



St. Francis Family Helper Programme

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Dear.....



Greetings from the staff of St Francis! We are coming to the end of another year. In many traditions we are given an occasion to look back and reflect on the time that is passed, and look forward to what

is ahead with new wishes, new dreams and new prayers. Many many families look forward and pray and dream for something better, because of having had “too much” suffering. We are thinking especially of countries at war – there are more of these than there are of countries at peace -, we think of the more than one million refugees trekking across Europe and Africa or living stateless and powerless in temporary shelters. We think of those who are homeless, penniless and hungry. We think of ourselves here in St. Francis, in Mbarara and in Uganda. We really have much to be happy about and much to be grateful for. We are grateful for peace, for work, for health, for our children, for our glorious sunshine which gives us free heat the whole year round! Then, dear readers, we are grateful and happy because of you. Our hearts are full as we wish you blessings and happiness in the year ahead. For those who celebrate Christmas we wish you a happy Christmas. We are very lucky (at least that is how many of us see it) to celebrate Christmas in Uganda. Christmas is especially a spiritual feast with much singing and

dancing in the Churches across the country. Families eat better at this season, and if men do not buy new clothes for their wives at this season then there is something to yell about!! The deprived wife might just refuse to cook your Christmas dinner, Ssebo! (this means “sir” in our local language!). Apart from these customs, the whole culture of spending madly has not yet come to Uganda.

To other dear friends of ours, who do not for religious reasons, celebrate Christmas, we have chosen a greeting of love and peace, that you can enjoy at any time of the year. Jews, Muslims, Jehovah Witnesses—we include you and think of you!

Looking back on this last year, we recognise that all our achievements have been made possible by your support, your encouragement, your work on our behalf and of course your funding. The audits of 2014 show that our income has been 313,000 EURO and our expenditure 278,281 EURO with a small balance to cover the unforeseen items, which, as you know enter most of our lives. The CTI building used up the greatest sum of over 100,000 EURO, the Child Sponsorship department and the tailoring school, both dealing with children, expended 90,000 EURO and the remainder was spent in the Counsellor Training Institute. The CTI (counsellor training institute) building is not complete but we hope that all work will be finished by the end of 2016 provided we are lucky and receive the necessary funding.

We would like to thank each one of you for your ongoing support. Children were able to go to school because of you. Different groups in the villages were able to benefit from the training courses which we have been offering to large numbers of primary school teachers, social workers, counsellors and development workers. In the last year we have trained approximately 186 catechists, 141 development workers, 127 primary school teachers and 24 counselling students.

Children in the Primary Schools are benefiting from the training programme as their teachers are being trained in methods of Liberation Education, are learning new ways of dialogue and discipline in the classroom while avoiding any form of violence or abuse. Teachers trained in St. Francis will in turn train the parents so that all work in harmony for the greater good of the child. Luckily we have been able to use all the rooms in the new building for training purposes, for meetings or for hire to other institutions.

In February 2015 the Irish Builders from Armagh came for the last time and because we wanted to thank them publicly we invited His Grace the Archbishop, Paul K. Bakyenga to bless the building (even though it is still unfinished) and H.E. Dónal Cronin, the Irish Ambassador to Uganda, to unveil the memorial plaque. Through a favourable chance the building was formally opened in August 2015 by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, president of Uganda.



Archbishop Paul K. Bakyenga, H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and Mary Moran

The president was actually invited to come for another function of the Archdiocese, but because our grounds were the best in the surrounding area, we were asked to host the occasion. The night before his arrival, at around 11pm the sign for the new building was put up "St Francis Educational Centre".



The new building

Both occasions were full of song, dance, speeches and remembrance of all those whose labour, love, funds, made those days possible as well as the events leading up to those dates. In addition to the above dignitaries we also had school children, and representatives from various religious, political, social and educational branches of Ugandan society.



Children dancing traditional dance

Child sponsorship



Dorin and Ritah (two students in the sponsorship)

In our sponsorship programme, we currently have 180 children; 50 in primary school, 102 in secondary school and 22 in tertiary institutions. Girls are the majority, totaling 115 while boys are 65. Though we are happy that we are supporting this number of children, it breaks our hearts to have to send away others who come for help. School fees in Uganda are rising very rapidly. Income of poor families, salaries of ordinary workers are not keeping pace with rising costs. We select children from the most disadvantaged families, many of which are headed by single mothers who are struggling to bring up children and provide them with an education.

