



Shyira Trust

Registered Charity Number 1118979

Patron: The Rt Revd Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool

Newsletter, March 2016

In January and February 2016 Trustee Revd Jane Morgan MBE spent two weeks in Rwanda. She was accompanied by her husband Peter, the Trust's gift aid officer and by Dr Dominic Bray a Consultant Psychologist and member of St Philip and St Paul with Wesley Church, Southport. This newsletter is based on the meetings and discussions they had while in Rwanda.

Child Headed Families.

The Trust has been supporting 21 child headed or orphan families in Shyira for 14 years. These are families where both parents have died and the children live in the family house. One of the children will have had to give up school to take on the role of parent, or family head, and so will not be educated and not able to get clear of poverty.

Over the years all houses have either been rebuilt or totally renovated by the Trust. With no income the children were not able to maintain their homes. The homes had small plots of land where the children could grow food, so sheep or goats have been provided. We gave the children furniture, cooking facilities, mosquito nets, blankets and other facilities for their daily living.



Education is very important for young people living in a deprived community. The problem for the child headed families was that fees had to be paid for those attending school and that appropriate clothing, or possibly even school uniform, was essential. We were able to help by providing for fee payment and uniform purchase. Some of the children were funded for school attendance through our sponsorship programme.

By the end of 2014 most younger members of the families had completed schooling and moved on, with some going to university. That left the family heads who did not have the education or skills to enhance the quality of their future lives. We paid for those who wanted to attend a technical school through 2015 so they could learn trades that would be of value in their communities and they may have a source of income. Jane and her group met with the eleven young women and nine young men who benefited from the course and who were very grateful for the opportunity given them. We have now sent money to equip all twenty with tools and equipment to get them started in the work they have chosen to do.

The support of child headed families has now been satisfactorily concluded. It is good to see a positive outcome from the Trust's support and partnership.

Maternity Hospital.

Maternity services at Shyira were originally provided as part of the general hospital by Ruanda Mission in the 1930s. The whole hospital was well regarded and we are told that people would travel quite long distances to be treated there. However, following the genocide of 1994 and conflict that continued to 2000 the hospital was almost derelict, and had been downgraded to a health centre when Trust members visited Shyira in 2000 and 2001.

St. Luke's church in Formby undertook the restoration of maternity services and a new maternity building was opened in 2004 amid great celebration. With the formation of the Shyira Trust it took on responsibility, and funded the training of two midwives, with the first qualifying in 2009. Since then there has been just one maternal death in Shyira maternity hospital, far below what may be expected in Rwanda. The maternity hospital became very popular and an extension or new hospital became essential because of overcrowding.

Two other factors then influenced decision making. Firstly the government had introduced new quality standards for maternity hospitals, reflecting what is expected in more developed countries. Secondly there was a realisation by the government that most of Shyira hospital was in a poor condition and in need of renewal. Originally plans were produced to rebuild the hospital in the same location on Shyira Hill, but at the time of Jane's visit it had



been decided to rebuild on flat ground at the bottom of Shyira Hill but still in Shyira District. Access will be improved for people from the surrounding countryside and construction will be simplified. The picture shows how the entrance to the maternity suite of the hospital will appear. The existing hospital will be converted into a health centre and will be linked by a new road to the hospital below it.

The estimated cost of the hospital rebuilding is £3million, with the government paying £2million. Because the hospital is a church facility the diocese will be expected to pay £1million to retain its overall ownership of the hospital, something considered important because of its history. The Trust will continue its commitment to maternity services and will support the proposals as far as it is able.

Kivu diocese, which contains Shyira parish, has few resources and will need to borrow money to pay its million pounds, and the Trust has been asked if it can help. We explained that as a small charity even the £300,000 for the originally proposed maternity building was doubtful, that money raised so far has been for the maternity building, and that we must keep true to our commitment to donors and use money for the purpose it was given. However, we do feel that part of the land purchase for maternity is an essential part of the provision and have sent £31,300 for that purpose. We will do what we can to raise money to help the diocese by retaining our commitment to part funding the maternity section of the proposed building.

