



St. Francis Family Helper Programme

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Dear Friends of St. Francis Family Helper Programme, in various corners of the world, from Africa, Europe, North America, Canada and Asia.



Greetings to all of you from St Francis Family Helper Programme. We would like to wish you, your dearest families and friends a happy Christmas and a new year filled with blessings.

We are grateful to our Archbishop, His Grace, Lambert BAINOMUGISHA who recently re-appointed the new Board of Directors for St Francis. With the same spirit we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Board Members for accepting to collaborate with St Francis Family Helper Programme.



Board of Directors

A lot has happened this year of 2024 in St Francis and we would like to share news of these events. We are not forgetting, that most of you, our readers, are among those who make these events happen, because of your generosity and support of all kinds.

St Francis opened the year of activities on Monday 8th January 2024. The day was dedicated to a staff meeting to evaluate the activities of the previous year and plan for the current year 2024.



Staff of St. Francis Family Helper Programme

News from the Departments St. Francis Counsellor Training Institute:





Team of CTI RtoL Bena, Rosette, Rebecca

At St. Francis Counsellor Training Institute, we continue to build on our legacy of fostering exceptional mental health professionals, equipping counsellors with the skills needed to make a lasting impact on communities, training psychosocial facilitators to use participatory methods in their work with communities.

This year 2024, we have celebrated several significant events that demonstrate our commitment to excellence in counselling, trauma recovery, and mental health awareness. These events include our yearly graduation at Uganda Martyrs University, advanced EMDR training by international experts from the Netherlands, staff mental health awareness initiatives, and our annual children's camp—a transformative experience for young minds.

EMDR Training:

This year St. Francis got an opportunity to host **EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)** training led by renowned trainers from the **Netherlands**. EMDR is a therapy that was developed in 1987 but is relatively new in Uganda, has shown great success in helping individuals heal from trauma, anxiety, and PTSD. This specialized training was attended by teams of counsellors from different refugee settlements and host communities including 6 staff members from St. Francis Counsellor Training Institute.

It provided an in-depth exploration of this therapeutic approach, empowering participants to assist clients in processing traumatic memories in a safe and structured way. The Dutch trainers brought a wealth of international expertise, enriching the training experience and enhancing the skills of our team. By incorporating EMDR into our counselling practices, we are able to offer clients a powerful tool for emotional healing.

Graduation at Uganda Martyrs University: The Graduands received their hard earned certificates and diplomas after years of training, ready to embark on their professional journey as counsellors



and mental health advocates and to continue studies with higher degrees.

Mental Health Awareness for Staff: Building a Supportive Workplace. At St. Francis, we understand that in order to provide the best care to others, we must first take care of ourselves. This year, we launched a comprehensive **Mental Health Awareness programme** for our staff, aimed at fostering resilience, reducing burnout, and promoting overall well-being. We thank Sr Rosette Kyogabirwe who facilitated the workshop.

Children's Camp: Healing and growth.



One of the most cherished initiatives at St. Francis was our **Children's Camp**, where young individuals 3-12 years were given a safe space to heal, grow, and express themselves.



The children had a chance to mix and mingle with one another sharing their talents and abilities through singing, dancing, moulding and drawing.

Such occasions don't just end without the children having a moment to share a meal mindfully together in the tradition of St. Francis.



Child Sponsorship Department



L to R Kevina, outreach officer, Lilian Head of Department

We praise God for ending this year well. Sponsored children are very happy because they have found people of good will to help them fulfil their dream of having a brighter future. We thank God and our

sponsors for their generosity. We sponsor 78 children at this time at a cost of 1,538 Euros per year for a best secondary school per student. And for a best primary school, the cost is 626 euros per year and per pupil.

7 of these are completing their ordinary or advanced level this year which means new choices and hard decisions for next year.

We welcome the new sponsors who joined us this year to support the education of children, who without support, would not be able to continue schooling and this, for Ugandan youth is their biggest nightmare. All dream of a good education and a future with more hope and happiness. We are thrilled that some sponsors accepted to continue with their sponsored children for the 3rd level education. Nafula Precious, doing Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery for 5 years and Mercy Patricia, doing a Masters in Secondary Education for 2 years, both students are in Kampala International University. We wish you success in your endeavours.