The problems experienced by these mothers and their children are many—poverty often being at the root, but ignorance, illiteracy and inability of parents to follow their child's progress in school, creates a situation where the child can feel alone in school affairs.

For this reason the Child Sponsorship department organizes school holiday activities for children and parents/guardians, in the form of meetings, workshops or trainings.

In August this year, 2015, we had workshops with parents alone, then with the children alone, and finally with parents and children sharing openly their needs, experiences, shortcomings and resolutions to bring about immediate change in parent/child/school/St. Francis interactions and relationships.

Both parents and children appreciate these meetings which are facilitated by trained counsellors. Our next planned objective is to meet each child and parent/guardian individually, to check on academic performance and on relationships between the parent and the school.

In addition to these meetings, St. Francis offers professional counselling to children or parents who make that request, or who are referred for counselling.

Letters from sponsors

Letters that come from individual sponsors mean a lot to the children. In a certain way, the children consider their sponsors as other guardians and quite spontaneously address their sponsors as mother or father! The most exciting of all, of course, is when a sponsor can actually visit Uganda and get to know their child. This is a highlight, not only for the visitor, but for the family and the child, who become very proud and happy and feel special. We all enjoy being special to someone else. Uganda is a beautiful country and St. Francis will always welcome you and help to make your stay a memorable one.



Some of our sponsored children at school

Tailoring School



Tailoring student at work

Greetings from the students and staff of the Tailoring school. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all those wonderful sponsors who have paid school fees and material for our students over the years, and in the last few years, Cross Catholic International have not only sponsored students but have contributed to some salaries. In any Charity organization like ours, getting salaries is one of the most difficult aspects to cater for. Many people are interested in helping children and at the same time they are often fearful that their donations go astray on staff needs or on administration. Because of this we have always made specific requests for staff salaries and thank God, some organisations have been generous to us and have helped us with some of our salaries. There are still a number of staff who do not receive external assistance and this discrepancy bothers us a lot as these members receive small remunerations of about Euro 200 or less per month.

Presently, 56 students have enrolled in the school. In the last semester of the 2nd year, our students sit for a national trade examination.

Last year 28 out of 32 passed with 1st grade and the remainder passed with 2nd grade. These results help both our school, as outsiders hear that the students are performing, and the students to a certain extent. The “certain extent” is so because there are not enough jobs out there in the industrial sector, to absorb all the graduates every year. The students form groups sometimes, when they leave, and set up their own little production units. Many of them purchase machines and sew at home. Possibly all of them will use their skills when they are married with children. In Uganda at this time, more people wear good clothing bought in second hand markets, than those made in the country. You might ask why we train tailors if they are not hired after school. The main reason is that in really top range technical institutions, students are taught more than one trade or skill. For us to expand we would need more land and a lot more money. Perhaps someday that expansion will occur. Perhaps someday global economy will improve for those at the bottom of the ladder. Perhaps someday we will actually have a world with fewer disparities. When the more than one million refugees walking through Europe at this time, get settled, perhaps those who stay behind in their own countries, will be better treated.

This year, we received visitors from Nangina, a group of young volunteers, from Paderborn in Germany, and when they saw what our students were doing they made many orders for dresses, shirts and hats. Their friends back home were so impressed they also sent requests for more orders. It is a pity there is not a photograph of the group wearing their new garments. Below you will see some of our students modelling their examination garments, which they designed, cut and sewed themselves.

Africans look beautiful in bright colours and wear exotic fashions with ease.

Volunteers and Visitors 2015

Annika Rachor



From August 2014 –July 2015 I was working as a volunteer in Mbarara, Uganda—part of which was spent in the Office of the Child Sponsorship Department of St. Francis. I spent some time every week working with women prisoners and the children they had given birth to during their prison sentence. I also worked one day a week in an orphanage run by a priest of the Archdiocese. I am German and was a member of the sending organization called EIRENE.

In St. Francis, I helped with all kinds of office work, like ordering files, writing reports of home visitations, answering questions from parents and children who came to the office looking for some assistance, information or other need. I found these dialogues very interesting.

