



# The Prophetic Witness

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## Editorial



**Immaculate Tusingwire, MMS  
ARU Communication Manager**

A lot is shared in this our 1st issue of 2025. You will read ARU network success stories, Reflections on the Jubilee Year and 10 years of Laudato Si. We can say that it is an Edition of hope as each story and reflection you will read, reflects Hope and will certainly not leave you the same!

My sincere gratitude to all of you who have contributed stories and reflections and all of you who always take time to read our newsletter. I am also happy that this is our 1st attempt to digitalize more our newsletter. If you are reading the PDF file, don't miss to click on our online Newsletter (using MailChimp). You only have to click on the story you feel motivated to read, though we invite you to read all.

In Uganda, like the Church worldwide, we will celebrate 10 years of Laudato Si in May this Year. You are all invited to celebrate it, not because things have changed, for they may not have changed, but because it has given us HOPE.

Since hope is widely reflected on in this issue, I would like to share this view of what Hope is for Vaclav Havel which has greatly touched me in the recent years. I find myself remembering it every time I think about hope:

"Hope is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but, rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed."

Our hope for a zero-carbon free earth does not come from the joy that things are improving, it comes from our individual and collective ecological conversion, our individual and collective action and our increasingly growing ecological spirituality that calls us to renew our sense of wonder and awe for God's creation. It comes from the growing awareness of our interdependence, inter-relatedness and inter-connect- edness.

Havel continues to say that, "Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out".

This is equally beautiful especially when I reflect on the Theme of the Jubilee Year, "Pilgrims of Hope."

Being a pilgrim of hope to me is bringing joy to those around me even amidst challenges, it is knowing that all is well, not because everything is okay or will be okay, but because I am not alone, I am a pilgrim with others on the Journey. It is contentment with the path I am on and trust in the one leading me. It is stumbling, even falling and getting up to continue, it is loving unconditionally and accepting that I am not perfect, but the Grace of God is sufficient. It is saying with St. Paul, "If I live, I live for the Lord; and if I die, I die for the Lord. So, whether I live or die, I belong to the Lord" (Rom. 14:8). It is about journeying with and in Christ knowing that my destination is one, God.

For those in the Archdiocese of Kampala, you are invited to join the celebration of 10 years of Laudato Si on Friday 16th May at Munyonyo Shrine beginning with an outdoor Eucharistic Celebration followed by an exhibition by Laudato Si implementers. It will begin at 9am.

I am grateful to the team; Mr. Ben Mukoni, ARU Communication officer, Sr. Jane Yatuha, Assistant Secretary General, ARU and Sr. Justine Naluggya, for their commitment and dedication to producing this Newsletter. May you all be filled with Hope in this Jubilee Year of hope.

# PILGRIMS OF HOPE ON THE WAY TO PEACE; AN INTEERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND ECUMENICAL IMPLICATION ON THE PASTORAL LANDSCAPE OF THE RELIGIOUS TODAY!



*By Fr. Vincent Karatunga\_ Executive Secretary Inter-Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism at Uganda Catholic Secretariat.*

**I**n the New Testament, the concept of Peace as a mission and ministry of Jesus is first underlined by St. Luke (2:13-14). In the gospel, the Angel appeared to the shepherds in the wilderness taking care of their flock. He announced to them the good news of the dawning of peace “on earth” through the birth of the savior. Thus,

*“And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

In this case, the shepherds became the first pilgrims of the New Testament in search of the promised peace through Christ the authentic and incorruptible agent of “God’s peace on earth “to those in whom His favor rests”. Having witnessed the birth of Christ the true and perfect communicator of the ‘Father’s Peace’, their hearts are filled with joy and peace.

As communicators of the marvels of God, their lives are transformed. They are immediately commissioned to go out and communicate the very peace to others without distortion or manipulation. They move in solidarity and communion with one another to announce the marvels of God. This peace had eluded them; often living in fear but in hope for security of both their own lives and that of their flock.

They affirm and confirm that indeed, in the *“new born baby of Bethlehem”* God’s era of joy and peace has dawned. “Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them” (Lk. 2:20). They couldn’t afford to keep the joy and happiness to themselves. They remained authentic in their message in both content and context.

