



The Prophetic Witness

A PUBLICATION OF ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS IN UGANDA
(ARU SECRETARIAT)

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Editorial >>>



Immaculate Tusingwire, MMS
ARU Communication Manager

Dear Sisters and Brothers
in Christ,

As we continue to journey together in this Jubilee Year of Hope, we give thanks for the many signs of life, renewal, and communion. We are coming to the close of this Jubilee year and this edition, captures some of the Jubilee year reflections and of course inspiring stories from our various networks and programs.

We are delighted to introduce a new section dedicated to vocation stories, offering a glimpse into the personal journeys that sustain our collective mission. This story, and the ones which will follow, are a reminder that vocation begins in the quiet call of God and blossoms

through daily fidelity and joyful service.

In this edition, we also feature a spotlight congregation, celebrating their existence, charism, history, and contribution to the Church and society. Each edition we will be highlighting one congregation. If you want yours to be next, reach out to us.

We continue to thank the ARU Radio Maria team that sustains 'THE BEATITUDES', an ARU Radio Maria program which airs every Saturday at 5pm. We urge you to continue listening in. A reminder that we have a slot for Vocation Animation of different congregations. Reach out to us if you wish to share about your congregation.

As ARU Communication team, we continue to collate and share these

stories with reverence. For in each narrative lies the quiet pulse of our shared mission—the Gospel made visible in our diverse charisms and ministries.

Grateful to the editorial Team; Mr. Benedict Mukoni, ARU communication officer and Sr. Justine Nalugya, IHMR, ARU Assistant Secretary General for working so hard to see that we have this newsletter ready for you.

If you have a story to share with others, kindly reach out to us at aru-communication2@gmail.com

May this newsletter inspire us to keep the flame of hope alive, in our communities, ministries, and in our hearts, as we continue to build a more synodal, compassionate, and hope-filled Church.

We remain united in mission and prayer.

The Beatitude Hour

With the Association of Religious
in Uganda (ARU)

Now Airing Every Saturday
Live on 103.7 FM, Radio Maria Kampala

5:00PM - 6:00PM E.A.T

Jubilee of Hope for Consecrated life; Prayer, Faith in Action and Active Hope



Some of the religious in Kampala Vicariate share a light moment shortly after a reflection on the this Jubilee year of hope, 2025. Courtesy photo

By Sr. Immaculate Nakato, SMR

The Jubilee year is slowly coming to a close and it has been joyfully celebrated worldwide. In Uganda, the consecrated persons have celebrated the Jubilee of Consecrated life in different Ecclesiastical Provinces.

In Kampala Archdiocese, over 400 consecrated persons gathered at Namugongo on February 2nd, 2025, for the opening celebration. The theme was: “With the Ugandan Martyrs, Anchors of Hope, we celebrate our Consecration and Renew. Our Hope” facilitated reflection by Sr. Justine Naluggya-IHMR. From the official opening up to now, the four Vicariates also commemorated the Jubilee Year under the theme:

“Together we can build the Present and Future with Hope, Peace and Reconciliation”, animated by Rev Fr. Anthony Kibira. Each Vicariate reflected on how they could live out the call of the Jubilee in their specific contexts Hope, Peace and Reconciliation”, animated by Rev Fr. Anthony Kibira. Each Vicariate reflected on how they could live out the call of the Jubilee in their specific contexts.



In Entebbe Vicariate, members expressed a deep desire for inner healing, acknowledging that most

of them have been struggling with a form of spiritual imprisonment. They also recognized the need to deepen their commitment, attitudes, and approaches to teaching Catechism, as shortcomings in this area have contributed to the loss of youth to other denominations, with claims that the religious did not do enough to root them firmly in Catholic doctrine. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of allowing the Lord to work within them by returning to the original inspirations of their founders through prayer

When Mitula Maria Vicariate came together, they also planned some activities for the Jubilee year. Mpigi Deanery resolved to visit Mpigi Prison, while Mitula Maria Deanery planned a visit to Kankobe Children’s Home, bringing items such as soap, sugar, rice, cooking oil, loaves of bread, and other necessities. And these were carried out.

The practical steps suggested by Kampala Vicariate include praying always for one another, setting aside time for a day of recollection together as a denary, and making regular visitations, especially to members who are sick. They also suggested reaching out through charitable acts such as visiting the Motherless Babies’ Home in Nsambya, offering prayers and presence to the sick in hospitals, sharing with refugees, Visit slums of Kiganda and Acholi quarters, visit to Luzira prison and the Children’s remand home in

Wakiso Vicariate expressed their desire to walk as pilgrims of hope, to be witnesses of peace, and to practice charity within and beyond their communities. They committed themselves to forgiveness, to fostering a synodal and compassionate style of leadership, and to manifesting faith so clearly that all who encounter them may experience the love of God. As a Vicariate, they agreed to organize an activity that would bring them together, enabling them to know one another better and to support those in need. Communities of consecrated persons also resolved to present to parishioners and well-wishers the beauty of the different charisms within

the Catholic Church, and to engage in concrete charitable activities as a sign of their shared mission.

Procession from Mapeera Nabunnya Pilgrim Centre, Lubaga at 9.30am followed by Eucharistic celebration at 10.am Naggulu.

While some Ecclesiastical provinces have already had an official closing of the year, Kampala Archdiocese will have their closing celebration on November 8th 2025, at Lubaga Cathedral, starting with a



Featured Institute

Medical Mission Sisters Celebrate 100 Years



Some of the Medical Mission Sisters at the occasion share a memorable lighter moment with the Bishops. Photo by MMS.

Sr. Immaculate Tusingwire, MMS

30th September 2025 marked exactly 100 years since the foundation of the Medical Mission Sisters on 30th September 1925.

In Uganda the sisters celebrated the Centenary on 13th September 2025 in Arua Diocese, Adjumani. On the same day, three medical Mission sisters pronounced their perpetual profession of vows and a Rehabilitation Centre for persons with disabilities was also officially opened.

The event was graced by the presence of three Bishops; **Rt. Rev. Sabino Ocan Odoki, the Bishop of ARUA** who was also the main celebrant, **Archbishop Emeritus John Baptist Odama** of Gulu Archdiocese and **Rt. Rev. Sanctus Lino Wa-**

nok, Bishop of Lira Diocese.