I learned how to manage the computer files, dealing with children’s school fees payments, I learned what happened when the sponsor/child donation was no longer sufficient and we had to appeal to a parent/guardian/relative if possible, or to what we call “free donations” (money given to the organisation or department without a specific target), or to the money given to us each year, by Kindermissionswerk, a German organisation assisting children in countries all over the developing world.



Gloria, Ruth, Hope und Immaculate



Hope, Immaculate, Viola and Apophia



Immaculate and Jowitah (head of tailoring school)

I came to understand how much office work is needed to manage such a department.

My biggest task in the office, was the communication in German, with Peter Gehlen who coordinates the work of all our German sponsors, and who actively looks for new German sponsors—a voluntary work which he has been carrying out for many many years. Translating letters from German into English and vice versa as well as helping with the translation of the annual newsletter took a lot of my time. In addition to office work, my most favourite activity of all was visiting the homes of our sponsored children and the schools which they attended. This was a look into the real life of our beneficiaries and helped me to understand their problems.

What I have learned for myself through volunteering in Uganda:

First of all, I gained more self-confidence here in Uganda. I learned the importance of self-awareness as a key to being there for others. Secondly, because of the variety of my experiences I came to know what I want to do with the rest of my life! One goal, is to be instrumental in stopping discrimination in our societies.

Living in Uganda for a year helped me realize how beautiful and rich another culture can be and how important it is to get in contact with other people and other cultures. I saw in this year how colourful our world is. Secondly I experienced for the first time in my life what it means to be a foreigner in another land, and to be judged by the colour of one's skin! I can now understand how it hurts trying to fit in but not really having full opportunity because of one's "difference". I have decided to study Education in combination with German and the pedagogy of children with special needs. With these studies, I hope to be a primary teacher in schools or classes dealing with

children who have speech or language problems. I expect, in this way to meet children from very varied backgrounds and cultures.

I attended a four week training in St. Francis and learned a number of skills in how to deal with groups, and to facilitate groups working through their own life problems. During these weeks of many group discussions I got a deeper look into Ugandan culture and Ugandan family life.

Thanks to EIRENE, to the Family of St. Francis, and to all my sponsors who helped me a lot in this year and made it possible for me to come to Uganda. May God bless the staff, children and sponsors of the St. Francis Family! I wish you only the best in the years to come and I thank you for the great work you are doing and the support you are giving to children in need here in Uganda. I will always keep these memories in my heart and promise, that I will visit you again in Nyamitanga!

“And until we meet again, may God hold you in
the hollow of his hands”
(An old Irish Blessing)

Arienne Schulz



The photo shows me with two of the tailoring students and the necklaces I taught them to make.

Already two months have passed since I first touched African ground. Two months, which passed so quickly and which were filled with many new experiences, a lot of enriching encounters and memorable moments.

Two weeks of introduction and orientation were followed by four weeks of a Runyankore language course. So far I'm able to greet, introduce myself, order and buy food (yes, I will not die of hunger) in Runyankore, the language of this region where I work.

Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, left me with lasting impressions: my first Boda Boda ride (daily, dangerous mode of motor cycle taxi travel), heavy traffic, eating chapatti (Indian/African flat bread), Samosas (Indian/African flat bread filled with meat of vegetables and deep fat fried), and other traditional foods made of maize, millet, bananas, ground nuts and white starchy cassava.



The bustling taxipark in Kampala

All the above are sold on the busy bustling streets of Kampala day and night.

I got used to Ugandan English accents, being called "Muzungu" (meaning white person), hearing the different sounds of Africa, seeing red dirt roads and colourful clothes.

I travelled by public bus from Kampala to Mbarara and was stunned by the landscapes and nature of this country.

Owing to the warm reception of all the staff of St. Francis, who welcomed me and familiarized me with the logistics of living here, I soon felt at home and am settling down.

At the moment I am just getting to know St. Francis, but so far I'm enthusiastic about the mission and work of this organization. I look forward to this coming year, helping to achieve the objectives of St. Francis and being part of this family.

Lillian Busingye Lisa Mugisha



My names are Lillian Busingye Lisa Mugisha. I am married and I have three children.

I started work as a personal secretary to the executive manager at St.