In our won time, every baptized is

“Called and sent to be an authentic Agent of proclamation of peace”. However, before embarking on this extra-ordinary ministry which is revealed unto us in ordinary mode of our lives, Christians must be able to internalize both the content and context of this mission.

In the final document of Francis XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, “For A Synodal Church”; Communion Participation Mission, 2021-2014, no.53, the Holy Father highlights that, “The call to renewed relationships in the Lord Jesus flourishes in the different context in which the disciples live and carry out the Church’s mission”, and that the plurality of cultures requires that the uniqueness of each cultural context is taken into account”.

Religious diversity is part of this pluralism which calls for intent listening to both the faith story and experience of the other in order to be able to arrive at mutual trust and respect for the other. “Listening is a fundamental element of the path to healing, repentance, justice and reconciliation (no.55). The Church, and more so every baptized as “a pilgrim of hope on the way to peace”, and an indispensable agent of the gospel, like the shepherds in the gospel, must cultivate an attitude of listening with special attention and sensitivity” aimed at promoting harmony and peaceful co-existence.

Like the shepherds in the gospel, every Christian is called and sent to be a communicator of God's marvelous gift of peace in a world torn apart by hatred, conflict and division based on differences, including religious differences, to be an instrument of dialogue; a dialogue that build bridges of peace and love across the barriers of differences. It highlights the shared fraternity ingrained in the common humanity which binds us together as a family.

*“Fraternity implies inclusiveness not only to my group, community, culture, religion but of all, as brother or sister. To live in fraternity becomes the dynamic, by which we rise above differences and instead build bridges of coexistence for a new world” (Card. Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot).*

These are risks for every disciple of our time. It may happen in both content and context and in the long run, may lead to; self-indulgence,

pride, arrogance, self-gratification, self-seeking, disrespect etc. This and many others, a disciple must avoid by cultivating an attitude of intent “listening” to the other.

In the Gospel of St. Mark (6:7:13), the theme, “Pilgrims of Hope on the way to Peace” is underlined by the great commission of the disciples by the Master. He calls out his disciples and sends them out on the mission two by two. They are commissioned to go for a special mission; **“to proclaim the Good News and restore hope to the broken hearted.”**

In the same gospel, the Lord warns the disciples against the temptation and risk of abuse of the prophetic gift they have received. Abuse may come in form of distortion, omission, or manipulation of the message.

Vested with the authority from God to communicate the marvels of His

love and peace; and as “Pilgrims of Hope on the way to Peace” in the footsteps of the Shepherds (Lk. 2:13-14), through dialogue with those who profess a different faith from our own, let us all be active participants in the mission of re-constructing and promoting a just social order where love, forgiveness, peace and the Mercy of God prevail over injustice, discrimination, hunger, disease, wars, conflicts and violence. These are the critical causes which undermine and abuse the dignity of the human person created in the image of God. They distort and manipulate the concept of peace.

As “Pilgrims of hope on the way to Peace”, we pray for both the Spirit and Grace of God to help and strengthen and help us to remain authentic communicators of the Marvels of God entrusted unto us.

## THE RELIGIOUS IN A JUBILEE WALK 2025! AS SANCTUARIES OF HOPE AND BUILDERS OF PEACE



By: Sr. Dr. M. Justine Naluggya,  
IHMR

The particular invitation of all religious men and women in this Jubilee Year of Hope according to Pope Francis was articulated on the occasion of the celebration of the 61st World Day of Prayer for Vocations: **“TO BE PILGRIMS OF HOPE AND BUILDERS OF PEACE** amidst the crises and the destructive menace of a third world war fought piecemeal”. This is a journey that begins with me and you towards a communal conversion and transformation as we create a peaceful environment and society.

Its implication summons all religious to be sanctuaries of hope, the Church's luminance (candle bearers in the society), for Christ mandated us to be the light of the world (Mt.5:14); witnessing the light of the risen Christ and kindling the hearts of people of God whose life is in darkness, wars, conflict, despair, hidden in their brokenness and vulnerability of soul and body.

**Story Continued to pg 4**

Religious are called and sent to proclaim the good news to the oppressed and to heal the brokenhearted (Lk.4:18; Is.61:1). Consequently, we are the perpetual witnesses of God's love and inclusivity, builder of peace with a prophetic duty of bringing all people of God to embark on the journey as pilgrims of hope in this synodal church.

