



*Solidarity with  
our sisters in*  
**Africa**

NEWSLETTER Edition 12

Autumn 2022

*“From the bottom of my heart, I thank every one of you for your presence in the life of the Daughters of the Resurrection (from Bukavu, from Rwanda, from Kindu) and for your generosity toward our mission to give assistance and hope to the little ones and underprivileged.”*

*S. Thérèse Namwindo*

In this newsletter, we hope to give you a snapshot of life in the African priories in 2022 and the extraordinary challenges our sisters continue to face.

As you will know there are three African Priors: two in D R Congo – Mirhi-Buvaku and Kindu and one in Rwanda. The two countries border one another.

Violence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo has escalated in recent months, resulting in thousands of people fleeing their villages and hundreds being killed. The situation is complicated. Our sisters report on the worsening situation in their area, the effects of upsurges of violence leading to an increase in people being displaced and consequent effects on health – particularly acute malnutrition in young children.

Amid the rising unrest, tensions between the DR Congo and neighbouring country, Rwanda, have reached an all-time low as the two countries continue to blame each other for crisis in the east. These tensions threaten to undermine on-going peace efforts in the region – prolonging the instability. The sisters are witnessing the effects.

There are no meaningful statistics which can give us a picture of the human cost in lives lost during the COVID pandemic in this part of Africa but the effects on poverty levels have been huge. There is a widespread fear of the vaccine, fuelled by rumours and unreliable medical information shared on social networks. This is leading to hesitancy about vaccines in general. UNICEF and the World Health Organisation have warned of the heightened risk of measles outbreaks and other vaccine preventable diseases, given widening immunisation gaps. This is the context in which our sisters are operating, offering what hope they can, wherever they can, to the people around them.

The Community ask for your continued support and prayer.

## MIRHI – BUKAVU, DR CONGO

You will have read in the Community news that S. Véronique Muhundo was elected Prioress this August. We send her our congratulations and prayers. Véronique has a huge task ahead of her. The Priory is growing, as is their work.



The pastoral and educational work of the sisters seems to be back in full swing, post-COVID lockdown, and is going well despite the situation in the country. The training centre is facing challenges, with too many prospective students for too few places. There are not enough classrooms and there are inadequate resources, for example sewing machines.



*Recent graduates from the Centre de Formation Professionnelle*

We were interested to hear that several deaf pupils have joined the classes run by the sisters. They are following the classes well and are very happy to be learning a trade.

The Nutrition Centre is reporting many new and very complicated cases, which echoes the news we received from Goma.



The Mirhi Priory have a mission house in Brazil. We are very saddened to hear of the death of one of the sisters, who had attended the last General Chapter, S. Laurentia. S. Petronella has been to Brazil for a short period to assist S. Théophile, who remains there.

### Our house in GOMA

The Mirhi priory has lots of smaller houses mainly in the east of Congo. There are two houses in Goma, a town in North Kivu, close to the border with Rwanda. Many of you will know S. Thérèse Namwindo who has been based there for several years now. Thérèse's account of life in Goma this year is troubling.

*"There is so much adversity here in Goma, so our work here is particularly challenging. We have to be present here to try to bring some hope to people and to show that all is not lost, despite the suffering."*

Poverty is on the increase in Goma. Key causes are: the volcanic eruption last year; the COVID pandemic and lockdown; the ongoing conflict and insecurity in the villages.



The eruption of Mount Nyiragongo last year was followed by earth tremors so strong they caused further destruction.

*“We fled, as everyone did, taking nothing with us, but we also had to return because of the malnourished children and the other sick we had at the medical Centre – we couldn’t abandon them”.*

So many houses were destroyed - scorched by the lava - and others badly damaged with huge cracks in the walls. Many people were killed and others injured and so we have seen a huge increase in people visiting the medical centre. There are more orphaned children. They are very weak, malnourished and completely exhausted.



