

Dear Sisters and Friends of Holy Union

Once again we send you an update of our life and activities in Tanzania. As well, we thank you unreservedly for your prayer and ongoing advice, practical support and financial help. This enables our ministry to be a source of hope and relief to the poorest and most vulnerable.

Tanzania today boasts a great deal of infrastructure development. There are new airports and aeroplanes, bridges, flyovers and rapid transport. There is the huge hydroelectric dam project at Steigler's Gorge and a new standard gauge railway, all in construction. The government claims to have improved the economy and social services, reduced corruption, restored law and order, put the emphasis on hard work and self-reliance, and by collecting taxes, as never before, laid the foundation for a better future. That may be so but the growth is not reflected yet in people's lives. Unemployment is high and austerity is crippling enterprise.

President Magufuli is highly regarded on the whole. (He is kind/wise/funny/patriotic/courageous/sociable with the citizens/hard-working/unselfish/ good to the needy – so say the students of our Form V). He has some amazing achievements to his credit in a few short years and will surely be re-elected next year. However the flaw is there. Democracy is being killed, protest is stifled, the press is no longer free, political rallies forming the basis of civic education are forbidden, independent entities monitoring accountability and progress are frightened and silenced and three years on the New Constitution which cost Tanzania over a hundred billion tz shillings so far, has been shelved.

Quo Vadis Tanzania?

October 7 2018. The growing Holy Union Community gathers at Dundani to celebrate Sr Annette's Jubilee

Golden Jubilee 1968 – 2018

Sr Annette writes:

On October 7th last year, I celebrated the Golden Jubilee of my entering the postulancy in Mont Vista, Athlone, in 1968. I had many celebrations of the 50 years: at our Farrell Family Reunion in February; with Sr Bridie, my novitiate companion when stranded for a week in the snow in London; with my community in Banagher and lastly with my community here in Dundani on 27th October. In between times, I had many heartwarming letters and cards from family, friends and sisters all over the congregation, plus many 50's in dollars, euro, pounds and Tanzanian shillings. For a while there I was as rich as Croesus! All of us Jubilarians were well feted too at the Province Assembly. Thanks to all of you who were so thoughtful and so generous.

I have much to thank God for, in all the years.good health and energy, inspiring companions, opportunities to learn and to travel, opportunities to share and be creative and to help many. I thank God for all the students I taught, for colleagues and Sisters and especially for a great family, always concerned and affirming and staunch helpers of Holy Union Mission. I thank God for 36 good years in Tanzania, my second home.

I remember the family members, friends and Sisters who have gone ahead of me ar shli na firinne but who are still very much alive in my heart and always will be.

In a special way I thank Sr Dostea, Sr Marion and the young Sisters for preparing a memorable celebration last October. The Mass was beautifully sung

in Swahili and English. Fr Denis, from Kisiju, was chief celebrant and did it so well.

After that great jubilation was had and photos galore. There was gold everywhere: table-decorations and candles, yellow roses and a tri-coloured cake! The traditional African cake was there too – a whole roasted goat and all the ceremony to go with it. There was entertainment with the young sisters acting as myself, highly amusing to see their clever impressions. Dostea gave a great speech and Mairead had composed a lovely song. It was a wonderful day. An added bonus for me was the presence of Srs Teresa Finn and Mary Harrington, my Novitiate companions and firm friends always.

AD MULTOS ANNOS



Community

General Council Visit

We were both delighted and privileged to receive Srs Caroline and Teresa on their official visit to us in October. As it was Sr Caroline's first visit to Tanzania she had much to absorb. It was a real pleasure for those who had made their Novitiate in Cameroun to see her again and welcome her to their home ground. It was home from home for Sr. Teresa, who has been a frequent visitor and advisor to us.



First visit from Sr Caroline

As well as visiting all our Ministries - Debrabant Secondary, Holy Union Pre and Primary school, Memkwa school for street children, Matumaini for children with disability, they spent time with everyone in the community, individually, giving each one time to share their present experience of life, religious life and ministry. Then they met with us all together. They also spent time in the Novitiate in Dundani.

They were appreciative and encouraging about what they saw and heard and affirmed the way the younger members have assumed responsibility in many areas. They challenged us too, urging us towards greater self-reliance and taking up more leadership roles eventually in the congregation.

Their visit overlapped with the International Formation Committee meeting, facilitated by Srs Mary Harrington and Gabrielle Stuart, faithful mentors of ours over many years. Sr Emerentia attended on behalf of Cameroun Region and brought us up to date on the troubled politics of her country today. Srs Dostea and Alice hosted the meeting held at the local Camaldolese Monastery in Saku.

The Sisters - Where are they and what are they doing?