The pilgrim journey presupposes the deepening of both self and community awareness in order to strengthen our relation with God, with humanity and with the mother earth. Thus says Pope Francis: ***“Our life finds fulfilment when we discover who we are, what our gifts are, where we can make them bear fruit, and what path we can follow in order to become sanctuaries, prophets and instruments of love, generous acceptance, beauty, and peace, wherever we find ourselves.”***

Hope is a gift of communion deriving from one's encounter with otherness, a gift that presupposes faith, charity, courage, patience and perseverance for a better future. Much as hope sustains the theological virtues of faith and charity, communion builds resilient, fruitful and peaceful encounters. Risking hope with faith and love is a strong invite guiding religious men and women to leap into the dark and the surprises of the present world, to accept the unknown and the uncertain future by casting into the deep waters trusting in only one, the Omnipotent, who is the prince of peace, who was and who will be (Revelations 1:8)!

This is a journey to conversion and reconciliation; called to be prophetic signs of hope and builders of peace. Hope transcends life's fleeting pleasures and the achievement of our immediate goals, makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called (*Spes non Confundit*).

Peace is not absence of war or conflict, it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice. But true peace derives from God, and it involves the harmony of all people pursuing justice for all. The Church sees peace as the legacy of Jesus, the greatest 'Prince of Peace', the outcome of Divine love and order with broader vision of merely the absence of armed conflict.

The interplay of hope and peace journey makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity. Religious men and women, in a special way are sanctuaries and seeds of hope and, builders of peace amid countless crises in the society where we live and serve.

Our pilgrimage on this earth however, is not a mere journey, but it is our daily response to God's call of witnessing his love and justice to all in the society. We are pilgrims of hope because we are pressing forward towards a better future, committed at every step to bringing peaceful co-existence.

To attain this goal, Pope Francis encourages us to keep our eyes, minds, and hearts fixed on Christ, discovering the love of God and at the same time discovering ourselves as we set out every day. Christopher White describes this year as a moment to recover and renew the lost hope in our hearts, and to sow seeds of hope amid the bleakness of our time and our world.

Celebrating all the jubilee events should not be taken for granted to us religious, instead, it is a moment of renewal, metanoia, calling us to complete change of heart, to go back to our vocational roots and charisms of our founders, to rediscover the enthusiasm, amazement and joy of feeling and being part of God's project of love through which we have dedicated our entire lives.

On our journey to peace, we are invited to renew our relations with one another (checks and balance in our fraternal-community living), work place and in other pastoral environments where we serve. Think of points of renewals and conversion like, misunderstandings, conflicts, the jealousies and unhealth competitions, egoistic attitude, corruption, deceitfulness for personal gains at the expense of common good and survival for the fittest attitude that engulfs our society today!

This is the time for us religious to critically reflect on situations in community living, in witnessing the evangelical life as candle bearers in the world and the challenging situations in our society like poverty, unemployment, corruption, human trafficking etc.

This is a society where we encounter conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt; we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them hope! For all these factors and other political, moral and social factors, we need to join the synodal journey to peace.

tunity for renewed hope in Christ which does not disappoint (Rom. 5:5). In hope, we patiently wait for God's opportune moment *Kairos*. We are Sowers of prophetic hope and peace builders! This jubilee task calls for an interior disposition that can be acquired through prayer and deep listening to the movement of the Holy Spirit leading us to joyful conversion and commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ.

May this Jubilee year remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called "children of God" (Mt 5:9). May all religious be agents of healing in the broken relationships of humanity and vulnerable mother earth, walking and working together the synodal journey as sanctuaries of hope and builders of peace.

### Reflection

Given the particular charisms and mission of our different Congregations, what do you discern as God's specific invitation(s) to live out concretely the call to be "Sanctuaries of Hope and Builders of Peace"?

## LAUDATO SÌ AT 10 YEARS: A DECADE OF IMPACT AND A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



By Placide inspects his *Laudato Si* Project.