Francis Family Helper Programme (SFFHP) in July 2015 as a volunteer. In September 2015, I was given an opportunity to become a fulltime employee. I went through the process of recruitment, was interviewed and hired by the management team of the organization.

Before I started working at SFFHP, I was attracted by its Vision, which is that; *all people may have a more equitable sharing of the gifts needed for human development (social security, education, health and happiness)*. I was especially impressed by the focus on the Family, as the central most important unit of any society. If a family is helped, supported and empowered to access the basic needs for survival, the whole nation will be helped. If members of the family are educated, the whole nation will be educated.

I am pleased to associate myself with this organization because of the good work it is rendering to the community, singling out the vulnerable and disadvantaged people and contributing to the Millenium Development Goals of the nation. I enjoy the team work with my colleagues. I am ready to learn and to share my expertise so as to help achieve the objectives of SFFHP.

I would like to thank Sr. Christine, Mary Moran the Management team and the staff of St Francis for giving me this opportunity to share my knowledge and experience and be part of this organization.

Tomomichi Kusajima



I'm a volunteer from Japan. Nine months have already passed since I came to St. Francis. I've been teaching computer skills to teachers from the tailoring school, supervising them in giving

computer lessons to their students and giving individual support to the staff of St. Francis who are already computer literate but who need added expertise.

What most surprised me since I came here is how hard the staff members work. It seems as if they were Japanese!

Tailoring teachers don't have much time during the day, so they come for their lesson after the day's work. This is real commitment! I can tell they want to get computer knowledge to give better lessons to students. They make me feel like I have to work much harder.

All the staff here are very nice to me, and talk to me casually. They tell me the local gossip and teach me their language. They invite me to their house on weekends, so I don't feel lonely and my days are fulfilling. I want to keep trying my best to help St. Francis in any way I can.

Nangina Club from Paderborn, Germany

In August Nangina finally had the opportunity of visiting St. Francis Family Helper Programme, seeing the Educational Building and learning how our donation was used. The visit gave us the possibility of gaining different views on the projects and exchanging personal opinions with the people on the ground. We visited local primary schools and met some of the sponsored families.

We spent time in the tailoring school seeing what the students were able to do. We then gave orders and the students made wonderful dresses, shirts and trousers from the material we gave them. Due to their very hard work we were able to receive the manufactured dresses on the last evening before our trip home. That was an immense pleasure.

Furthermore we had the singular opportunity of meeting the President of Uganda because he took part in the inauguration ceremony of the building and the archdiocesan university. We thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon with songs and dances of different school groups. We found the speeches a bit long, when compared e.g. with German occasions.

Of course, we also profited from a safari trip to Ruwenzori National Park, during which we saw hippos, crocodiles, lions, buffalo and last but not least a great troop of elephants. Finally we took part in a cultural evening in Kampala, given by the famous Nderi Dancers, dancing and singing different tribal styles.

We had a very special last evening. Our time in Mbarara was absolutely great. Some of us even liked it so much that they spontaneously decided to go to Uganda next year again.

Boys from the County Armagh

There is a song written about them, best sung when they are stamping their feet, and downing a drink! The song goes:

*"No matter where I wander
Through cities near or far
Sure, my heart's at home in old Ireland
In the County of Armagh!"*

The beautiful cathedral city of Armagh has left its imprint in Uganda and most especially in the cathedral village of Nyamitanga, home of St. Francis Educational Centre,

which the men from Armagh helped to build, for which Martin Grimley from Armagh raised a lot of funds and which Paul Donnelly also from Armagh supervised after the departure of Brendan Beirne. Now Paul is again working for St. Francis, creating a comedy show, with the hope of raising more funds for the supervision room. How can we thank you? Your names will be remembered each time we enter the building as the beautiful plaque demonstrates.