People in hospital in Rwanda must have a carer with them—someone who will cook and care for them. Maternity carers had a small building on the slope below the existing hospital, but it was a health hazard because it filled with smoke from the cooking fires. Through its safe motherhood programme the Trust has provided funding for combined kitchen and other accommodation. Eventually the kitchen will become part of the health centre.

Children's Centre.

The children's centre was provided through the Trust and formally opened on 16 February 2014. Jane has reported on its use. Sundays it is very busy, providing a place for children to meet while the adults are taking part in a church service. With 400 children in the Sunday School the centre can be quite full.

During the week the centre is used by children and young people and some choirs may practise in it. The centre is undoubtedly well used and is providing the intended facility for children and young people.

The Trust has sent money for equipment and facilities and we feel that our provision of a children's centre is now complete. It may be appropriate for us to continue to provide equipment through alternative gifts, remembering that the children will probably be using consumable resources; pencils, paper, text books, etc.

Schools.

Two schools still benefit from support. Jane and her group met with 65 sponsored students at Groupe Scolaire. Those meetings are always quite emotional as the young people express their thanks to sponsors. Letters were taken for the sponsored children, and replies were brought back. The children are always grateful to receive letters, and any who do not get a letter are very disappointed.



When we started the sponsorship programme the children in the school were all boarders. With the development of the country the school has become mostly a day school financed by the government. However, there are still costs for families sending children to school, and with so much extreme poverty in the community many families are unable to pay. People who sponsor a child are making it possible for that child to attend school and are giving him or her a possible way of reducing the family poverty.

The other school we have supported is Shyira Primary. We have carried out a complete restoration of the buildings and provided desks and other furniture. The one outstanding item has been the painting of internal walls—that was not considered important with so many needs in the community but we did persuade the school to paint some walls, and we provided funding to make it possible. The school would now like to paint the remaining walls.

There was an exchange of letters between children at St. Philip and St Paul Primary School in Southport and children of Shyira primary school.

Widows/Mothers Union.

The Mothers Union, St Mark's Church, Shyira, has approx. 100 members. Pastor's wife, Peace Ruzindana, is the President. Many of the members are widows, and have little or no income and means of supporting themselves. Peace has grouped them into small 'families', who pool their resources. Jane was able to take blankets and mosquito nets, knitting wool and needles and money for the women. More money has been sent through the bank to purchase mattresses and essentials.

Butaka.

Butaka is an impoverished community about 8,500 feet up the slopes of Mount Karisimbi, a dormant volcano and the highest mountain in Rwanda. The community is approximately 2km from the border between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Episcopal church is working to establish a presence in communities like Butaka and Moses, who had served as a lay minister in Shyira, was asked to go to Butaka and help plant a church there.

We know Moses well from his time in Shyira and have great respect for his work. He has a wife and family that includes two orphans adopted from his extended family. He has almost no income—clergy are paid a proportion of church collections and in a poor community that does not yet have a church building collections are very small and his stipend is less than £10 a month. Trust members have been providing financial support for Moses and his family.

St Luke's church with the Shyira Trust has been raising funds to build a church/community centre and a home for Moses. Land has been purchased in the corner of a Pyrethrum field and building work is well under way—it is the practice in Rwanda to spend money as it becomes available and then to wait until more is available. Using local labour as far as possible the whole community benefits from money going into the community. The walls are now



almost built and roofing sheets have been purchased. In the picture you can see steel rods built into the walls. They are there to protect against the earthquakes that can occur because the region is volcanic, and more steel rods will be added around the top of the walls.

Money sent to Rwanda.

“It's all about the people” said a friend. He was right, and many Trust supporters have developed personal friendships with people in Rwanda. We have come to have Rwandese friends and we see the effects of poverty on the way they live. As fellow Christians we have been moved to help by developing relationships and by sending money for specific projects, some of which are described in this newsletter. The Rotary Club of Formby has sent about £56,000 and some individuals have privately sent money to friends.

The Trust's latest money transfer was £41,235. It included individual-to-individual gifts, money for the new maternity (page 2), for the child headed families (page 1) and for Moses (above) as well as school sponsorship money (page3), alternative gifts and some support for ministry.

That latest money transfer brings the total money sent through the Trust, and before 2006 St Luke's Church, to an amazing £348,482.

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