By Placide Elia, MHM

Ten years ago, on May 24, 2015, Pope Francis published an encyclical *Laudato Si*, that has profoundly transformed how we view and respond to the environmental crisis. Addressed to Catholics and people of goodwill, its message has gone beyond religious circles, touching lives across the world. *Laudato Si* has become a guiding document for individuals, communities, and institutions committed to ecological justice and the care of creation.

For me, this encyclical is not just a document, it speaks directly to my lived experience. As someone born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I have personally witnessed the destruction of our environment. The Congo Basin, one of the world's most vital forest and a lifeline for

millions of people, is under severe threat. I have seen vast areas of trees cut down, rivers that once sustained communities drying up, and the disappearance of species of birds and animals that were once abundant.

When Pope Francis speaks of the earth "crying out" due to human exploitation, I know exactly what he means. I have seen families struggle to find clean water, fishermen return empty-handed from rivers and lakes that were once filled with fish, and farmers whose lands are no longer fertile because of deforestation and climate change. The message of *Laudato Si* is not just a call for ecological responsibility—it is a plea for survival, for justice, and for the dignity of people who depend on nature for their daily lives.

**The Challenge for Our Generation**

One of the most powerful aspects of Laudato Si is its urgency. Our ancestors may not have fully understood the consequences of their actions on the environment, but today, we have no excuse. The evidence is clear: climate change, global warming, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and pollution are real and pressing threats that demand immediate action.

Despite this, many people continue with destructive habits, ignoring the warnings. Corporations exploit natural resources without accountability, governments prioritize economic gains over environmental protection, and individuals remain indifferent, believing that someone else will fix the problem.

**A message of Hope**

Around the world, people are responding to Pope Francis’ call to care for our common home. The Catholic Church, along with people of goodwill, has embraced ecological movements and initiatives aimed at restoring the environment. Schools, universities, parishes, and religious communities have adopted Laudato Si as a framework for ecological responsibility. Young people, in particular, are stepping up, recognizing that their future depends on the choices they make today.

In many countries in Africa, we see both the crisis and the potential for change. Our forests are still among the richest in biodiversity, our rivers still flow with life, and our

communities still hold deep wisdom about living in harmony with nature. Pope’s invitation is to protect what remains and restore what has been lost.

**CYNESA’s Commitment to Laudato Si**

For us, as members of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), this 10th anniversary is a moment of gratitude and renewed commitment. We have taken Laudato Si as our guide, integrating its message into our daily lives and activities. Every member of CYNESA is encouraged to read and implement the teachings of this encyclical in practical ways—whether by planting trees, reducing waste, educating communities, or advocating for policies that protect the environment.

As we join the Catholic Church in Uganda and the rest of the world in celebrating this milestone, we recognize that the work is far from over. This anniversary is not just a time for reflection but a time for greater action. We call upon more young people to join many different

ecological movements and make a difference in our communities.

Caring for creation is not just for a few passionate individuals—it is a responsibility for all of us. Climate change affects everyone, and we all have a role to play in reversing its effects. Whether it is through tree planting, reducing plastic waste, adopting sustainable farming practices, or pushing for better environmental policies, every action matters.

**An Invitation to Act**

As we mark the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si, I invite you to do something, no matter how small, to protect our common home. If you don’t know where to start, reach out to us through our various platforms. Together, we can make a difference.

The call of Laudato Si is clear: “The Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” (Laudato Si, 2). May God bless you as you take a step towards caring for our planet, the poorest of our time.

**Fr. Placid implementing Laudato Si**



# 100 YEARS OF HEALING PRESENCE; MEDICAL MISSION SISTERS



**By Sr. Josephine Nafula MMS,  
Unit Uganda/ Malawi Coordinator**

**T**he Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, also known as Medical Mission Sisters, are happy to share with you the joy of celebrating 100 years since the foundation of the Society. The Society was founded on the 30th of September 1925 and on 30th September 2025, it will be 100 years.

The Medical Mission Sisters in Uganda will officially celebrate the Centenary on 13th September, 2025 in Adjumani, Indriani Parish on MMS Rehabilitation Centre Grounds. The celebration will be graced by the presence of Rt. Rev. Sabino Ocan Odoki, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Arua, as the main celebrant. You are all warmly invited to this celebration.