- Sr. Dostea:** Novice Mistress - a big responsibility to be in charge of the Formation of young Sisters.
- Sr. Agatha:** Headteacher in the Pre & Primary School. So capable in dealing with Local Government officials and requirements.
- Sr. Benedicta:** Bursar - not an easy task in this cash economy where much of our food is bought in the local market where there are no receipts! She is also on our Leadership Team.
- Sr. Maria:** A student studying English and Religious Studies in University in Kenya. She will complete her Diploma Course this year but will continue to Degree Level for a further year.
- Sr. Eugenia:** Teacher in Debrabant School and liaison with the Hostel girls.
- Sr. Alice:** Leadership Team. Cathecist in the Parish and teaching Religious Education in schools.
- Sr. Jesca:** First Year in College (DSM), studying Social Studies and Youth Work.
- Sr. Emeliana:** First Year in College doing Montessori Pre-School Training.
- Sr. Schola:** Catechist in the Parish with special responsibility for the outstation in MajiMatitu. She also teaches Religious Education in schools.
- Sr. Glory:** A student in Morogoro taking Education and Religious Studies.
- Sr. Antonia:** Completed her Montessori Training. Has started work in our own Holy Union Pre-School in MajiMatitu since January.
- Sr. Fides:** Director of Matumaini Centre for children with disability.

Novices Olympia and Monicah with Sr Annette. In 50 years' time (2069) how will Holy Union have grown in East Africa? Remember, 50 years ago in 1968 there was no Holy Union Mission yet in Tanzania. The Mission only began with Srs Aquinas and Adriana, in Kilimanjaro in 1973.



Sr Alice writes:

Just as Jesus accompanied the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24) we, the Holy Union sisters, journey with the young women who come to us, wanting to join the congregation. We listen to their stories, provide seminars for them and make an effort to meet their families. This is not easy when they come from very far away and the travel is long and difficult. However, just as in marriage, it is important for the two families to know each other well.

Last year I visited some of our candidates in their families. One of them came from Dodoma, which is fast becoming the capital city of Tanzania. But she lives right in the interior, where no cars or buses reach. To reach you have to climb onto a motorbike, risky and daunting on bad roads with a driver determined to show you how fast he can go, but worth it all for the great welcome from the villagers and the family so happy to have me sleep in their home.

Education: Debrabant

The Holy Union Sisters in Tanzania have been active in the field of education and community development in the Mbagala suburb of Dar es Salaam for the past 19 years. When we moved to the area it was a green field site. Now it has a population of over one million and is growing all the time. Our work reflects our conviction that education helps to tackle poverty, reduces inequality and improves the position of girls and women in society.

Debrabant Secondary was built at the request of the local government, prior to the Millennium goals expansion of secondary education. Since it opened in 2008, it has become a model of good practice, high academic achievement, significant inclusion and support for marginalized students and a genuine alternative to the public system which continues to fail so many students.

Three years on the capacity of the Tanzanian government to translate policies in relation to free education for all into meaningful practice is still extremely low. The abolition of school fees has left significant gaps in school budgets: schools are not able to fund basic needs, water,

electricity, maintenance etc, which were previously paid for with parents' contributions. Most public schools are seriously understaffed so while there are no fees, the majority of students have to pay for extra tuition and grinds for every subject that they are taking.

History of success

Debrabant Secondary/High school has been providing Form V and Form VI since 2014. To date 90 boys and 53 girls have been enrolled in Form V. Of the 37 who graduated in 2018, 29 students achieved results between Division 1 and 3 which enables them to go on to university and other colleges.

In 2016, the school won first place in their sector, out of 52 schools, in the Young Scientist Tanzania competition, introduced to Tanzania by the late Lorcan Fulham, Irish Ambassador to Tanzania in 2014-2016.

Support for disadvantaged students

To date 27 students, 16 girls and 11 boys, attended Memkwa/COBET before coming to Debrabant. Six of these students have gone on to university. These young people, many of whom were amongst the most marginalized and excluded in society, have been supported financially, practically and psychologically to progress through the education system.

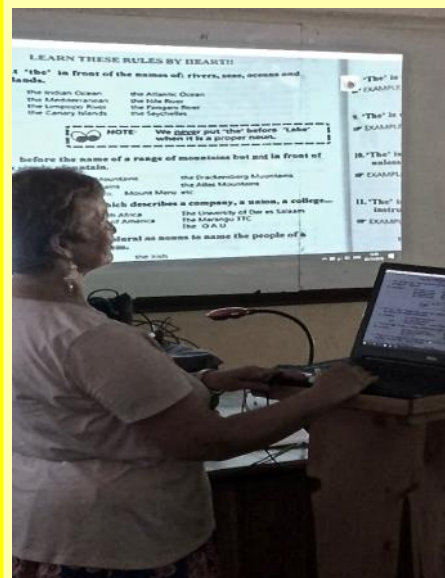
The new Sustainable Development Goals of the UN refer to the need to "Leave no one behind". This is very much at the heart of the approach used in Debrabant. Many students, not just the COBET cohort, have been supported with their fees, their accommodation and living expenses/school needs. Without this help, they might have dropped out altogether.