Because of the generosity of our benefactors we were able to provide school needs and other personal requirements to our sponsored children.



St Francis Vocational Training Institute.



LtoR Hassan, Gift, Bright, Sr.Rosemary and Mukwasibwe

The year 2024 has been good for the VTI department. Though, we still have challenges of accommodation for our students, we hope to raise funds to build a hostel within the coming years..

It was a great joy on the 7th December 2024 when 13 students of SFVTI graduated.



Parents and guardians were very happy to see their children’s skills in fashion and design. As they were empowered, they left ready to go into the world to make a difference in their profession. Once again



congratulations and thank you for being our Ambassadors wherever you will be. We congratulate the Instructors of SFVTI, your parents /guardians and sponsors who brought you to this point.



Students happily wearing the garments they designed, cut and sewed themselves.



Our gratitude goes to Mary Moran, who was present at the graduation ceremony, was our guest of honour and handed the certificates.



Cutting a cake with the graduates



Students modelling their garments

We are glad to inform you that we shall introduce a new course on hair dressing and cosmetology.



This year, we were invited for an exhibition in Kakyeka, our local sports and show grounds. Our students were happy to see different fashions and enjoyed the beauty of fashion and a novel horse ride.



Training programme for catechists and their spouses in Personal and Group Transformation and Spiritual Development.

We are grateful to Missio Munich for their great support. The project activities are still vibrant. The Catechists at St Kalemba are ever indebted to St Francis Family Helper Programme for constantly training them to reflect on their personal lives, their families and their relationships with other people. However, there was a constant appeal from the catechists that much as they benefit from this



training, their spouses at home were missing it. Missio positively responded to this appeal by allowing the training for catechists and their spouses in their parishes.

This year 2024, we started with Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Bubangizi and St Joseph the Worker Buhimba parishes and the training was completed successfully. One of the couples, the man had been a captive of alcohol for so long and had rejected the invitation of his wife to come to the training. When he saw a change in approach and language of his wife, he followed her to see where she was always going to train. This was in the last week of the training. During that time, he was touched and gave his wife a hug to thank her. He also praised the team for bringing a change into his life and family.



This is new life after the training. A big sign of reconciliation.



Two follow-ups and evaluations of previously trained catechists and their spouses in parishes were done and transformation was impressive

in some families whereas others were still trying to integrate the essence of the training into their daily living.



Some felt empowered to improve their life styles and e.g. build better homes. On previous page, see the former house and above see the newly built home.

Other families started to generate income through small projects like chicken rearing



Many couples met challenges in the cultural practice of how resources were shared when they examined Access, Control and Benefits of “Family” Property. Formerly men had much more control and ownership. Through dialogue, honest examination of the status quo, and willingness to change, many such problems were peacefully resolved.

Promotion of Non Violence in Families



Team working in the Misereor Project

The project for promotion of non-violence in families is currently being implemented in the district of Isingiro, south western Uganda. The project target groups are married couples with children in schools, and community leaders in the sub counties of Ngarama, Nyakitunda , Kagarama, Masha and Isingiro Town Council.

The project’s main goal is to improve family relationships by improving relationships between spouses, between parents and children and by strongly advocating with community leaders to work and promote publicly non-violence in families. Some of the notable achievements so far are; There has been a noticeable increase of men’s participation in household work (participating in household chores), there is some relative peace in the families of the beneficiaries and women are testifying that they are happier. Reduction (some have stopped completely) in alcohol consumption has led to increased productivity, reduced violence and theft.

An increase in parents understanding of and provision of children’s developmental needs like beddings, clothing, education has occurred. Their more responsible roles in parenting have created greater bonding with and attachments to their children. They communicate better with their children, respond more consciously to their needs, refrain more from inappropriate disciplinary measures and train them in a more gender balanced way.

The trained couples identified the following as pillars for a strong family.

Having quality and adequate time with all members, with regular family meetings. They also have a strong desire to practice mindfulness

exercises daily, as well as dee, compassionate listening—all of which they learned during the training.