The Association of Religious in Uganda, (ARU) was well represented with the presence of the President, **Rev. Fr. John Bosco Kamoga**, together with the Secretary General, **Sr. Jane Yatuha**, OLGC and the Assistant Secretary General, **Sr. Justine Naluggya**, IHMR. The attendance of many priests, religious and friends who travelled from far and near especially Kabale and Tororo contributed to making the day more colourful.

Medical Mission sisters are grateful to all their partners in mission who tirelessly support them in their mission through different ways.

In her Centenary Message, MMS

general Superior Sr. Agnes Lanfermann recall the words of Anna Dengel, MMS foundress, “the impossible of today will be the possible of tomorrow”. She invited the sisters to explore and risk; be open to shift their mindset and be transformed; lift up others in fostering environments where all feel safe, valued, and inspired to contribute creatively.

MMS IN UGANDA

Brief History

The pioneering Medical Mission Sisters came to Uganda in 1962 at the request of Bishop Vincent McCauley, CSC. The Bishop wanted the Sisters to take over Virika Dispensary in his Diocese of Fort Portal. The White Sisters who had been staffing the it wished to leave.



The three Sisters prostrate during their Perpetual Vows.



From the very beginning, MMS started construction work beginning with the upgrading of the existing structures. The goal was to upgrade to a Hospital before starting a nursing training program. While the construction of a convent, pharmacy, lab, emergency room and registration offices went on, the sisters kept themselves busy working and learning Rutoro, the language of the area.

Medical safaris to Bwamba on the Zaire border were regularly conducted for two full days and two half days every week except when there was no second doctor available, and when there were tribal fights in certain areas.

The hospital under its new name of Holy Family was blessed on the feast of the Holy Family in 1963. Bishop McCauley presided. By that time, all the MMS hospitals across the world were called Holy Family Hospitals, so Virika was also renamed.

The nursing program finally started as planned on the first of January 1964 with the first group of twelve probationers even though the school was not yet constructed. After four months they received 'caps and aprons. In March the same year, the private wing of the hospital was inaugurated.

In June 1965, a dental clinic, headed by Dr. Edith was opened at the hospital. Towards the latter part of the year, a second operating room was set up for the simultaneous surgery. The nursing school was constructed and blessed in November 1966.

All senior nursing students were found eligible to appear for the state exams and nine out of eleven passed as enrolled nurses. They were the first to graduate from Holy Family Hospital and from the western region of Uganda.

Weekly safaris were kept up with a record number of patients visiting. At the request of the bishop a monthly safari to the Sudanese Refugee camps were also undertaken.

Moving to Kasanga

For 15 years, from 1963-1978, the sisters made regular safaris to Kasanga and in 1979, they took up residence there. The sisters carried out maternal and child health work and family life, and they would walk and climb hills to reach different villages.

In Kasanga, the sisters constructed two buildings plus foundations for future expansions. They run a government Health Centre with no

in-patient beds. They set up clinic sites in 5 sub-counties and trained community health workers and traditional birth attendants.

The patients coming to the centre were many and overwhelming. On carrying out a survey, the sisters realised that measles was a major cause for child mortality and so they started immunizing against measles.

The second cause was severe anaemia caused by hook worm. The sisters encouraged the people to wear shoes and to build toilets and within a short period of time, there was a dramatic reduction of under-five mortality rate.

MMS Mission in Uganda

Presently, the sisters serve in the dioceses of Arua (Adjumani), Kampala (Bukoto), Kabale (Rubanda) and Tororo (Angorom) in the following priority areas for mission; eco-spirituality and advocacy against exploitation of planet Earth, mega-migration, healthcare and health promotion, escalating violence, exploitation and injustice against women and children, needs of children and youth and responding to mission in accordance to the needs and signs of the times.

Called Again, Guided by Faith, Strengthened; Sr. Grace Aciro, Superior General Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu (LSMIG)



Sr. Grace Aciro - LSMIG, Superior General of Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu

By Sr. Immaculate Tusingwire, MMS

The Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu (LSMIG), a congregation founded in 1936 to serve the Church and society through education, health care, and pastoral ministry, recently held their 10th General Chapter where they re-elected Sr. Grace Aciro as their Superior General. Sr. Grace has already served six years. Her re-election is both a sign of trust in her leadership and a call to continue guiding the congregation in its mission of compassion and service. In this conversation, she reflects on her journey, the challenges and achievements of her first term, and her vision for the future of the congregation in the service of God and humanity.

Congratulations dear, Sr. Grace. We prayed for and we will continue to accompany you with our prayers. How do you feel about being entrusted once again with the responsibility of Superior General?

I feel the weight of the cross, having carried it for six years and knowing what it entails. It is not an easy task—it is both a great challenge and a profound call to deeper responsibility and service. I have embraced it in humility and obedience, trusting that the Lord who has called me will also sustain me.

This re-election must mean a lot to you; What does it mean to you personally and spiritually?

Personally, I see it as a sign that the sisters have faith and trust in my leadership, and desire that I continue to guide them. Spiritually, it is a reminder that true leadership must be God-centered. For me, this re-election is an invitation to carry my cross and follow Christ more closely. The Lord is teaching me humility, deepening my faith, and showing me that it is ultimately He who leads—not I.

Looking back at your first term, what have been the major achievements or milestones for the congregation?

By God's grace, together with the team, we were able to accomplish many of the mandates given to us by the previous Chapter. Among these are:

- Publishing key documents, including the Charism Book, the Formation Syllabus, guidelines for vocation animation, the Strategic Plan, and Policy Guidelines.
- Celebrating six first vows professions, with 66 sisters professing.
- Reopening three previously closed communities and establishing three new ones.
- Setting up the Formation Desk and Counselling Desk.
- Training four Formators and ten sisters in Spiritual Accompaniment.
- Conducting capacity-building for 105 sisters.
- Lobbying successfully for a tractor to support our farms and acquiring 51 acres of land.

We thank God for all the achievements. What challenges did you experience and the lessons learnt in the past 6 years that you feel will be helpful to you moving forward.