To celebrate the first 10 years of Debrabant High School's service to education, Holy Union Sisters have decided to give 10 scholarships to some of the brightest girl students in Mbagala. This can be a groundbreaking initiative as Mbagala is not known for educating girls to a high level. However the number of girls attending Debrabant in recent years is consistently higher than the number of boys. The girls are expected to make full use of all the facilities and opportunities and they are encouraged to excel.

Another welcome visitor this year was **Mrs Agnes Hurley**, a retired National School teacher. She came laden with English grammar manuals and a Visualizer which she used to great effect with the Form V students in Debrabant.

She also devoted a lot of time to the Primary school where the pupils are still asking, "When is Sister Agnes coming back?" We hope the answer to that is, "Soon!"



Pre & Primary School



Holy Union Primary School Update :

In 2012 a new phase of Holy Union Mission here in Tanzania began in Maji Matitu. Due to pressure from parents whose children had started in our Kindergarten and due to the ever expanding population in the area we made the decision and commitment to build an English Medium Primary School which would serve the local people of Maji Matitu, Mbagala.

Tanzania is rather unusual in African terms in that it boasts one National Language – Swahili. All Government Primary Schools teach through the medium of Swahili. For whatever reason - perhaps a throwback to Colonial times, Secondary Education is all taught through the medium of English, making it extremely hard for children to learn and understand. Children with a good foundation in English tend to do much better, on the whole.

Where to build?

Once the decision to build was made, two new pressures ensued - where to build and where to find the funding. Sr. Mairead took over the headship of the school at this point. We built two classrooms on the Pre-School site which gave us time to consider and search for a more spacious site and get the major building work underway (These classrooms are now part of the expanding

Montessori Pre-School). In the end we decided to use part of the Community's farm for the new school. Financially it was a perfect solution but the terrain for building a school was far from perfect. The farm lies on a steep slope running down to a valley. There is no level ground. Gaining access to the site with large machinery was a problem. However, this situation made us consider carefully the structure and layout of the school. Most schools in Tanzania are single storey buildings but this would have required major earth works and raised the cost. In the end we decided on a two storey build with a Dining Hall and Kitchen on the lower ground floor and the Classrooms and Offices on top, making a neat compact building. The school now includes a Computer room, Library and Staffroom – which are much appreciated by the staff.

Solid progress

This year, in June 2019, we will have completed one full cohort of students in the Primary School and our first Grade 7 students will graduate - a day to celebrate. Sr. Agatha, the headmistress now, is working day and night to ensure that Holy Union Primary is among the best schools in Dar es Salaam for its academic achievement. She also takes pride in ensuring the students have good food to eat daily.

There is still much to be done – as yet we are not using the new Dining Hall though by Easter we hope to have the finances to furnish the Hall and Kitchen. The grounds need landscaping and, in time, some more leveling will need to be done so that we can have sports facilities nearer than at present.



Matumaini

Sr Fides writes:

Having been working in the Centre now for over a year, I have grown to experience and understand the difficulties which face the children and their carers here.

When Sr. Adriana founded the Centre her intention was to improve the lives of children with disabilities living in our local area, by dealing with the total home situation, including family carers as well as the children. She made the Centre a place they could come for help, support, encouragement and advice.

Timetable

Our Centre gives out services four days a week. Each morning our bus collects children and their mothers or guardians around 8.30 am, while our workers come in earlier and do the cleaning. Every child gets exercised with an assistant physio-therapist daily. While waiting for the service they are encouraged to use the supportive apparatus like special chairs, standing frames, walking supports to help them walk, sit etc. Most of this apparatus is made at the Centre. There are also lots of toys for the children to enjoy and play with. At 11.30 the mothers/carers feed the children a nutritious porridge. After that the women can do craft work or learn sewing etc and they go back home by bus around 2pm.

Funding

How do we finance the Centre? We fundraise in the parishes. This was fruitful last year and we are continuing to make appeals this year during Lent. We have support from some benefactors at home and abroad and I thank in a special way Louis and all of Sr Adriana's family for ongoing help.

Challenges

We have difficulty in getting supportive material such as Splints, Calipers and Wheelchairs. They are very expensive to buy. Much of the equipment we can make at the Centre relatively cheaply but some items we can't manage. We give our services free of charge, on the whole. This is because to care for a child with special needs can be a huge financial burden, especially since many fathers abandon the children to mothers who have very little ability to make money themselves.