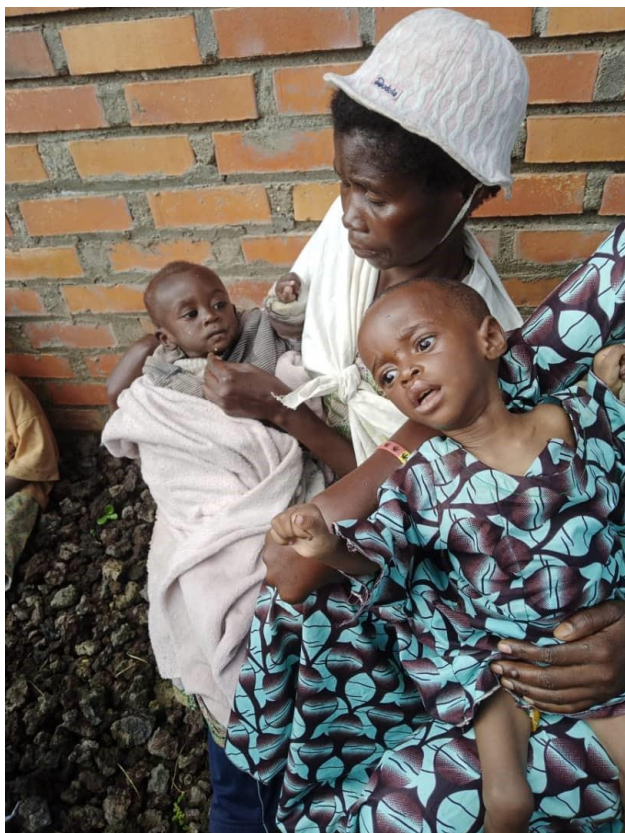
*“Restrictions on movement due to COVID pandemic lockdowns caused huge issues in our country.”*

During the pandemic, prices rose, people could not move about in the normal way to find food. Many people died in their houses, others in hospital. They were not vaccinated because they were afraid of the vaccine. There were of course some who recovered after treatment in the local hospital.

The most concerning issue is the ongoing conflict and insecurity in the villages. We have heard reports on BBC World Service in the last week about the conflict and worsening situation. Many refugees and displaced people are making their way to where the sisters live on the periphery of Goma. They are suffering from extreme poverty, weakened by hunger and illness.

There are 6 sisters working in the Diocesan health centre. Thérèse tells us that the huge cost of treating children with malnutrition is often a subject which is raised at meetings in the Diocese. It has been mentioned as a ‘huge burden’ on resources. Thérèse insists:

*“The Community are steadfast in their commitment to these young children and their poor mothers. We are in Goma primarily to support them and we will never abandon them; they are part of our identity”.*



The sisters currently operate out of the Diocesan centre but would ideally like to build their own centre, on their own land to avoid any surprises by the Diocese in the future! It is a place away from the path of the volcano.

They have started tentatively, with a couple of rooms, to take in some of the malnourished children, orphans, pregnant women, refugees and people displaced by the war, but they lack the means to continue.

Apart from that they have an immediate need for milk to feed the young children and are beginning a sort of small bakery where they are making bread for the poor and the sick.

They are also urgently looking for some lengths of material – leatherette – to put over some old beds, where they treat orphans and children with malnutrition. For hygiene reasons they need a material which is easy to wash and durable.

*“And on top of all of that, we know we have nothing. So we try and give a bit of hope to these vulnerable people, just with our presence there, giving our time, our strength and above all our love.”*



*S. Bénite comforts a 7-year-old orphan, suffering from malnutrition*

## KINDU, D R CONGO

S. Anne Marie, who for years has supplied us with lots of photos and news from Kindu has been seriously ill. We heard earlier in the year that she was in hospital in Goma getting treatment and we were delighted to get a Whatsapp message from her recently after a long time without news. She is back in Kindu and getting treatment there. She is unable to walk and has intermittent pain but she says she is slowly improving. Her health issues have highlighted concern about the cost of healthcare for the sisters.



*S. Anne-Marie with S. Thérèse at General Chapter in 2017*

S. Jacqueline, current Prioress in Kindu, is now sending her news via Whatsapp, including a couple of videos! She tells us that the situation in Kindu is calmer than in the east of the Congo. However, the economic situation in the country is hitting them all.



*S. Jacqueline*



*Sisters work in the fields with young mothers*

The sisters do what they can to assist the local people – they take food to the elderly, provide primary medical care and have an involvement in the local schools. The sisters have a particular focus on helping young women and children. Many of the women will have become mothers at a very young age, before they finish their secondary education. The sisters teach them to grow food and other skills to provide for themselves and their families.