The story of one hundred years ago began with a young Austrian woman, named Anna Dengel

who heard that there was urgent need for women doctors to serve in North India. Thousands of women and children were dying there because their Muslim customs did not allow them to be seen by a male doctor. Anna remembered;

*“I was fire and flame! This was the answer to my subconscious desire and aspirations, to be a missionary with a definite goal in view, filling an unfilled need that only women could fill.”*

And Anna’s journey began, through a medical school and years of very intense medical work in India. In 1925, after much prayer and discernment, she founded the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries (Medical Mission Sisters).

It was clear to Anna Dengel when she founded our Society in 1925 that the Catholic Church needed to evolve to have a greater impact in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and, as our Society has grown, so too have we evolved even though the Charism remains, “Being a healing Presence of Christ in a wounded world.”

The Medical Mission sisters are serving in 17 countries and currently, their international headquarters are based in Acton London, UK, and that is where the Society Leadership Team which comprises of members from different countries reside.

## **Medical Mission Sisters in Uganda**

On the invitation by Bishop Vincent McCauley (Congregation of the Holy Cross), Bishop of Fort Portal Diocese at the time, 9 American MMS arrived on the Eve of Uganda’s Independence October 9, 1962. Virika Hospital, Fort Portal, became the first mission of Medical Mission Sisters in Uganda where they also started a Nursing School.

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, Health care/ promotion, escalating violence, Exploitation and injustice against women and children, Needs of children and youth, responding to Mission in accordance to the needs/ signs of the times.

## **Friends of Medical Mission Sisters**

To mark the Centenary, MMS in Uganda have started a group of ‘Friends of Medical Mission Sisters in Uganda’. Medical Mission sisters work in partnership with others. The friends of MMS are close partners who share in our Spirituality, Mission and different activities.

***Story Continued to Pg 8***

We are grateful for this long period of 'life and mission' of our sisters, Associates, benefactors and friends in many places across the world who journey with us in solidarity with the people in need. We know that we are connected to you in very different ways.

**Beyond the Centenary Celebrations**

Beyond the 100 years celebration, we envision sustainable initiatives that will continue the MMS mission for future generations. To achieve this, we invite all MMS friends, partners and well-wishers to be part of this journey.

You can get involved by; Joining a Regional Team of friends of Medical Mission Sisters (North, South, East, West) and contribute your skills

Support our fundraising efforts to establish lasting impact projects

Participate in the planning and celebration of this historic milestone

Share ideas on how we can build a sustainable future for MMS Uganda

*"On 30th September 2025, Medical Mission Sisters will be celebrating 100 years."*

Contact **+256 744 177533** or Email us at: [jnafula@medicalmissionsisters.org](mailto:jnafula@medicalmissionsisters.org)

May the charism of promoting healing and wholeness across the Earth continue to keep the fire burning for the vision that "Another world is possible." Looking forward to hearing from you or seeing you during the Jubilee Celebration. I extend my heartfelt and best wishes together with warm greetings from the members of the Unit Leadership and the entire family of Medical Mission Sisters.

## A VISION OF HOPE AND HEALING TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH COMPASSIONATE CARE



*In the picture above is the CRSHCIU, administrators, St. Francis Buluba hospital administrators and the beneficiaries of the surgery camp posing for a memorial group photo during the revisit of the program Coordinator, Sr. Maria Goretti Kabakaali - DST, to ascertain the progress of the beneficiaries. Photo by ARU.*

**By Sr. Maria Goretti Kabakaali, DST (Coordinator - CRSHCIU)**

**I**n July 2022, an inspiration of hope emerged in Uganda with the establishment of the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda (CRSHCIU) – now a fully-fledged registered NGO, born out of a deep commitment to serving the most vulnerable.

This initiative was founded by the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) to tackle critical maternal and child health challenges. With a particular focus on teenage mothers, CRSHCIU seeks to provide essential healthcare, restore dignity, and create brighter futures for young women and their children.

CRSHCIU is led by a team of dedicated Catholic sisters, medical professionals, and community volunteers, which has made significant strides in reducing maternal and child mortality rates. The initiative offers a lifeline to mothers in need; providing with them antenatal care, safe delivery services, postnatal follow-ups and life-changing surgical interventions for birth injuries.

Their message is clear: *“every mother and child deserve compassionate care and the opportunity to thrive”*.

