

MEDICAL MISSION NEWS

Winter 2008

All about Ethiopia

Walburga

Carol Senait

Belaynesh

Joni

Pia



German MMS Walburga is the coordinator of Medical Mission Sisters in Ethiopia. Here she writes about MMS in that country where we have eleven sisters, three Ethiopian, three German, two American, two Indian and one Filipina.

It is rather new for MMS in Ethiopia to be working very much within our Church structures. Our contribution is much appreciated and this encourages us to share our gifts with our co-workers, other religious communities and in the parishes wherever we can.

Inge

Elise

Elaine

Nigist

Rita

Addis Abeba



working and celebrating together

My favourite involvement is assisting the young pastoral workers in our Addis Abeba diocese in developing their vision and mission, objectives and strategies in their respective departments. Because of my other responsibilities as district coordinator, as coordinator for the business of Attat Hospital in Addis and being part of the major religious superiors' conference, I don't have so much time for the diocese but I do make an effort to be there at least two days a week. When I started after my return to Ethiopia in 2005 there were only a very few pastoral workers but now we have a good number of young committed workers. The Pastoral Letter of our Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia "The Church we want to be" inspired me to begin this work. After having taught midwifery for eleven years in the government's centralized school of nursing, at my advancing age I can now be a "spiritual midwife". Together with the church leadership and the mostly

young pastoral workers we developed our own elements for a common vision of the Pastoral Action of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia. Almost all of them are non-professionals, and many of them are continuing their education in extension programs. There is ministry for laity, youth, bible correspondence, "healthy choice"(youth to youth education on HIV/AIDS), apostolate for the sick, formation of catechists, laity council and pastoral council, communication and library, prison ministry and justice and peace.

Lay groups from the parishes join us in programs that we coordinate such as a youth group called "EVOL (Eagle's Vision Of our Life). The EVOL group has as one of their objectives: "To promote awareness and a responsible attitude about the environment and about health problems and how to solve them." This is quite ambitious, and action and results are not forthcoming as envisioned, yet they do not give up.



Walburga at the Felseta Mariam Feast

Recently they started to produce their own candles as a way of generating income. They also plant small gardens in the parishes and give health education especially about HIV/Aids and Fertility Awareness to their peer groups.

The Felseta Mariam group (Felseta Mariam is the Feast of the Assumption of our Lady in August) with a few hundred members arose from the desire for spiritual growth and to promote spiritual growth among laity. The Christians fast before these big feasts. Since this prayer and fasting helps them so much, they encourage each other to be really serious about it, and organise input for prayer and prayer times and bible sharing etc. They also assist the sick to attend mass and receive the Sacraments and organize pilgrimages. Pilgrimages mean they visit and participate in the celebrations of the patronage feast of the different parishes in all the dioceses. Both Belaynesh and Senait have given

talks on these occasions. We have only 19 Catholic Parishes. The number of Catholics being small, they visit each other on these occasions. About 10 buses or more may travel from Addis on such days.

More satisfying is the output of the Bible correspondence group, which was initiated by one of the Capuchin Fathers during his studies in France. From there he sent Bible lessons which are being distributed throughout Ethiopia in the Amharic language. There have already about 5000 subscribers. To understand our efforts to reach the faithful in all our dioceses, you need to look at a map and see the size of the 10 dioceses. Addis Abeba is the biggest and covers an approximate area of 253,000 sq. km. with a population of 26,000,000 of which the number of Catholics is only about 23,000. (Orthodox Christians are about half the population and Muslims the other half. Protestant Christians are more on the increase than Catholics.



Senait

Ethiopian MMS Senait is the coordinator of Social Rehabilitation and Development at the National Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (ECS) and relates in this capacity with all the other 10 dioceses of Ethiopia. At the moment she is heavily involved in trying to rehabilitate the people, especially the youth, who are living and begging in the streets of Addis Abeba, trying to persuade them to return to their home areas, a rather impossible task. However all the agencies, including the government are determined and join in this together. Senait is part of a number of

Addis Abeba



Belaynesh

inter-faith prayer groups involved in urban development. She also keeps up our connection to the United Nations here in Addis.

American MMS Carol is teaching English at Cathedral High School, but more than teaching she is now supervising the younger teachers and developing beautiful textbooks. She is also very clever in using the English medium to give some value education to young people. Carol has a great love and commitment to help the seminarians of the Major Seminary to learn good English and use it well.