Transitions in St. Francis



Dear Readers, 2015, is surely one of the most memorable and grace-filled years for us at St. Francis. This is Mary Moran writing as I need to share some great news with you. I have been working

in and fundraising for St. Francis since its inception in 1984. At that time I was a member of a religious congregation, the Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

It was as a Daughter of Mary and Joseph and with support from that congregation, that St. Francis came into being. In 1986 I left for California where I studied psychology and psychotherapy. In 1994 or 1995 I left the congregation and returned to Uganda in 1996 as a laywoman. During my time in the States, St. Francis was under the directorship of Leokadia Kabibi, whom many of you might remember and whom some of you have met during her visit to Germany and Ireland. Leocadia left for the big city of Kampala in 1996 and so when I came back to Uganda I was once more able to get a job in St. Francis. Funding at that time was coming from Germany, mainly through the work of Peter Gehlen, with introductions and references from Fr. Ferdinand Tillmann, Missionary of Africa, from the UK,

under the chairmanship of Alex Palmier, and from Ireland from friends and relatives who remained faithful to their commitments of sponsorship.

From 1996 to this year I have been busy with the daily affairs of St. Francis, in a number of capacities, with of course the support of 21 members of staff (majority Ugandan). The organization has expanded during these years and every step of the way cost money which was generously donated by a wide variety of individuals and organizations from Germany, Canada, Croatia, Italy, Ireland - North and South -, the Netherlands, Uganda, the UK and the USA. None of the money would have come without the work of hundreds if not thousands of generous persons from these same countries, and none of the work could have been done without the commitment of the staff of St. Francis, some of whom have been there even longer than me! Jovita Kamajuni, who replaced Margaret Odit as head of the tailoring school is the longest serving member of the organization.

Peter Gehlen, Alex Palmier, Paul and Mary Sherlock have all served for many many years. Last year Alex, Paul and Mary retired from the management board of St. Francis in the UK, and the financial end was handed over to Martin Grimley, MG Accountants, Armagh, Northern Ireland. Gerard Allen, solicitor, has agreed to be a board member, and Martin has found another few members to be on the English Charities board as well.

I have been wanting to retire from management responsibilities in St. Francis for quite some time. I have been speaking to our Archbishop about this for at least two years. The Archbishop approached the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, with the hope that perhaps they would once more consider taking over the management. After much discussion with the present Ugandan area manager, Sr. Pat Pearson, and with the Congregational Leader, Sr. Helen Lane,

the handover occurred on the 30th July 2015 and following due process. Sr. Christine Ntibarutaye was appointed executive administrator of St. Francis and presently she is completing her six month probation.

The Daughters of Mary and Joseph have committed themselves to giving some other sisters to work in the different departments. I am still director of the Counsellor Training Institute, but I hope and pray that this time next year, I will be able to inform you that this position will have also been filled or at least that we have an assistant director in training.

Sr. Christine has been in management in the congregation for many years, has travelled and studied in Burundi, the Cameroons, Uganda, Switzerland and Ireland. She



speaks four languages fluently. In keeping with tradition she is not only executive manager but she is also the team leader of the project for the prevention of violence against children in schools and homes of the Archdiocese. Hopefully the project will spread to other parts of the country. I know the organization is in capable hands and I will be very happy when all other responsibilities will have been handed over.

I am grateful to God, to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, to our Archbishop, to the Board of Trustees and the staff of St. Francis who have wholeheartedly supported the process. I am grateful to all the donors who have supported us for the last 30 years. Wishing all of you a very wonderful, peaceful season of Christmas. Sincerely and gratefully.

Mary Moran

Greetings from St Francis Family Helper Programme. This is Christine! I started working in St Francis last year in September 2014. I worked as a volunteer for 8 months. I was so touched by the various services offered by St Francis, more especially for the poor, HIV aids victims and orphans.

I got a chance to go through all the departments and see what was happening. As St Francis offers different courses, I was also trained in the Counsellor Training Institute in Personal and Group Transformation and Psychosocial Facilitation and got a certificate accredited by Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi. My gratitude to Mary Moran who is always ready to empower people around her.

In August 2015, Mary Moran handed over St Francis to the DMJ. I am appointed as an Executive Administrator of St Francis Family Helper Programme. I am still new in the office, I am learning and meeting challenges but God is present. Let us keep each other in our prayers. On behalf of St. Francis staff, I would like to express our special gratitude to all of you who are supporting us financially and emotionally.

May this Christmas season bring to you a gift of mindfulness, peace and love.

Sr. Ch. Ntibarutaye

BBB Bwanga

Arienne Schultz

W. G. G. G. G.

Lillian Bwanga

W. G. G. G.

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