The Priory building is completed, but they haven't finished building the living area for the young sisters – the Noviciat – due to the exorbitant cost of materials. Apart from a general rise in prices, it is because many of the materials in their part of the world have to be transported by air; their roads are not always passable and vehicles are in short supply.

With regard to coronavirus, she tells us that some of the sisters have had their vaccination, including S. Jacqueline herself, but many people have refused it. As in other areas in DRC, a main consequence of the pandemic which confronts them is the huge rise in prices – food and other resources.

The new Priory is growing. There are now 24 sisters, 5 novices and 5 postulants. Their work has also increased.

They need help in the fields but can't afford to pay workers. They also make communion hosts to sell to parishes. The business could expand but they desperately need money to buy the machines to fabricate the hosts.



*Novice sisters collecting firewood and manioc (cassava) - a staple in their diet*

## RWANDA

The Rwandan priory also has a lot of work to do and with many challenges. Here is an outline from S Marie Rose.

### Muhanga

S Marie Rose sent us pictures of the orphaned children in Muhanga. Some of you will have been following their story.



With money received from UK benefactors, the sisters have been able to buy two small houses for the children in Muhanga. The houses are close to the Community's house and school so it has made supervision of the children much easier for the sisters. The houses are not well appointed but the sisters will be able to sort that out themselves. The purchase of the houses has lifted a rental burden from the sisters' shoulders as they now only have one other small house to pay rent on. The children and the sisters are delighted and extremely grateful to their friends in the UK.



The sisters also run an ‘inclusive’ school in Muhanga; they have many deaf and non-verbal children, who learn alongside children without disabilities. Some of the newer pupils have been learning sign language and in September they began lessons with the other children which they have been able to follow without any problems. When I visited back in 2018, I was struck how EVERY teacher in every class was signing their lessons.



S. Marie Rose informs us that the government are aiming to move orphaned children into ‘guardian angel’ families to take in the children. It is difficult to get foster families for the children in Muhanga due to their disabilities, but nevertheless the sisters have to prepare the children for this possibility – to help them understand the benefits of living with a family.



## Kimihurura & Busasamana

The running of the crèche at Kimihurura is back to normal. The sisters look after children whilst their parents are at work and at Busasamana, near the Congolese border, there are several new postulants. It is good to see life getting back to normal after COVID.



## Masaka

The school at Masaka has grown substantially. The kindergarten and primary school together now total 450 pupils, a huge leap from around 200 in 2018. The Community is now providing a midday meal, which the children eat in the classroom. We are also thrilled to see from the photos that the pupils now have playing-out time at school.



Thank you all for your donations and prayer.

## FUNDRAISING

We thank all of you who have given donations for Africa over this past twelve months – either by regular or one-off donations and by supporting a fundraising event.

We note in particular the Everett-Clayton family for their mammoth task of making up delicious tea boxes in the summer. This year the money raised was £2,000.

We also thank Annie Callaghan and the SVP in Colchester and the Justice and Peace group in Melbourne for their fundraising initiatives in support of our African sisters.

It is these regular events which help the sisters on a consistent basis.

### **‘LIGHT A CANDLE FOR AFRICA’ - ADVENT APPEAL**

Our Advent 2021 fundraiser for Africa raised an impressive total of £3,426.25. We are running the appeal again in 2022. We hope you will be able to support it.

This is how it works:

- You donate whatever you are able by using the [DONATE](#) button which you can find on the CONTACT page on our website. Please put in the description ‘LIGHT A CANDLE FOR AFRICA’.
- Or send a cheque payable to Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre to the Community at 74, Howe Close, Colchester CO4 3XD - put ‘LIGHT A CANDLE FOR AFRICA’ on the envelope.
- Send your prayer/intentions to the Community, via email Pauline McAloone at [projects@canonesses.co.uk](mailto:projects@canonesses.co.uk) or addressed to Pauline at above address.
- Your intentions will be added to our prayer tree and the Community will light a candle every week of Advent and will pray for your intentions and for the sisters in Africa.



**THANK YOU ALL**