Yes, indeed. A life without challenges is a life without growth. Among the challenges we faced were: the death and departure of members, sudden termination of some sisters



Sr. Grace Aciro, Superior General of Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu elect, middle pose for a group photo with her new team.

from external service, limited financial resources, acts of disobedience, weak prayer life among some sisters, and unauthorized projects started without leadership approval.

We addressed these challenges through various means: producing policy guidelines, signing formal contracts, offering counselling and workshops, and organizing spiritual renewal exercises. What initially appeared as difficulties became opportunities for growth and renewal.

Many young sisters left the Congregation after completing their studies. Moving forward, we recognize the importance of ensuring that sisters are first well-rooted in religious life before being sent for further studies.

All sisters employed should be with a formal contract. This safeguard provides clarity and accountability. At the same time, we have learned that focusing our energies on our own projects is more sustainable than relying heavily on external engagements.

To ensure proper oversight and accountability, all projects should be monitored by the Institute's Development Office rather than by the Councilor in charge of projects. This structure has already proven to be more effective.

A new term is like beginning anew and at the same time a continuation. What priorities will guide your new term as the Superior General?

The mandates of the 10th General Chapter will guide us in the next six years. These focus on:

- Safeguarding and deepening our Spiritual Patrimony.
- Formation, both initial and ongoing.
- Strengthening consecrated life, particularly through the evangelical counsels and community living.
- Good governance and stewardship of resources—human, financial, and material.

What role do the Little sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu play in the wider Church in Uganda and

beyond in response to the current realities of poverty, conflict and other challenges faced especially by the young?

Our role is to contribute to the life of the Church through pastoral ministry, particularly in accompanying young people and families with spiritual guidance, counselling, and support. We are also committed to promoting holistic well-being by addressing physical and mental health through educational initiatives such as health screenings and awareness programs.

We support young people with vocational and entrepreneurial skills so that they become job creators rather than job seekers. This helps address unemployment and poverty in practical ways. In Northern Uganda, where decades of conflict left deep scars, we continue to foster inter-religious dialogue, promote tolerance, and engage the youth in non-violent conflict resolution. Our mission is to transform pain into peace and despair into hope.

In the next six year's journey with your sisters, what are some of the ways you'd like to encourage them to find joy and strength in their vocation?

I believe the best way is to lead by example—showing that I truly love and enjoy my own vocation. I will accompany my sisters with empathy, care, and encouragement, support them in both moments of joy and of trial, and foster a strong sense of belonging to the LSMIG family. Mentorship and inspiration are key to helping them embrace their calling with renewed joy and commitment.

That is indeed beautiful. To the ones reading this especially leaders, what values and qualities do you recommend which you find most important in religious leadership today?

Religious leadership today must be rooted in prayer and faith in God. Beyond that, qualities such as integrity, humility, compassion, courage, wisdom, emotional intelligence, and clear communication are essential. It is not easy to embody all of them fully, but they are the compass that guides true and authentic leadership.

What message would you like to give to the younger sisters and those aspiring to join the congregation?

My message is one of hope. In this Jubilee Year of Hope, I want to assure them that religious life is a special vocation, a gift from God. Discernment takes time and patience—God guides each step of the journey. I encourage them to seek guidance from experienced sisters, share their struggles with trusted mentors, and not carry burdens alone. Openness to being mentored is vital for growth and perseverance.

As we come to the close, kindly share your hopes for the future of the congregation in the next six years?

The future is bright. We hope to grow in numbers, strengthen our identity, and eventually attain Pontifical status. We plan to open more communities both within Uganda and internationally. We also look forward to improving the living conditions of our sisters by completing the major residence project and the new gate construction. Most importantly, the review of our

Constitution will be finalized, ensuring our Institute is firmly rooted for the future.

The role of leadership needs a lot of support, how can the wider Church, partners, and lay collaborators support your leadership and mission?

Partnership and collaboration are key. The wider Church, our partners, and lay collaborators can support us by promoting our mission and vision, engaging in community initiatives, and advocating for the values we stand for. Sharing resources, building networks, and walking with us in solidarity will enable us to achieve our common goals in service of God's people.

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**08 Nov 2025 AT LUBAGA CATHEDRAL
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*Procession will begin at Mapera Nabunya
Pilgrimage Centre, Lubaga at 9.30 am*

USA SPOON Visit to Uganda: Strengthening Partnerships and Celebrating Impact



Members of SPOON-USA, 4 Whites, CCCU MTs CCI and babies of Revival Babies Home. Photo by our staff.

**By Caroline Nansukusa S. –
ARU-CCCU, CMO**

The SPOON United States team visited Uganda to reflect on the achievements of the on-going capacity building, responsive feeding training, and the innovative 'Count Me In' (CMI) which is the ministry of Health app under Nutrition and feeding efforts in Uganda.

SPOON USA is a partner to the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) through the Catholic Care for Children Uganda (CCCU) Program. SPOON promotes Nutrition, Improved feeding practices and the Count Me In App through its Master Trainers who offer capacity building and monitoring to Child Care Programs under CCCU.

The team wanted to strengthen partnerships and explore the future of this important work. They began the visit with a courtesy call to the CCCU and ARU leadership, where SPOON's Executive Director, Mishelle, and Senior Director of Programs and Partnerships-Tammy, expressed deep gratitude for the collaboration since 2018. They

acknowledged the unfortunate pause in the program due to shifting donor priorities but reaffirmed their commitment to seeking new funding to sustain the gains made in children's nutrition.

Since 2019, SPOON's nutrition and feeding project under the ARU-CCCU program has transformed the lives of children in 17 Child Care Institution/Programs (CCI/Ps) across Uganda. This is done through capacity building, responsive feeding and Nutrition training, and the innovative Count Me In (CMI) Health app.

Over 1,100 caregivers, CCI/P staff, and parents have been empowered to improve child nutrition, reaching out to more than 500 children with sustainable, locally rooted feeding practices. The project has contributed to improved nutrition status, strengthened monitoring systems, and renewed confidence among caregivers to provide inclusive and responsive care.

