



Keeping in touch

Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

OVERSEAS AID INCORPORATED

Dear friends of the OLSH Missions

May 2011

TZANEEN, South Africa at a glance

The Diocese of Tzaneen is situated in the far north of the Limpopo Province of South Africa, the country with the largest number of HIV infections in the world. In the province of Limpopo, 92% live in rural areas and currently has an average HIV/AIDS infection rate of 15% and this rate continues to grow. The diocese has high levels of poverty and the unemployment rate is approx 30.5%. The majority of people live on marginal land and in informal settlement and are very poor.



Orphans and vulnerable children experience an increased risk of death, suffer from emotional distress, malnutrition, inadequate health care, inferior education and are often subject to abuse. They are at a high risk of being exploited for labour and sex trafficking increasing exposure to HIV and, if they flee in pursuit of a better life they are homeless and open to gang bullying from older street youth.

Gender/Traditional beliefs that women are subservient to men are still very strong and the needs of males take precedence over those of women and children, contributing to the spread of HIV. The practice of concurrent multiple sexual partners render women and children vulnerable. The issue of gender inequality has deep cultural roots, and its effects are widespread. Witchcraft is another source of fear and human abuse where the more powerful can take advantage of the illiterate and exploit them. It is a deeply entrenched system in this rural area.

The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart are working to help raise the dignity of each person. This is done through education, live-in care at our children's places of safety, emotional, spiritual and material support of families, distributing anti-retroviral medication to the sick and monitoring their nutrition and overall health.

Srs Sally Duigan and Christine Martin have initiated the Ametur Project, 'Ametur' being a Latin word to do with being loved ... a traditional word used in the Congregation's motto:

**May the Sacred Heart of Jesus
be everywhere loved.**

Mary* is one of many children we have given assistance to over ten years. Her story is here in summary so that you glean an idea of how your donations to us do make a difference to individual lives and thus to the village community. Her eldest sister, is now married and has a job as a security officer thanks to a course we were able to put her through using Overseas Aid donations.

Her brother, was lucky to get a place in community nursing and enjoyed this until he became too sick to work. Her next sister, nursed him at home and was very traumatised when he died. She has been at our Skills' Centre learning to use the computer and to sew. She is waiting to go to a Health Course for twelve months that will give her a chance to get a job as an assistant at a rural clinic or a home-based helper for the dying in the village.

When we first were told about this little family of orphaned children they had no food, no income and no prospects for the future. Thanks to you all that has changed for them and for many other child-headed families because of your generosity to us. We can only promise to pray for you and ask God to bless you.

Sr Christine Martin

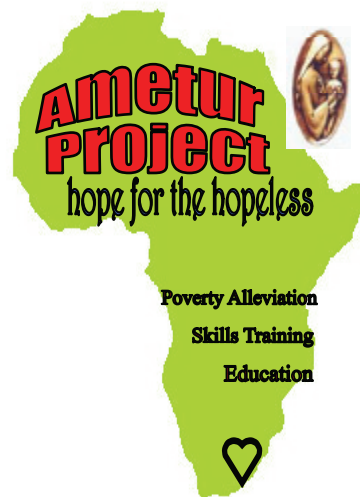
(*Name has been changed to protect the family)



The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Overseas Aid Incorporated is a signatory to the Australian Council For International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct. The Code requires members to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.

www.acfid.asn.au

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are tax deductible**



A project of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. South Africa

Making A Difference

Meeting Mary

Mary* was the youngest girl in this family who had suffered from the loss of both parents due to HIV/ AIDS. Their graves are to be seen in the children's backyard as they were too poor to purchase a plot at the cemetery.



Both young girls were accepted at Bakhita a place of safety while the eldest boy continued at school and the eldest girl, who had missed so much school nursing their parents, came to learn sewing and English and other skills to prepare her for employment.

Mary excelled at primary school and participated in all the weekend activities at Bakhita. Here she is with some of the others showing the results of their cooking afternoon.



Secondary school was a boarding arrangement which continued to keep the environment secure for Mary and her older sister who had begun at St Brendan's too.

All subject reports of Mary's were above average and she was very good at dancing, drama and poetry reciting, winning her age award at the Limpopo eisteddfod.

Mary's Grade 10 was interrupted when she found herself pregnant. Fortunately she delivered a healthy little girl, and was taken in by the young man's family.

We are helping Mary with return to schooling for education is the key to a better future. Sadly her older brother, 24, died of AIDS last July. Mary is in her matriculation year in 2011 and has the ability to go on to University.

After a childhood of sorrow this will be a huge victory. Please keep her in your prayers.

*(*Name has been changed to protect the family)*



There are other orphan girls throughout the Tzaneen Diocese whom we would also like to see back in school or learning skills at our centre so that they have a chance to become employable and perhaps break the poverty cycle. They all need support with food, uniforms, school fees, toiletries, household necessities and the most important ingredient... someone who cares about their welfare and gives them hope to keep trying.

FROM SR MARLENE DEWAR IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

St Gerard's Community Health Worker Training School at Veifa'a PNG (four hours drive on a good day from Port Moresby) has been training health workers since 1968. In 1988 we started training male health workers as well as females, this is a challenge we enjoy.

Training

In PNG most of the professional health workers (trained nurses and doctors) seem to prefer the towns. This is difficult when 85% of the population live in the remote rural villages. The community health workers are trained to work in the remote areas of PNG, this means they have to deal with any health emergency that come their way as well as the day to day health problems and deliveries. The training is competency based. We have sixty six students in training at present. Eighteen students will graduate in June. The students, as part of their training, go out to the villages to work with the people on health concerns in their villages. Last year the students were out for several weeks working in the villages to improve community health. We had an outbreak of cholera in Port Moresby so a big emphasis was placed on basic hygiene. We were lucky to only have one case that came in from Port Moresby sick and was treated and recovered. Many died of cholera around Port Moresby and in other places in the country. It will need constant vigilance as it seems to disappear then flare up again.