A meeting, organised by the funder of the above project, MISEREOR of Germany, was held in Kampala, on the 3-4th November 2024 for Misereor partners of Uganda. The focus of the meetings was



on local fundraising. Martin, the Misereor Desk Officer and Jana above, were both committed to aggressively promote local efforts to raise funds. We are grateful to Misereor for organising such a workshop. It has opened our eyes to future possibilities, and though it won’t be easy, we shall give it a try.



The above photos show the Misereor partners from Uganda.



A small group of beneficiaries who invited Martin and Jana to their project.

Primary Teachers Training in Personal and Group Transformation, Child Development and Liberation Education.

An MoU between Government Leaders and St. Francis Family Helper Programme, as the project for primary School teachers enters a new district to work for three years was signed in Mitooma District. Mrs. Benardette & Sr. Christine receiving the MoU from the CAO and RDC.



Above is the team for the teachers' project working in Mitooma and Isingiro.

We continue to express our appreciation to Kindermissionswerk for the constant support to this project on Personal and Group Transformation, Child Development and Liberation Education. The same project is being implemented in Isingiro District. 720 Primary School Teachers will be the direct beneficiaries in both districts. The same project is currently being implemented in Nebbi, Northern Uganda and funded by Misesan Cara through Viatores Christi. We thank Mike Grealley and Victor Okonga who came to check on this project in October 2024.



Teachers were invited for a mindful walk, before they started the training day and afterwards shared how they felt.

“I felt calm because I was composed since it was a very slow walking exercise; I was feeling very good because I felt supported by the ground and I could see where I was going; it reminded me of my wedding as I walked slowly with my wife into the hall where the celebration was going to be; I was happy to learn how to walk mindfully because I have never done it; I felt good while walking slowly outside and I was able to see the environment well, the trees and hills outside, something I have never taken keen interest to do. So, I appreciated the nature and God’s creation.”



We thank also the team of teachers from Gulu and Nebbi who came to meet Mike and Victor to discuss the impact of the project on them and their schools.



Some participants showing their wisdom stance.
**“My name is Peace
 I am and I stand for Non-Violence. I embody and**

generate Non-Violence through my work, in service of the children, parents, communities and all beings on the planet”. In 50 years, people will remember me for my stand on Non-Violence.”



We are all called to be happy. Sometimes, we think happiness is a life without challenges. Let all of us learn the meaning of happiness from our Holy Father, Pope Francis. He writes:

"You can have flaws, be anxious, and even be angry, but do not forget that your life is the greatest enterprise in the world. Only you can stop it from going bust. Many appreciate you, admire you and love you.

Remember that to be happy is not to have a sky without a storm, a road without accidents, work without fatigue, relationships without disappointments.

To be happy is to find strength in forgiveness, hope in battles, security in the stage of fear, love in discord.

It is not only to enjoy the smile, but also to reflect on the sadness.

It is not only to celebrate the successes, but to learn lessons from the failures. It is not only to feel happy with the applause, but to be happy in anonymity. Being happy is not a fatality of destiny, but an achievement for those who can travel within themselves.

To be happy is to stop feeling like a victim and become your destiny's author. It is to cross deserts, yet to be able to find an oasis in the depths of our soul.

It is to thank God for every morning, for the miracle of life. Being happy is not being afraid of your own feelings. It's to be able to talk about you. It is having the courage to hear a "no". It is confidence in the face of criticism, even when unjustified.

It is to kiss your children, pamper your parents, to live poetic moments with friends, even when they

hurt us. To be happy is to let live the creature that lives in each of us, free, joyful and simple. It is to have maturity to be able to say: "I made mistakes". It is to have the courage to say "I am sorry".

It is to have the sensitivity to say, "I need you". It is to have the ability to say "I love you". May your life become a garden of opportunities for happiness ... That in Spring may it be a lover of joy, in Winter a lover of wisdom. And when you make a mistake, start all over again. For only then will you be in love with life. You will find that to be happy is not to have a perfect life. But use the tears to irrigate tolerance. Use your losses to train patience.