The team set aside a day and visited

2 CCI/Ps - St. Francis Revival Babies Home-Kyato, and St. Vincent Pallotti transitory community-based program, both in Masaka. At each CCI, they witnessed the CMI app in action-growth assessments, responsive feeding techniques, and inclusive care for children with disabilities. The Staff shared their experiences of how the program had reshaped their approach, with Sr. Sylvia Nassaka, Administrator at St. Vincent Pallotti, noting, "I have more confidence caring for children with disabilities, unlike before when I would just refer them."

While the positive changes were evident, challenges remain, particularly the lack of resources to conduct anemia assessments and follow-ups. In this case, CCCU will still be glad for willing partners to support in this line of care.

On another evening, the Rogers family, long-time friends and supporters of SPOON, hosted a dinner at Latitude 0 Hotel in Makindye, bringing together SPOON, CCCU master trainers, and other partners. The evening was filled with companionship, reflection, and high-level networking, further strengthening the community of support for child nutrition in Uganda.

The visit concluded with a renewed sense of purpose and appreciation for the shared efforts that have improved the lives of hundreds of children. While funding challenges remain, the commitment to advancing children's nutrition and responsive care continues to unite SPOON, CCCU, and their partners in this vital mission.

SLYI Successful Journey of Phase II



The program staff and Divine Mercy VTC staff are excited to put on the caps of Yoparwoth Golria

By Sr. Caroline Bacia - LSMIG

Driven by the Social economic plight of the youths in Uganda especially after COVID 19, the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Major Superiors in 2019 came up with an initiative to address this plight, and that is Sister Led Youth Initiative (SLYI)

SLYI has successfully concluded Phase II where it trained over 1,000 youths in different enterprises in the past 4 years. ARU had conducted a baseline survey/ needs assessment that highly showed the need for Hands-on-skills training for the vulnerable youths.

According to the Sr. Led Youth Ini-

tiative National Coordinator Sr. Caroline Bacia, LSMIG, considering the overwhelming number of vulnerable young, there is still need for continuity of the program. Hilton Foundation agreed to ARU's proposal of having a third phase with six (6) additional training centres including Karamoja Sub-region as one of the catchment areas.

Phase III will also have spinoff inceptions of mega business as a sustainability strategy for the participating Religious Institutes to benefit the youth in terms of employment and support. Three (3) participating Religious Institutes were identified,

vetted, and selected under tough selection criteria to pilot the mega business and they have submitted business plans.

The exciting story is the newly given personnel for creation of a functional Partnership and Employment Hub Office (PEHO). This would be linking not only the trained youths, but others to potential employers for job opportunities and internships.

The approved phase III has increased training centres from sixteen (16) to twenty-two (22) though in the same two Ecclesiastical Provinces of Gulu and Tororo. The inclusion of Karamoja sub-region has led

to increased number of dioceses from seven (7) to nine (9).

This phase comes with a lot of gratitude to the technical team of Hilton Foundation who keenly reviewed the proposal with interest and gave it a positive consideration. It will be implemented for three years (2026 – 2029).



Vocation Story

A Personal Reflection and experience on how Synodality is impacting my Vocation as a Consecrated Person



Sr. Justine Naluggya, IHMR

Every vocation begins with a whisper, a gentle stirring of the heart! Mine was awakened by the radiant witness of faith-filled women and the quiet encouragement of my family.

As a little girl at Our Lady of Sorrows, Kitovu Cathedral Parish, I was captivated by the joyful reparative presence of the Ggogonya Sisters. These consecrated women, known locally as Aba Sister Abaddaibirizi abe Ggogonya, served with grace and devotion at the diocesan curia, teaching catechism with patience, singing in the choir with passion, and walking hand-in-hand with young people. Their very lives were a living gospel at the parish. At that tender age, my grandmother's un-

wavering faith became a steady beacon. Between her quiet strength and the sisters' vibrant witness, the spark of my vocation was kindled.

I longed to be a Ggogonya sister, to dedicate my life to pastoral ministry, to walk with young people in joy and zeal, to serve with love. This burning fire grew into a seed of pastoral passion, blossoming into a golden treasure: the gift of consecration, though unworthy, I was chosen! God called me to join the salvific journey of making me worthy and every moment of my life is a learning experience of the treasures of heaven and mystery God's saving grace.

Today, I am profoundly grateful that God called me, not only to belong to the Ggogonya Sisters, but to be his witness by living a life of listening, teaching, accompanying, and contributing to building God's Kingdom on earth. The spirit born in my childhood experiences has shaped my entire journey as a religious sister, a pastoral minister, and even a scholar. It inspired my doctoral research entitled: Cooperation and Coordination of the Apostolate among Feminine Religious Institutes and the Particular Church: Praxis in Kampala Archdiocese. At its core lies in one strong conviction

of my heart and teaching of the Synodal Church: the Church flourishes when we walk together in communion, participation, and mission.

Synodality, a Lifestyle, not a new Program in the Church

Life experience and my synodal engagements in ministry have taught me that being synodal is to cultivate a lifestyle of encounter of otherness, humility, and simplicity at work and shared responsibility in the mission.

Synodality reshapes how we live with others, embrace diversities, openness to newness, appreciate other's contributions in discernment and decision-making processes etc. It asks us to slow down, make space for voices on the margins, and trust the Spirit moving through the whole People of God. When Pope Francis called the Church to be synodal, he was not asking for a new ecclesial campaign, he was calling us back to our Christian identity a people of God who walk together in communion, participation, and mission. At its heart lies what we call Conversation in the Spirit: a way of listening deeply, discerning together, and moving forward united in the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Recently, I had the privilege of fa-

cilitating a workshop with the leaders of the Laity from the parishes of the Kampala Archdiocese. It was a joy to share with these men and women who carry immense responsibility in our parishes and together explore how Synodality has shaped our leadership and integrated in the daily pastoral life of the different categories of people of God, at all levels including the family encounters.

Together, we practiced listening before leading, discerning rather than debating, and building consensus rooted in prayer. We reflected on the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13–35), where the Risen Christ walked with two confused disciples, listened to their struggles, experienced the rekindling of their hope, and saw them returning to their community with renewed mission. What moved me most was watching the leaders discover that Synodality is not about structures or titles, but about creating space for every voice, especially those often unheard; the young, the poor, and the marginalized. In those moments, I felt that the workshop was not just training; it was Church lived in action.