Carol & Elise

Ethiopian MMS Belaynesh is the head of the Peace and Justice desk of our huge Addis Abeba diocese, a very new mission of our diocese, and she uses her skills to bring awareness of peace and justice issues to the youth in some schools, to parishioners and to political leaders.

Our diocesan secretariats have a pastoral activities wing and a wing for social and development activities, which are mainly liaison offices with the different government ministries for agreements on projects etc. Though our membership is small, our activities, especially social and

development activities are a great witness. Our schools and health services are very much appreciated. In fact, our pastoral activities have always been rather in the background, because all the missionaries cannot have a work and residence permit as pastoral workers but have to have a profession that cannot yet be covered by nationals and work in it. These activities make us extremely busy and leave us very little time and energy for the spiritual side, which is painful, but as long as we do our work with love, I believe that is also very spiritual.

Wolisso



Provision of safe water - a borehole

American Medical Mission Sister Elaine Kohls writes about the most recent MMS involvement in Ethiopia

After many years of search and deliberation by the Ethiopian Catholic Church along with the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS), St. Luke Catholic Hospital and College of Nursing was inaugurated in September 2000. MMS were involved from the beginning. The Chairman of the Ethiopian Bishops' Conference requested the MMS to release me from my role as administrator of Attat Hospital to be the general manager of the new hospital in Wolisso. After planning I moved to Wolisso. Along with six other Sisters from four other Congregations I began the work of setting up and starting both the hospital and college of nursing in April 2000. Indian MMS Pia Poovan, who had

worked as a doctor in Attat for 21 years was asked to help out in Wolisso and she joined in 2002.

The construction and furnishing of the hospital and college of nursing was a gift of the Episcopal Conference of Italy to the Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia. The local government and people of Wolisso contributed 83 hectares of land with five office buildings. Doctors with an Italian based international NGO funded the construction and furnishing of the hospital and college of nursing. The college of nursing is established to train nurses to work in the clinics and hospitals located in remote, rural areas of the country, both for the Catholic Church and for the Oromia Regional Health Bureau which sponsors nine candidates each year. As of August 2008, 338 nurses have completed their diplomas. This group also



In the School of Nursing

includes health assistants who have been upgraded to clinical nurses in collaboration with the regional health bureau.

The primary objective of the hospital is to improve the health status of the community by providing both curative and preventive health services. It is the only hospital in the area and serves a population of about 1.2 million. The hospital presently has 144 beds with an occupancy rate of over 88%. Medical, surgical, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, ophthalmology and orthopaedic services all have full time specialists (Ethiopian and expatriates). ENT and plastic surgeons render services periodically. The hospital services continue to expand and over the past five years HIV/AIDS diagnosis, prevention, treatment and care have become a major activity of the hospital.

The public health services include maternal and child care including antenatal and under five clinics, health education, a maternity waiting area for high risk mothers, a nutrition rehabilitation unit, and immunization program, and outreach services to the rural areas including the provision of safe water supplies and construction of health posts. My own special interest and training is in international development and I am wholeheartedly involved in the ongoing development of the public health services.

Financial support for the services of the hospital is from patient fees (30%), the Italian Bishops' Conference (12%), the Oromia Health Bureau (20%) and private donors. The college of nursing tuition fees are from the sponsors of the nursing students.



Pia with paediatric patients

At this juncture when I conclude almost thirty years of service in Ethiopia and retire to India, I want to express my deep gratitude for the education I received from grammar school to the College of Surgeons of England. I am indebted to the MMS, England, the Mercy Sisters and the many hospitals and doctors who trained me. I had the privilege to serve a desperately needy and often poor section of the population. A special thanks to those who supported me in my recent attempt to raise a Millennium Fund for emergencies for Wolisso Hospital and all those who will continue their support.