### A Mission beyond Medicine

The impact of CRSHCIU extends far beyond medical interventions. Many young mothers face overwhelming societal and economic barriers, including poverty, stigma, and lack of education. CRSHCIU tackles these challenges by providing health education, community sensitization programs, and skills training for teenage mothers when resources are available.

By empowering individuals and raising awareness, the initiative seeks to break cycles of poverty and misinformation, paving way for healthier communities.

Collaboration is key to CRSHCIU success and with support from partners like the Hilton Foundation, it continues to expand its reach and enhance its services. Grounded in Catholic values of compassion, integrity, confidentiality, humility, and patience, their work is a testament to the belief that every life is precious.

### Impact of CRSHCIU

The impact of CRSHCIU is undeniable. Over the past year, it has sensitized and screened over teenage mothers, equipping them with vital health knowledge, engaged young people in discussions on preventing early pregnancies and fostering healthier futures, trained community members in advocacy, empowering them to champion maternal health issues and conducted life-changing birth injury surgeries, restoring dignity and hope to affected women.

CRSHCIU has continued its mission of compassionate care to mothers and children through cervical and breast cancer screening, ensuring timely medical interventions, while referring patients who are beyond their services for specialized care, including cancer treatment and non-communicable disease management. These efforts have not only saved lives but have also strengthened the community’s trust in CRSHCIU as a reliable and compassionate healthcare provider.



Health care education in Schools



A revisit at St. Francis Hospital Buluba, Jinja diocese after the Surgery Camp. Photo by ARU.

This mission of CRSHCIU is not without obstacles, but these obstacles have only fueled determination to push forward.

CRSHCIU invites everyone to be part of this transformative journey, through donations, partnerships and volunteering. You can help CRSHCIU reach more mothers and children in need. Your support can provide a safe delivery for a young mother, life-saving surgery for a woman suffering from birth injuries, or critical health education for a risky teenager.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40. Your involvement in this course is not just an act of charity but a testament to faith and love in action.

To join the movement and be a champion for maternal and child health; Call +256772553743 or visit <https://catholicsistershealthcare.org/> today to learn more and make a difference. You can also Email us on: [catholicsistershealthcare@gmail.com](mailto:catholicsistershealthcare@gmail.com).

Together, we can build a future where no mother or child is left behind—one of hope, healing, and endless possibilities.



Board members of CRSHCIU

# NURTURING FAITH: A JOURNEY OF HOPE TO GULU DIOCESE



*The Diocesan and Regional Vocational Animators (DARVA) team pose for a group memorial photo during their visit in Gulu Diocese. Courtesy Photo.*

**By Sr Sophia Musiime OLG- Vocation Animator/Ass chairperson DAVARC.**

In a heartwarming display of commitment to fostering religious vocations, Gulu Diocese recently welcomed a 21member participant team of dedicated promoters from Diocesan and Regional Vocational Animators (DARVA), ARU. Their visit was not just a routine event; it was a vibrant outreach aimed at inspiring the youth across several schools in the area to consider a life dedicated to service and faith.

For a week of engaging sessions from the 19th to 25th March, the DARVA team visited many schools, including St. Joseph's College, Gulu High School, Gulu Army SS, St. Mary's Lacor SS. Each visit was met with an enthusiastic response from

students eager to learn more about the rich tapestry of religious life. Through interactive discussions, personal testimonies, and engaging activities, the promoters illuminated the paths of becoming priests, nuns, and religious brothers.

The energy was palpable as students poured into assembly halls, filled with curiosity and questions about life as a religious. The DARVA promoters shared their unique stories, joys of their journeys and the would be worries for anyone aspiring. They concluded by calling students to dedicate their lives to faith and community.

The Emeritus Bishop of Gulu, the Most Reverend John Baptist Odoma, a revered figure in the diocese, yet so simple, whom the team had a chance to pay a visit, expressed his gratitude for the visit.

“This initiative is crucial,” he stated. “It not only opens the doors of possibility for our youth but also strengthens the fabric of our community through dialogue and engagement. It's about planting seeds that will grow into mighty trees of faith.”