As I reflect on how Synodality continues to transform my life day by day, year by year, I am convinced: we are called to be a Church that listens, learns, leads, and walks together. This is the only way to be Church in the sacred path of listening, discernment, and shared transformation. And just as the Ggogonya Sisters once walked with me in my tender years, I embark on a daily journey and walk with others, praying that my presence contributes to the light in their path, one step at a time, on this pilgrim journey of faith.

I pray that you too who is reading my story, the synodal spirit will transform your life, becoming part of something deeper trusting that the whole is greater than the part. May you join the sacred journey of communion, participation, and mission- Way of being and walking together, not only as Church, but with all the ecological citizens.



Pilgrims of Hope: Restoring Justice Through Advocacy



Sr. Lilly Driciru - MSMMC

By Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru -
MSMMC

The journey of hope to restore justice in the face of social injustice through advocacy began in 2018. It was then that the urgent need to rescue and restore the dignity of survivors of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) became undeniable and ignited. The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN), based in Washington, championed a paradigm shift—moving from acts of charity to advocacy for structural change. Soon after, AFJN Uganda emerged as a key flag bearer of this mission.

The inspiring and memorable lessons of Fr. Aniedi Akure and Sr. Eucharika Madueke continue to bear fruit today. Their workshops—marked by thought-provoking inputs, courageous testimonies, and bold decisions—set many on a journey of no return. Testimonies from

survivors of trafficking left participants speechless, awakening a shared commitment to action.

Among the many survivors of TIP, Miss Ndagire Joanita Joshi-rah stands out as a leader. She courageously took up the mantle of leadership for the Association of Survivors of TIP in Uganda, working alongside the advocacy team to raise awareness and prevent trafficking, especially among children and youth in Karamoja. From this commitment, the Mwagale Foundation was born—an organization now in partnership with AFJN Uganda, the “mother” that nurtured its leader.

The breaking of modern slavery chains and Joanita’s rise to the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the fruit of hope. Her journey is a source of joy to all “pilgrims of hope,” and a powerful reason to celebrate 2025 as the Jubilee Year. For her mentors, Joanita’s resilience and leadership embody the triumph of overcoming all life odds especially

in the face of helplessness and sometimes hopelessness.

Despite persisted health struggles, Joanita has emerged stronger and healthier after years of endless pain. Today, she is the Founder and CEO of Mwagale Foundation, an organization dedicated to combating human trafficking through survivor support, skills development, and awareness creation. She also represents Uganda on the leadership team of the Global Migrant Network (GMWN), an international movement supporting grassroots, survivor-led, and migrant worker-led initiatives.

Together, AFJN Uganda and Mwagale Foundation continue to call humanity to justice for the oppressed, exploited, and marginalized members of the Society. Locally, they focus on preventing trafficking in persons and unsafe migration, while organizing youth into agricultural groups to strengthen food security and promote agribusiness—beginning in

Missionary Sisters of the Queen of the Apostles and their Mission of Hope in Masese Slums



Some of the vulnerable children at the enjoying physical exercise on the play ground within the school with some of the administrators and their caregiver. Photo by ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni

Missionary Sisters of the Queen of the Apostles are making a profound impact in the lives of underserved children and teenagers in Jinja district Uganda who reside in different Jinja slums.

It is a quiet plight which the children are residing in Masese, kikar-amoja, walukuba and mpumudde slums have to go through. These slums are homes to thousands of people in poorly planned and overcrowded settlements with inadequate housing, water supply and sanitation. These conditions lead to

extreme poverty, poor health and lack of education.

On her arrival in Uganda, Sr. Rajani, SRA saw the children from these different slums and felt called to respond to their needs even though she didn't know how. She narrates;

"I saw the children on streets begging, it touched my heart and I felt the call to do something. I didn't know exactly what to do and especially that as a congregation, at a time, we were more involved in women empowerment. This disturbed me for 3 years that I was doing nothing about these children and finally, I made a decision to talk to my superior who gave me a go

forward"

By this time, Sr. Rajani had received some money that she could begin with. On 1st April 2025 she gathered the 1st group of children. Her previous inquire about why these children left their homes had revealed that they leave in search for food. This is why Sr. Rajani started by giving them food. Only after they had eaten did she start teaching them the English basics like the Alphabet. And other activities like dancing.

She started with 25 children aged 6-14 and the number on the daily basis has grown to around 65 including 30 teenage mothers. The sisters do not accommodate these children, they come in the morning, start with a cup of porridge, dive into the days program and have a meal in the afternoon and a small snack before leaving. She also provides a place where they can take a bath and change into clean clothes that come from well-wishers and invites others to contribute in kind especially food staff and other utilities like soap.

According to Sr. Rajani, they live each day at a time, not knowing whether she will have something for the children when they come the following day, but also fearing that if she fails to feed the, they will return



to the streets. The fear does not take away her hope that the well wishers who keep on contributing small things are sustaining her initiative and that God will not abandon her and the children.

The new challenge that she is facing, some among these children have started requesting her to help them join a formal school which is understandable, some were in school at one time but dropped out due to unavoidable circumstances at home. Sr. Rajani also hopes that some of them will join technical schools where they can learn some skills to sustain them and their families.

Sr. Anisha Fernandes, also a Missionary Sisters of the Queen of the Apostles is currently serving as a head teacher at St. Mary's Secondary School, the same Campus with Fr. Bodwig Nursery and Primary School in Masese slums, Jinja district.

Sr. Anisha says it has offered her a good opportunity to take care of the children, who don't know about

the value of education in the area. "Being here has offered me the opportunity to impart knowledge to the parents of our students as well."

"All these students and pupils who come from the slums need our support, listening ear and values inculcated into them to help them behave well and become responsible people in their communities, society and the world at large." Sr. Anisha noted.

According to Mr. Nathan Okurut, a teacher at St. Mary's Senior Secondary School, Sisters have fought hard to make sure that learners in the neighboring communities benefit from the school. They even provide them with basic needs like food and clothes. Teachers are appreciated and motivated as well in form of gifts.

"Before Sisters joined the school, most pupils and students were on streets, abusing drugs but now the school has totally transformed most of them." Mr. Okurut revealed.