Water

We are still working on the Water and Sanitation Project to get safe drinking water to the villages. Since October we have erected eighteen Southern Cross Tanks in the villages. We want to put another eighteen tanks in, but are held up due to the floods in Brisbane. The steel comes from Brisbane for the tanks. A mine polluting the river and ground water is still operating and expanding. Since we have done the project phase one and two, we are having fewer people coming into the hospital. We are actually having empty beds in the hospital which is amazing. I have been working at Veifa'a for over twenty two years. We have been pushing hygiene all these years but with the project the people are much more conscious and taking steps to help themselves more which is good.



The new water tanks at St Paul's Parish Church at Veifa'a, four hours from Port Moresby.

HIV/AIDS

At Veifa'a we have a Voluntary Counselling and Testing Clinic for HIV/AIDS. It has been running since 2005. We are checking all the antenatal mothers to prevent parent to child transmission of HIV. There is a lot of HIV/AIDS in the country. When we find people HIV positive we can give them the necessary treatment. In the beginning we had nowhere for the people to stay in Port Moresby while they were seeing the doctors. It was very difficult because the people were really sick. We could not bring them to Port Moresby then back again in the one day as it was too far and they were so sick. We were able to get a house in Port Moresby for them in 2007. It has been running really well until last year when our funding source, the Clinton Foundation, run out due to the financial crisis. Since then we have been trying all avenues to get funding. The work is really important as we are saving families. We are treating whole families and in doing so are preventing orphans. The parents are able to look after their children. When we find the parents we can get them on the drugs as soon as they need them. The people then live for many years and are able to raise their children. We have couples who have been able to return to work and provide for their families. If you have any extra money it would be appreciated if you can help us in this work.

Other Residents at Veifa'a

At the training school, there are four street children we are looking after. They came from Port Moresby. We are trying to educate them so that they can look after themselves later on and do not turn to crime. The oldest boy, in grade six, won three prizes at the end of the school year. He tries so hard. The student health workers help him with his study. The youngest a girl is very bright. She has just started school this year. The two middle boys are not too interested in study. It is a constant job to keep encouraging them.



2010 Graduation- the Governor-General came for the ceremony – the first time a GG had been to the area.

Building Program

Our present accommodation areas and classrooms are not big enough for the number of students we have. We need to expand. As far as the building program is going, we are still working on it. We are looking at ways to save up the funds. The Prime Minister came to the training school last year and gave us a cheque. The government is willing to open more community health posts in the remote areas so we want to have more health workers where the people are. Many communities do not have a health worker. Mothers are dying in childbirth. PNG has the highest Maternal Mortality Rate in the Asia Pacific Region.

**Thank you for your help. Please keep us in your prayers. We pray each day for all those who help us. God bless. United in His Heart.
Sr. Marlene Dewar**

Could your Family and Friends put on a 'do'?

Rumbalara Estate Winery, in Queensland's Granite Belt, has a fantastic African Rhythm and Reds Day that helps to support our orphans, in particular the child-headed households which are so vulnerable.

It has been a huge success for the three years that Mike and Bobbi Craig, owners of Rumbalara, have been the hosts. They have live African bands who encourage the folk to dance with abandon. This of course works up a thirst! African food and free flowing wine are inclusive in the tickets —650 all pre-sold! Although not compulsory, people are encouraged to enter into the day dressing in African attire and this certainly adds to the spirit of fun.

Michele Cozzi (Sr Christine Martin's sister) and her husband, Tony, are the main stayers in the organizing of the Catholic commitment to 'make money for the missions' selling beer and organizing games. Members from the parishes of Sacred Heart Lyra and St Mary's Wallangarra are the voluntary work force along with some of their friends. Bobbi and Mike (South African born) also gladly donate cases of wine as prizes to the final winners of the games. Those at Rumbalara's day give generously knowing that suffering children are the beneficiaries.

Each year we are sent from \$2000—3000 which is a great effort and a marvelous help. Another facet of this remarkable day is the agreement that bags for the participants be made by the Skills Centre at Tzaneen where older orphan girls and poor rural women come to learn to sew with the aim of beginning their own cottage industry back in their villages. The bags are simple, designed to carry the program and menu.

Taking responsibility for this training and for the welfare of the orphans are the sisters belonging to the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart who have five communities across the Diocese of Tzaneen (situated in the far North of South Africa). Here AIDS is still the biggest killer. Poverty and unemployment takes its toll. The plight of the 200,000 orphans seems, at times, overwhelming and the destitution and suffering of the Zimbabwean refugees, our nearest neighbours, adds another dimension of humanitarian aid. It is a huge challenge for local poor families to welcome the stranger who will take a share of what is such a meager ration of resources ... even the village water or a job they will do for less money.

Sadly exploitation is a reality as is xenophobia.

Zimbabwean youngsters who have crossed the border looking for a better life or for ways of making money to take back to their starving families. Feeding and clothing growing boys is a challenge ... plus getting them to settle into school!



The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, our brother congregation, have set up a shelter for some boys.

Would you like to make a bequest in your will to OLSH Overseas Aid?

If you would like to include the work of our Missions in your will, we will gladly advise your solicitor of the specific terms of the bequest. Alternately, Michael O'Dea AM, of Carroll and O'Dea Lawyers, would be happy to advise you at no cost. He may be contacted directly at 02 9291 7100.

Or would you like to request mourners at your loved one's funeral to donate to OLSH Overseas Aid in lieu of flowers? Both these things can make a significant difference to the way we can help the people in need.