Use your mistakes to sculptor serenity. Use pain to plaster pleasure. Use obstacles to open windows of intelligence. Never give up Never give up on people who love you. Never give up on happiness, for life is an incredible show."

Sr. Leonidas

I joined SFFHP this year in March 2024. On some occasions, I had visited SFFHP and admired its ever clean, serene and verdant beauty not



knowing that at a certain moment I would be part of this beautiful family and magnificent environment! Thank goodness that all these did not remain as conjectures of a bystander but a reality. I am now part of this family, which I used to admire, serving as an Assistant Executive Director to Sr. Christine Ntibarutaye.

When I officially entered into this family, I was immersed and inducted into one of the important cultures of SFFHP called 'Mindfulness' it is a morning tradition that opens each day. Before we enter our respective offices or begin our activities,

we all gather as a family in the Prayer Room for at least 15-20 minutes for a guided mindfulness exercise and also to receive communication from one another.

This mindfulness connects us with ourselves, with each other and the environment hence, connecting us to the legacy of our Patron St. Francis who was always interconnected with his environment.

St. FFHP is indeed a family whereby all share happy and sad moments together. For example, birthdays, achievements, loss of dear ones and other occurrences.

SFFHP is a multifaceted centre with different heads of departments but all working peacefully in cohesion under one executive Director. It is a staff that is self-driven with exceptional well seasoned and professional psychologist counsellors and other trainers and professionals in varied fields.

It is a centre/ family of open space for persons of all walks of life as one of our nature species portrays it here.



Sometimes, people come in with heavy burdens and with sad faces but go out feeling light and relieved with hope and a smile on their face.

SFFHP is an amazing place of work in that at a certain period the place is full of staff and in another one it is left with just a quarter of staff. This shows our diversification of work for outreach to people in the fields. These include the teachers, catechists, married couples and sponsored children in schools.

I am grateful to each and everyone for the support and mentoring to make me fit in the system and family of SFFHP.

New Members in St. Francis FHP.

We welcome new members, who have joined us this year 2024. May you be safe, may you be healthy, May you live with ease and happiness. May you be free from all pain.



Kabafunzaki Tadias- Public Relations Officer (P.R.O)



Kamugisha Gift, Tutor for St. Francis VTI



Sr. Philomena P Alako DMJ- volunteer



Xavier Musasizi- IT Manager

Visits to St. Francis FHP in 2024

It's always a joy for us to receive visitors in St. Francis. This year we were honoured to welcome



Iris Bildhauer, the Coordinator of EIRENE Organisation that partners with us and sends us volunteers when possible.

are doing they should wear “what we call ATTIRE which stands for”

- A: Accountability**
- T: Transparency**
- T: Trustworthiness**
- I: Innovativeness**
- R: Responsibility**
- E: Effectiveness**



Martin and Jana from Misereor, planting a tree in St Francis at the end of their visit.



We were equally privileged to host the Academic Registrar Reverend Dr. Kisoga Josef Buchana and Mr. Kayondo Basil Deputy Academic Registrar of the Uganda Martyrs University that accredits St. Francis Counsellor Training Institute programmes, and with which the CTI is affiliated. While visiting the CTI, they also met all the CTI students and they told them that in whatever they

As we go on holidays and close this year we have many wishes for you. May the New Year 2025, bring you an abundance of amazing opportunities, beautiful moments and joyful experience.

May your actions and attitudes inspire others.

May you be brave enough to take on and overcome rewarding challenges.

May you find yourself in high spirits and excellent health.

May you love with all your heart and find peace in even the most turbulent of times.

May the love you give always find its way back to you multiplied. And may you forever be filled with the hope and strength necessary to make your dreams a reality.



Before we end this writing, we would like once

again to express our gratitude to all our donors in different capacities. For the ones who lost their beloved ones, may God fill the gape and the once who are sick, we wish them a very quick recovery.

Much love from all of us in St Francis

Sr. Christine Ntibarutaye, Director

Sr. Ch. Ntibarutaye

Mary Moran, Board Member

Mary Moran