Frank Oranjo, a student at St. Mary's Secondary School is delight-

ed to join the school because he has experienced love, care and almost everything from the administration run by Sisters that other children who are out of the school have not experienced.

Nangobi Francisca, a student at the school notes that she has established a good foundation and she appreciates her teachers and administrators, who enabled her to pass well.

Because of St. Mary's Secondary School where Sisters administer, Waiswa Derrick's hope was restored because Sisters would pay his school fees sometimes. He adds that Sisters are loving and interactive with all of them. Derrick extended his appreciation to Sr. Anisha, who did everything to see to it that he attains good education

Sr. Anisha is grateful for serving as the administrator at the school and for offering an opportunity to these students and people in the community at large who are benefiting from her services.

Story of Hope

From Adversity to Excellence: The story of Sarah



Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE) is a program under the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) in partnership with the Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network of Africa (JENA). It is a beacon of hope for vulnerable girl children empowering them through quality basic education to break the cycle of poverty and achieve their dreams in the targeted countries and schools.

It was established in 2021 during the Covid-19 lockdown and commenced in 2022. It initially benefited 20 girls, in each school of the 16 targeted ones; form/ senior S.3 and S.4 or the last two years of high school. But due to high demand of what next after S.4, the scholarship was extended up to A' level.

In the recent monitoring and evaluation of how the program is impacting these vulnerable girls, in the months of August and September 2025, the program's National Coordinator, Sr. Scovia Kiconco – MMS caught up with Sarah in a deeper personal conversation.

Sarah, a BCM/ICT student at Our Lady of Guadalupe Secondary School, comes from a humble family of five children. While her siblings dropped out of school due to lack of fees, she remained determined to continue despite repeated setbacks. Often sent home for unpaid fees and facing hunger at home, her hope nearly faded.

Everything changed when she was selected for sponsorship by Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE). With renewed determination, Sarah worked tirelessly, balancing sleepless nights of study with prayer. Her hard work paid off when she emerged as the best student in her school and the entire Gomba district in the Uganda Certificate of Education exams (UCE).

Now dreaming of becoming a surgeon, inspired partly by her brother's untreated injury, Sarah is committed to lifting her family out of poverty and supporting others facing similar struggles. Though living with a lame left leg, she continues to inspire her peers and community with resilience and hope.

She credits her success to BPE, whose support has changed not only her life but also the lives of many girls in her school and community.

Today, Sarah stands as a source of inspiration to her peers and her community. With resilience, faith, and the gift of opportunity, she continues to move toward her goal of becoming a surgeon—ready to heal, serve, and bring hope where it is most needed.

Sarah, BCM/ICT student, Our Lady of Guadalupe S.S.S

Catholic Care for Children Sri Lanka Visits ARU_CCCU



Administrative members of ARU, CCCU and the visiting team from Sri Lanka pose for a memorial group photo at ARU Secretariat shortly after a benchmarking meeting. Photo by ARU.

**By Sam Bernard Gumisiriza,
ICT Manager & M& E Officer, CCCU**

In July 2025, representatives from six countries gathered in Sri Lanka for the Catholic Care for Children International (CCCI) Conference hosted by the Union of International Superior Generals (UISG)

The conference was meant to strengthen the capacity of Catholic Care for Children (CCC) teams across several countries. It brought together delegates from Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka — each carrying their hopes, questions, and lessons about childcare reform.

During the one week of intensive training and sharing, Uganda's delegation, representing the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) and Catholic Care for Children Uganda

(CCCU), stood as a living example of what faith-led reform can look like. This led to Catholic Care for Children Sri Lanka visiting Uganda from 27th September to 4TH October to see the model they had admired in Sri Lanka — now alive in practice. From the moment the team arrived, they found not only presentations, but living examples.

Sr. Euphrasia Masika, National Program Director, ARU_CCCU, shared Uganda's experience with the team in her presentation, 'The New Charism of Care: Responding to the Call for Transformation in Child Care in Uganda.' She spoke of a quiet revolution — of sisters turning children's homes into early learning centers, parenting spaces, and livelihood programs. Buildings once defined by silence now echo with laughter and life.

"The best place for a child is in the warmth of a family. There, love becomes guidance, and guidance becomes a future." — Sr. Euphrasia Masika

The team further received different presentations from the CCCU Uganda Staff before they headed to the field. In the presentations, CCCU Uganda took them through Case Management emphasizing that it's the heart of the program, the CCCU tracking system which helps them in making the care measurable and consistent and Sustainability through partnership as the bridge between today's effort and tomorrow's promise

After all the presentations, Sr. Stella Maris Kamanzi, CCCU Program Coordinator, took the opportunity to offer words that carried both gratitude and conviction. 'Every time a child is reunited with their family, a piece of society is healed,' she said. 'Our work is not only professional; it is deeply spiritual. Each reunion is a reflection of God's mercy made visible.'



Some of the ARU-CCCU team members during the session.

For the 2nd part of the visit, the team was taken to the field starting by visiting the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development which has worked closely with CCCU ARU over the years. In Iganga where they visited, they sat with families who had been reunited.

ed. They listened to caregivers who spoke of second chances. They met children whose smiles said more than any report ever could.

CCCU has become an international model for those with the same program. The program's Na-

tional coordinator Sr. Euphrasia has already been to Malawi to help the conference as they started the program after which, they also came to Uganda to Benchmark.



The visiting team from Sri Lanka and the ARU-CCCU team share a light moment during their visit to the ministry of gender labour and social development.



The ARU-CCCU Director, Sr. Euphrasia Masika sharing some of the success stories and strategies used in Uganda.

ARU Annual program for Junior Professed; A Sacred Gathering of Grace and Communion



The Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) hosted its Annual one-month Inter-Congregational Program for Junior Professed Religious in preparation for Perpetual Professions.

From June 28 to July 26, 2025, St. Mbaaga Major Seminary in Ggaba became a sanctuary of reflection and renewal, hosting the National Inter-Congregational Program for junior professed religious men and women from across Uganda. This dedicated period offered a gentle space to pause and deep reflection on the precious gift of Consecration in the threshold moments before final profession. It was also a time to weave bonds of fraternity and shared purpose among peers from diverse congregations. Rooted in prayer, dialogue, and mutual encouragement, the program invited each participant to listen deeply to the stirrings of the Spirit, to the wisdom of the Church through various inputs, and to one another.