*Thank
You!*

Attat



An Urgent Case

German MMS surgeon Rita writes:

It is late afternoon in the outpatient department of Attat Hospital in Southern Ethiopia. I am wondering whether we will finish with today's patients as there seem still so many waiting. A girl is pushed in on a trolley. Mother is very upset. I ask them to stop crying because otherwise I cannot hear what they need to tell me. 14 year old Desta had an appendix removed two years ago in our hospital. Yesterday she developed abdominal pain and became very sick. The girl is admitted, her mother with her. Later in the night it becomes quite obvious that Desta needs an operation but her mother has no money; they came unprepared because it was so sudden. She does not want an operation for her daughter. We bargain a while and settle that I will do the operation to save her daughter's life and that we will look into the money later. In these situations I am always grateful for our benefactors who enable us to help people who cannot pay their full hospital bill. No emergency patient is ever turned away because of lack of funds. The adhesions in Desta's abdomen which were causing the problem, are released. Next day during rounds she is complaining a lot about the gastric tube through her nose but generally she feels better. After four days she is already eating bread and tea and she returns home after a week. They had paid 100 birr (£5) when admitted but it seemed that they really did lack money. A big thanks goes to our friends and benefactors from Desta and her mother!!!!

Attat Hospital



*German MMS
Rita*



*Filipina MMS
Toni*



*Ethiopian MMS
Nigist*



*German MMS
Inge*

Attat is a small rural hospital 187 km from the capital Addis Abeba. Medical Mission Sisters started it 39 Years ago. We have a unique combination of preventive and curative services. We want to provide basic health care for the rural poor who cannot afford to go to private clinics. The hospital also has an extensive and successful Village Development Program, a water scheme with 145 wells, women's groups (for 2622 women) and immunization (EPI) and antenatal care programmes.

The hospital serves a population of 800,000 and has 65 beds and 168 Ethiopian employees, of whom 30 are working with 26 villages in the area and

in the water program. 60% of the running expenses are generated from patient's contributions and 40% come from donations.

We average 250 patients a day in the out-patients' department. About 10% of these patients need admission and the average stay is 3-4 days; our occupancy rate is 92%. Most have problems in pregnancy and child birth or infections like malaria, pneumonia or urinary problems. We have more than 1700 deliveries per year (63% complicated) and one third need a Cesarean Section.

In order to keep costs down we have a subsidized program for mothers. Women who had at least two antenatal

visits get a flat rate of 30 birr (1,5) for whatever needs to be done with no further bill. We feel that the program works well, especially our "Maternity Waiting Area" (MWA). This is a house for expectant mothers at the end of their pregnancy. They get a bed and a blanket and for the rest they look after themselves. When labor starts they go over to the delivery room which is 3 minutes away. The infrastructure of rural Ethiopia is very poor. The difficulties in reaching a road and then getting a car to take you to the hospital are often immense. It is touching to witness how the women encourage a mother whose baby dies. They say " Next time you come early to

the waiting house and then you will have a living child". Such mouth to mouth propaganda is very important.

Attat hospital is also a center for HIV/AIDS care in Southern Ethiopia. 7213 HIV tests were done in one year. 460 AIDS patients are on Anti-Retroviral-Therapy and 973 HIV positive persons are enrolled for possible future therapy.

Health education is an integral part of all our activities. The patients waiting in the OPD and the mothers from the Maternity Waiting Area get health education while waiting. Also each meeting of the women's groups has health education, mostly as a drama that the women perform as part of the meeting.

Joy at Christmas and in 2009



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A LIVING LEGACY

The care and concern that you have shown for the needy and suffering during your life-time can live on in a special way through a gift made in your will. Legacies can be specified for a project or area of the world in which you have special interest or they can be left unspecified, to be used wherever needed most.

All correspondence regarding wills to be sent to 109 Clitherow Avenue, London W7 2BL

STAMPS

We would like to thank everyone who has sent stamps to Mr Dixon for us. He really does a tremendous job by selling them and has been making amazingly worthwhile amounts of money for our mission in this way.

OBITUARY

Please pray for our benefactors who have died recently:

Mrs. May Hegarty, Canada, cousin of Sister Rita Syron

Mrs Winifred Pakes, Worthing, West Sussex

Mrs Maureen Mateunas, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire - died in October 2007, only notified now

Mrs S Huggins, St Clair, Trinidad – died in November 2007, only notified now

Mrs Josephine Toy, Falkirk, Shropshire

Thank you for your support and concern. Please pray for Medical Mission Sisters working in: Belgium, England, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, the Netherlands, Uganda, USA, Venezuela.

FAIR TRADE – FAIR PRICES FOR THIRD WORLD PRODUCERS

Tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, bananas, mangoes, pineapples, fruit juice, wine, sugar, snacks and biscuits. They should be available in your local supermarket with the fair-trade label. If not, ask the manager why not!