In each school, the DARVA team distributed resource materials, including brochures and vocation pamphlets, encouraging students to explore their potential calling. As the week drew to a close, the impact of the team was unmistakable. Many students expressed new found curiosity about spiritual life, with some feeling inspired to delve deeper into their faith journeys. The visit not only reignited the conversation about vocations but also reaffirmed the community's commitment to nurturing future leaders of the church.

As the sun set over Gulu, there were several responses of hope from students, a promising sign that the seeds of faith had been sown, ready to blossom into a new generation of committed religious life.

With its sights set on the future, Gulu diocese continues to be a beacon of hope, where faith meets youthful energy, creating a powerful momentum for the church's next chapter. As the DARVA- ARU'S visit illustrates, the journey of faith is not solitary- it is a shared adventure waiting to be explored.

# RSCNI BRINGING HOPE THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN SUB-SHARAN AFRICA



*Sr. Editrudis Kajuna - OLGC, Coordinator Religious Sisters Counsellors Network Initiative (RSCNI) addressing other Sisters during a workshop pertaining to the network in Uganda. Photo by ARU*

**By Sr. Editrudis Kajuna - OLGC  
Coordinator, RSCNI**

**T**he Religious Sisters Counsellors Network Initiative (RSCNI) is transforming mental health care services in Uganda, Malawi, and Zambia. Compassionately offering a listening ear and a heart-to-heart conversation with understanding, the RSCNI is helping to ease the stigma of seeking care, while bringing healing and hope to Religious Institutes and the general population.

The primary network, also known as the Counselling Hub, was established in Uganda, and satellite networks are being developed in Malawi and Zambia.

Mental health challenges in sub-Saharan Africa have created an overwhelming, unmet need for counselling services. In Uganda alone, the suicide rate increased by 34% from 2020 to 2024. In 2023, a devastating cyclone in Malawi left thousands to grieve unimaginable losses of loved ones and homes.

Thanks to generous support from the Hilton Foundation, this initiative supports Catholic Religious Sisters to address mental health issues with professionalism, compassion, and faith, combining their spiritual mission with professional training.

## **A unique framework for The Religious Sisters Counsellors Network**

Religious sisters have long been champions of the marginalized, bringing hope and courage to those in the most challenging situations. Building on this legacy, the counsellors network unites professional sister counsellors to reach out to individuals and families in need, especially those on society's periphery.

In communities with limited access to mental health services, the counselling initiative creates affordable, safe spaces for healing from loss, conflict, trauma, depression, addiction, and other challenges.

The network and available services continue to grow, thanks to a model with the components of Empowering sisters through professional training, Creating awareness through outreach,

Establishing counselling satellites and Caring for the caregivers which recognizes that even the strongest caregiver need support.

Stories of transformation and hope Through the dedicated work of professional sister counsellors, lives are being transformed where hope, healing, and resilience are restored. One sister shared, "When people come to the hub, they don't just see a professional; they see someone who believes in their dignity, someone who cares deeply about their pain. That trust is where healing begins

A Sister came to the counselling hub in Kampala feeling overwhelmed by great fear and anxiety. Through her sessions with a sister counsellor, she came to understand that she had experienced a traumatic experience in her youth and a similar incident more recently. By working through that trauma, she felt restored in her own mental health and is now fully engaged in her role as a caretaker of the aged nuns in her congregation.

A couple came to the counselling hub, they were filled with fear about seeking help for their strained relationship. With counselling support, they learned how to see the underlying issues and set goals and priorities. For them, the stigma of mental health treatment is gone. They can clearly understand each other and have restored their loving marriage relationship.

## **A model for global change**

In a world increasingly marked by isolation, loneliness, depression, anxiety and despair, the Religious Sisters Counselling Network demonstrates how faith-based initiatives can complement professional expertise to create profound and lasting impact. An ever-growing network of sister

# CELEBRATING A TRUE PILGRIM OF HOPE IN KARAMOJA REGION



*This photo was taken in Karamoja region during a countrywide sensitization on human trafficking by ARU.*

**By Fr. Placid Elia, MHM**

**O**n Friday 21st March 2025, the Christians of Saint Joseph's Panyangara Parish, Kotido Diocese in Karamoja Region, together with friends of the Mill Hill Missionaries from Soroti and Lugazi Diocese, gathered to celebrate a Memorial Mass for Fr. Declan O'Toole, MHM, who was tragically killed on March 21, 2002 in Karamoja, Northeastern Uganda.