Sr. Annunciata Tumuhimbise, one of the participants, shares her experience and reflection after this course.....

It is not me but God who makes everything possible

From this course, I discovered that what makes me a consecrated person are not only evangelical counsels but also community life. The Community is a learning place for us and a home where we share everything in common. In sharing, I need to listen in humility and discern on what to reply.

I discovered that as a religious, I have a privilege to be listened to and listen to others. This is done through the evangelical counsels especially poverty. Just as Jesus though rich, he made himself poor for my sake. This calls us to grow together in communication by deepening our charisms and mission rooted in Jesus Christ as the theme of Sisters of Our Lady of

Good Counsel from 2013 – 2019 states.

I also learnt that as a religious, I am called upon to give hope to the world, for their trust is in us. This is done by visiting families, the sick and the marginalized (lowly of society). With mental health, I discovered as a religious, I have a big role to bring healing to people psychologically

As I am looking forward to committing myself perpetually, I have to make sure that my life becomes the light of the world.

Great thanks to ARU and the organizing Committee who thought about me to come and share this wisdom from great men and women. Thanks to the facilitators and formators for being there for us.

No longer strangers but friends. Jn 15:15

Sisters in Social Entrepreneurship, Building a Brighter Future



The social entrepreneur class, first module in the second cohort in session at Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat, Nsambya, Kampala. Photo by ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni

The Sisters' Blended Value Project (SBVP) is making remarkable progress in building the capacity of Catholic sisters in Eastern Africa with now social entrepreneurship skills in its second cohort, first module which took place at Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat from 21 – 25, July 2025.

The second cohort is targeting to train around 172 sisters within five countries where the program is being implemented in the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) region; Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia.

This project started germinating in 2018 after the Impact Investment Conference that was held in Rome by major

superiors who meet annually to discuss issues within the Catholic Church and the congregations and later, launched in 2021.

The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) and Strathmore University Business School, with funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

In the first cohort as piloting, SBVP trained around 690 sisters from 147 congregations in project management, social enterprise development, and leadership skills which has supported the establishment of sustainable social enterprises, enabling sisters to address community needs while ensuring financial stability.

According to Sr. Celestine Nasiali, Oblate Sisters of the Assumption and

ACWECA Regional Project Coordinator for SBVP, before the recruitment of this second cohort, they visited all the congregations that went through the program and the ones who were intended to join the program and found significant strides and energizing stories from the sisters.

“They have been able to start some social enterprises and this gives us a lot of energy to continue this program because we feel that what we are giving to the sisters has come timely and is really helping them to move and think on sustainability,” Sr. Celestine remarked.

Sr. Alice Kyosimire, from Daughters of Mary and Joseph is a participant in this second cohort and attended the first module. She says “We have learned how to come up with social enterprises, run them, how to know and get on with people who are going to help us run the enterprise and the impact that these enterprises are going to have on the society.”

She also learnt on the approach of selecting the kind of enterprise to run after doing a needs assessment and knowing what the clients will really need and if it will solve their problems in the society one is setting up an enterprise.

Sr. Arita Tuhirirwe, a participant from the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary notes “I should not always just focus on my own plans, but first identify from the community and get to know what people are really facing, then I build up from there. I should look at the needs of the people in the society.”

CERRA-Africa Creating a Lasting Impact among Sisters through Education and Research



The indoor photo of the a validation exercise of CERRA-Africa in session at the ARU Secretariat, Nsambya, Kampala. Photo by ARU.

By Benedict Mukoni

Centre for Research in Religious Life Apostolate (CERRA-Africa) carried out a validation exercise for children research and the importance of education to sisters and how they impact the community at Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) Secretariat.

CERRA-Africa is a data center that was started about five years ago involved in research but working in collaboration with the Association of the Sisters of Kenya, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and Tangaza University.

The initiative looks at how the education the sister received has impacted life, at her religious community in terms of generating more income for the individual community and at the

wider society of the community how the impact has been felt.

It also looks at how the impact is changing the society and how it is transforming the lives of people around her and herself as well. There are several studies going on at the same time, but for the impact of education, it is working in three countries; Uganda, Kenya and Zambia.

So far, the CERRA-Africa has enabled the congregations to come up with the policies to bridge the gaps that have been identified in the research that has been carried out and has continued identifying several gaps and looking for interventions to assist this improvement.

Sr. Therese Njonge, the current head of the initiative reveals that there are 150 that are participating with African

Sister Education Collaborative; 50 from each of the three countries. They have been equipped with the skills that they didn't have such as, monetary skills, technology, among others and are grateful for program.

One of the things that these sisters are equipped with when they enroll is a laptop. They are taught the skills to be able to help them manage their ministries and also educating the students that they undertake. Others are sponsored to colleges to gain higher education.

Sr. Maria Justine Nalule – MSMMC, joined CERRA-Africa in 2024 and she appreciative that it has helped her and other participants to improve on their skills in their different fields of work.

“It has helped me to improve my administrative strategies, especially good relationship, working well with the people, listening skills, and also embracing new ideas from other people. It has helped me to be humble. I have learned that the more I get educated, the humbler I should become to help raise others by sharing my knowledge with them and also improving their leadership skills in the different departments in the school where I work.” Sr. Justine noted.

She adds that as Sisters, they need to be change makers in a peaceful manner by discussing issues, not to force our own skills on others because others have not received the chance which I have received.

The initiative is founded by the Hilton Foundation under ASEC.

CCCU build Stronger Foundations for Children with Disabilities in Schools



Members of SPOON-USA, 4 Whites, CCCU MTs CCI and babies of Revival Babies Home. Photo by our staff.

By Caroline Nansukusa. S –
ARU-CCCU-CMO

From April 1st to 18th, 2025, the ARU-Catholic Care for Children in Uganda (CCCU) team undertook a “Journey of Support and Transformation” across 17 schools serving children with disabilities (CWDs) in all four regions of Uganda.