I attended a seminar on

child protection and safeguarding in 2018 in Arusha. This was very good, it confirmed to me that Holy Union were actually pioneers in this area, doing home visiting so as to see the reality of the children's lives and working out practical ways to help the most vulnerable families.

New Partnership

Our friend Dr. Helen O'Connell, an expert in working with Disability, now teaching in UCD, is exploring the

"We are mindful that the poor were a real concern to our Founder and that the Church calls us in our time to respond to their cries"

Art. 56



possibility of a new partnership for us. A site visit is planned for July to meet and for them to identify our needs from a clinical perspective. We look forward to that. Sr. Adriana was always trying to improve the Centre and to involve others who could help. We want to do the same.

Sr. Scola writes:

Holy Union sisters serve and help the local Church by working as catechists, teachers and leaders in the Parishes. Every year we prepare more than 800 children for First Holy Communion and about 500 children for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Apart from that we prepare Catechumens for Baptism, and we teach in many primary and secondary schools.

We teach respect and tolerance for our Muslim neighbours and emphasize what we hold in common: belief in one God, morality based on the commandments, prayer, pilgrimage, fasting and helping others, especially the poor. We help parents to understand their responsibility for helping the children grow up with faith in God and in right relationships with all. It is challenging as we are too few for all the work which needs to be done, in teaching the doctrine of the church and supporting families.

Sometimes in schools there is little cooperation or consideration from the Heads and teachers and a catechist has to struggle to get time with the children or even a classroom.



◀ *Ally when he came to Matumaini Centre....*

▶ *....Now he is at MajiMatitu Primary School*



Family Support

Family support is always an important aspect of our work in the community. In the absence of social welfare services many people come to the Mission for help or advice. Food, medicines, house rent, fares, school fees and school needs, as well as tuition are the main issues. We help the most needy where we can.

For example, one young mother of two has bi-polar disorder. Her medicines are so expensive she stops the dose and invariably relapses...so we help and she's doing better now.



Housing support for a poor family

Can you help?

The faster we grow, the more support we need. You can find out more about our life & work at our website: www.holyuniontanzania.co.uk

PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY:

1. By cheque, made out to 'LSU Tanzania Project' and sent to: LSU Tanzania Project, 29 Pulteney Road, Bath BA2 4EZ
2. 2. Online Donation at: www.virginmoneygiving.com

Type 'LSU' in the 'Find a Charity' box.

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Tel: 01225 469405
Email: bursar.lsu@btconnect.com

CONTACT US IN TANZANIA:

Tel: (+255) 7562 08424
Email: fideskimario@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofHolyUnionTanzania>

An elderly mother with 7 children, one with disability, has, for years, been shunted from one rented tenement to another... her children making too much noise, over-using the 'facilities', fighting with other kids. She had a small plot and now we're helping her to put a couple of rooms there and a latrine. Thanks to our benefactors she can now look forward to a better future for herself and the children.

Our cows help too. We sell much of the milk but several people get milk free. 3 HIV sufferers, one neighbour with cancer and a family with one-month-old twin girls are beneficiaries at the moment. It is not easy to get fresh milk locally. Feeding grass to the cows is no problem in the rainy season but in the long dry season, it's touch and go. So, many people give up. We have persevered so far, the manure being an extra bonus.



Our cows help too!

Sr Jesca writes:

This year I'm studying Social Work in Mwenge College. As a professional social worker I will be able to help many people with different problems: such as Child Abuse; people living with disabilities; the frail and elderly; those living with HIV/AIDS; young people abusing drugs and alcohol.

I will be able to direct these troubled people to where they can get services and have their basic needs met. Not only that, as a social worker I will help and advise people with family problems, including helping them to manage their finances and increase their income with micro-projects.

The knowledge I'm gaining and the skills I'm developing now will help Holy Union to give improved and sustainable services in Projects such as Memkwa, Matumaini and others in the future. I'm fully satisfied and enthusiastic about this training. I feel I am learning a lot that is relevant for our Mission.

Bungu

The community now owns a piece of farmland, around 20 acres, some distance beyond Dundani. It is hoped that this flat and fertile holding will be developed to produce cash crops and to enable us in our efforts to become more self-reliant. Recently, through the auspices of a benefactor, we managed to sink a borehole on the property. When funds become available we'll develop the well and use solar energy to pump the water.

*Another successful well!
Joy for Sr Annette*



To finish, the Sisters of the Tanzania Area Community wish you a very happy Easter as they thank you again for your unfailing interest and concern for the Mission. We look forward to your continuing support.

God bless you all.