 1000 live births (in UK, under 4 per 1000). The need is great! The nearest government facility is 11 kms away, with no maternity or inpatient services and limited/no drug supply. There is also a very high rate of malaria among the population. After listening to the local people MMM has decided to work on two main fronts, clean water and maternal health.

They are working to provide for a bore hole to provide clean, safe water. This can also be used in activities of the health centre, with patients, caregivers and staff, promoting better hygiene and guarding against cross infection and disease.

The facility will provide preventive/curative health care services, community development programmes (IGA's and women/youth empowerment), currently ongoing in temporary settings. Including out/inpatient (19 bed) services, Maternity & child welfare, diagnostic services (lab, HIV etc). Solar will be the main energy source, a renewable choice. This will enable access during emergencies, childbirth, and safe drug storage.

MMM Learn as They Work

In Tanzania, MMM run the Faraja Centre in Singida. It deals with many aspects of health care but among its many programmes is one for counter human trafficking.

They have been innovative in how they deal with individual cases, and most importantly, how they prevent children and young people from being exploited by outreach to the schools and by radio programmes.

While they work, they learn, and they shared some of their key learnings with Healing Touch.

The first learning is: “We often think we are acting as individuals. The Team has learned, through our experiences with patients, caregivers and with each other in the Team, that what we think is a small contribution can have much greater implications than we expected.”

A second learning was that going to the root of the problem is often a sure and easier way to get rid of the problem. They do not wait for the trafficking cases to be reported but have learned to eliminate risk factors that lead up to it. This involves providing economic means to the at-risk groups so that they may engage in income-generating activities rather than be susceptible to human trafficking. Raising awareness of and solving violence against children-related cases is also another way to reduce trafficking activities in the area.

The third learning was that although human trafficking does not discriminate against individuals, they have learned that children and youth are the most at-risk group for human trafficking activities. They have resolved to improve and increase children and youth-related activities in the future to create more awareness as needed. The teachers are trained in awareness of the problem and the students who are involved in school clubs, are

encouraged to share if they have any clues about it going on in their village. Students often teach their parents and the elderly people in the community and are a great support to one another.

We in Healing Touch are proud of our MMM Sisters and staff who work so courageously and still have time to reflect and learn from their experiences.



Sr. Marian Senna, MMM with client (above) and staff (below)



Meet the Sisters – Sr. Magdalene Iyua Upev, MMM

I come from Kwande local government area of Benue State (Adikpo London), Nigeria. I speak Tiv as a local language and I come from a polygamous family. My father Upev Adagi was a traditional ruler. He was a king of 12 clans in our area. According to tradition, the king has to marry many wives. My mother, Martha Alu was married off at about 12 years old and she happened to be the youngest of the wives of my father. I have five sisters and a brother from my mother. At birth, I was given the name Iyuator meaning 'gift to a king'. I am the seventh child of my mother and the youngest in the family having lost my sister who came after me. I am privileged to have many half-brothers and sisters and one of my sisters is the present queen of the TIV Nation home and abroad. Her husband is the Tor Tiv (King of the Tiv Nation).

My mother's eldest child and her husband assumed the role of my parents when I was five. I am constantly referred to as the eldest of their four biological children. Our parents are deceased, my father passed on when I was six years old, while my mother died of cancer soon after I joined MMM.

I trained as a nurse and midwife before joining MMM. I graduated from the School of Nursing Makurdi at 24 years old. I got a state government appointment the following year. I worked in a school sick bay. While in the civil service, I went for my postgraduate midwifery programme at the Mutala Muhammed School of Midwifery in Jos University Teaching Hospital from September 2008 to March 2010. I entered MMM in August 2010.

The idea of a religious vocation started when I was about 14 years old. I had been reading



about the lives of saints from the World Among Us monthly publication and was inspired by St. Martin De Porres and St. Josephine Bakhita. Furthermore, around the same age, I got actively involved in the Legion of Mary and so was touched by the idea of going on mission. I remained a Legionary until I joined MMM.

Before joining MMM, I knew nothing about the Congregation since MMM never worked in the State I come from. I first came across the Medical Missionaries of Mary in 2005 from a booklet of Religious Congregations in Nigeria, and in the same year, I made contact with the Congregation. A classmate of mine, who was a Missionary Sister of the Holy Rosary and knew I had an interest in religious life, gave me the book and encouraged me to start with MMM. I had been thinking of writing to Our Lady of the Apostles (OLA) second. However, I got a response from MMM the following week after posting my letter, so I decided to go in search of MMM. The fact that MMM was involved in healthcare attracted me more because I was already training to become a nurse.

Continued: Meet the Sisters – **Sr. Magdalene Iyua Upev, MMM**

After my First Profession, I was assigned to the Fuka community in Nigeria. Ten months later, I received another assignment to the Republic of South Sudan where I worked for six years and six months.

In my free time, I love reading, cooking, shopping, housekeeping and watching good movies. When I was in Ireland upgrading, I got serious about walking and jogging; the benefits are tremendous!

In 2023, I upgraded my nursing to a BSc at University College Cork in Ireland. My new mission is in Uganda; I am presently taking classes in Luganda in preparation for ministry. I already love the language and people.

What I have enjoyed the most in life are beautiful and rich liturgies, time to meditate, meeting people and sharing life with them. Some of the challenges I have faced are difficult missions, war, ill health and the worries that come with it. I am quite outgoing and can be talkative sometimes but I make an effort to be sensitive and caring of others needs too.

One thing life has taught me is to value people, listen to them without hasty judgement. Life has also taught me to be kind and reach out to people who need me most as well as take care of myself.



Sr. Elizabeth Ogar, MMM and Sr. Magdalene Upev, MMM, June 2023



Inspiration



**“I trust God absolutely. The past is in
God’s hands, so is the future and present.”**

- Mother Mary Martin (1934)

Thank you for your continued support.
We hold you in our prayers.

www.mmmworldwide.org