The mission aimed to strengthen child safeguarding and school-based case management, ensuring that every child is supported—one file, one family at a time. With hearts set on holistic child development and inclusive care, the team engaged with children, educators, and families that define this unique landscape of compassion and service.

The team visited both special schools and inclusive annex schools. On-site, the CCCU staff provided

practical guidance, helping schools customize safeguarding policies, establish proper coding systems for confidentiality, and organize child-friendly file preparation. They also reintroduced tools such as child and family assessment forms. Job aids were shared, and model file boxes were displayed to inspire uniform, standardized recordkeeping.

Beyond schools, the team visited families of children with disabilities. These encounters revealed both deep struggles and inspiring resilience.

In Gulu, the team visited a family where the father and all the children—except the mother—had partial blindness. Disowned by their clan and community, they were unaware of nearby government health facilities supported by donors and of the government disability grant. Thanks to the visit, the school administrator committed to helping

the family access these services.

In Madera, through the visit, an extended family led by a grandmother learned of the Parish Development Model (PDM), Emyooga, which is a presidential initiative to transform homesteads to market-oriented production and other support programs. One single mother, supported by CCCU in 2022, is now thriving with her piggery, soap-making, and garden projects—proof that family strengthening works.

While some schools showed strong progress, the journey revealed several challenges: limited staff to support case management, inadequate funding, incomplete documentation, and families facing extreme poverty. Yet within these challenges lay opportunities for growth. The team emphasized the need for continuous mentorship and refresher training, stronger family-school-community linkages, improved use of child assessment tools, and household economic strengthening—particularly for the most vulnerable families.



During a Practical Family Assessment with one of the families of Mother Teresa P S for the blind

transformation and a strengthened commitment to care.

As one school staff member movingly expressed during a debrief session:

“We are now more than ready to walk this journey of change because now, we know how.”

During the journey, CCCU honored one of its long-term partners by formally closing its partnership with St. Theresa Primary School–Bbika. The school, once vibrant in the program, no longer served the target group of vulnerable children. The decision, though difficult, was taken with grace and gratitude. The school coordinator, received the closure letter with appreciation for

the many years of support.

This journey was more than monitoring—it was a movement of hearts and hands, committed to making children with disabilities visible, supported, and safeguarded. From school halls to village paths, the CCCU team carried a message of hope, leaving behind footprints of transformation and a strengthened commitment to care.

As one school staff member movingly expressed during a debrief session:

“We are now more than ready to walk this journey of change because now, we know how.”



In the photo is the extended family depending on Grand-mother in purple. Photo by staff.



During the initial engagement with the staff of St Mary Goretti PS Ngetta in Lira Blind Annex



In the shot is the Staff of Madera Listening in on how to file during the training team field on-site visit. Photo by our staff.



The photo above shows St. Ulsura staff practicing the coding process. Photo by staff.

CRSHCIU Continue to Bring Health and Healing to People



The CRSHCIU team share a light moment with the staff of St. Ulrika Health Centre III together with the Village Health Team (VHTs) during the monitoring and evaluation exercise. Photo by our team.

By Benedict Mukoni

Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda (CRSHCIU) have continued to make a significant impact in addressing critical health issues affecting mothers and young girls. Through various initiatives, they provide holistic healthcare services, education, and support to vulnerable populations.

In the recent monitoring and evaluation exercise to ascertain the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities that have been carried out in the various Sister led health centres, it was found out that significant strides aligning with the initiative have been well fulfilled.

Catholic sisters in Uganda are working closely with schools to sensitize students and pupils about the risks of early pregnancy and its consequences. This includes educating them on reproductive health and the importance of staying in school. Statistically, at St. Maria Goretti 1400 students at St. Theresa, they got 500 students and 1500 pupils at St. John Bosco Primary school were sensitized.

Effective trainings were carried out to Catechists and Village Health Teams (VHTs) who do deep Community outreach programs to raise awareness about breast and cervical cancer, its symptoms, and the importance of early detection. They educate women and girls on health-re-

lated issues, including reproductive health, hygiene, and sanitation.

Among other activities that have been carried out especially on mothers are, birth injuries camps where they are taught what they can do if they have fistula, prolapse and level four tire. They are also sensitized about how to approach health practitioner to address their issues freely.

They were able to offer free non-communicable disease, breast and cervical cancer screening, treatment, and care to mothers in need. This initiative aims to reduce mortality rates and improve overall health outcomes. This also included radio talk shows.

The CRSHCIU is dedicated to providing holistic healthcare services, education, and support to vulnerable populations, particularly teenage mothers and women. These efforts are transforming lives and communities in Uganda, promoting health, education, and empowerment for women, girls and children.

The Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda is creating this significant impact in the health sector with funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.



ARU A BLESSING TO US ALL

In Uganda's heart where faith thrives,
A course for the juniors in consecrated life,
By Association of the Religious guided with care,
Topics of growth in Community we share.

Personal, commitment a faith we traced,
Community living in love's gentle space,
Canon law's wisdom, a framework so clear,
Mental health's balance, wellbeing's cheer.

Synod on Synodality, a journey we took,
Dialogue and collaboration in faith's hook,
Beneficial lessons for me and for all
In this course's embrace, our hearts stood tall.

Gratitude to ARU we say,
For this course's gift, on our journey,
Growth in faith, in community, bonds we find
Blessings of the course, in hearts intertwined.

With knowledge gained, our faith aligned,
In consecrated life, our hearts do shine,
Unity in purpose, in love we bind,
Together walking in, faith's pathways.

Through challenges faced, and lessons learned
In community living, our spirits dwell
In Synodality's spirit, we reside
In faith's journey, our hearts abide.

In the Church's landscape, our faith so bright,
The course's impact, the beacon of light,
Guiding us forward, in service and prayer,
In consecrated life, our hearts declare.

In prayer and service, our lives weave
A call to consecrated life, in love we believe
With ARU's guidance, we grow in the Lord
Grounded in community, our hearts accord.

With hearts united, in purpose we stand
In the church, our hearts intertwined
This course's blessings, in us remain
Consecrate life's journey, love refrain.

By Sr. Maria Teddy Nakirunda, LSOSF



Pictorial Highlights of Some Events