The Eucharistic Celebration which was presided over by Rt. Rev. Dominic Eibu, Bishop of Kotido Diocese, was a moment of deep reflection, prayer, and renewed commitment to the cause for which Fr. Declan lived and died. That cause is justice, peace, and reconciliation.

At the age of 31, Fr. Declan was ambushed and shot alongside his

driver, Patrick Longoli Dodoya, and his cook, Fidelis Longole, while returning from a peace meeting.

Hailing from Head ford, Ireland, Fr. Declan, a Mill Hill Missionary priest, began his mission in Karamoja in 1998, serving as the first missionary priest in the newly established Panyangara parish. During his four years there, he was deeply committed to fostering peace among the local communities, often mediating conflicts and working tirelessly to promote reconciliation.

In 2015, steps were initiated toward Fr. Declan's beatification and canonization, recognizing his dedication and sacrifice. He is officially recognized as a Servant of God, marking the beginning of the formal process toward sainthood. The path to canonization involves several stages,

including the verification of miracles attributed to the individual's intercession and thorough examinations by church authorities.

In his homily, Bishop Eibu reminded the Christians of Panyangara that 'our God is the God of the living and the dead'. He spoke powerfully about the cost of truth and justice, emphasizing that when the just are targeted, the innocent often suffer alongside them. "Before you plan evil for someone," he cautioned, "think of the innocents who may suffer with them."

As Christians marked this solemn anniversary, they offered prayers for Fr. Declan and his companions, entrusting them to God's mercy. They prayed especially for the people of Panyangara, for the Church in Kotido, and for the universal Church, asking for strength to continue the work of peace and reconciliation that Fr. Declan so passionately embraced.

The Bishop encouraged all of the people present to keep praying for Fr. Declan's beatification, recognizing him as a Servant of God whose life of faith and sacrifice continues to inspire many. His witness reminds all that the mission of Christ is often met with suffering, but it is also a path of love and hope.

The Mass was well attended by Christians from Panyangara, as well

as friends of the Mill Hill Missionaries who traveled from Soroti and Lugazi Diocese. Also present were family members of the late Patrick and Fidelis, who stood with us in prayer and remembrance.

Fr. Declan's life and tragic death bear witness to a painful reality of extreme violence. He was killed for speaking the truth, for standing with the poor, and for tirelessly working toward peace in the Karamoja region.

The exact motive behind the attack remains unclear. Initial reports indicated that two Ugandan soldiers were arrested and swiftly sentenced to death by a military court for their involvement in the murders. However, subsequent investigations led to an official inquiry that cleared the Ugandan army of complicity in the killings, leaving many questions unanswered. The question as to why his driver and cook were killed also remain unanswered since they were innocent men who simply shared in his daily mission.

As they left the celebration, the people of Panyangara carried with them the challenge to live as Fr. Declan did—with courage, faith, and a relentless commitment to justice and peace.

Fr. Declan's unwavering commitment to peace and his profound impact on the Karamoja community continue to inspire many, reflecting the enduring legacy of his missionary work. May he and his companions continue to intercede for us all.

## ARU SISTER LED YOUTH INITIATIVE HITS DESIRED TARGET



*In the shot is Sr. Carol Bacia - LSMIG, Coordinator, SLYI program during the distribution of start up kits to the youth in Easter and Northern Uganda at the start of 2025. Photo by ARU.*

**By Sr. Caroline Bacia, LSMIG\_ Program Coordinator SLYI.**

**T**he Sister Led Youth Initiative (SLYIU), one of ARU's programs achieved a milestone toward its desired goal in the months of January and February through the support from Global Solidarity Forum (GSF).

220 youths who have been undergoing upskilling program, successfully completed their studies with examinations by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), who awarded them with certificates of level ONE and Modular III.

The most exciting and amazing milestone achieved was the procurement and distribution of start-up kits supported by Global Solidarity Forum (GSF). This was a wake-up to the beneficiaries especially those who could not be accessed easily. Most of the youths were the first to reach the distribution centres after hearing from fellow youths about the kits.

About 701 beneficiaries were supported with start-up kits of different trades. These were received with great excitement by the beneficiaries and parents. Words of gratitude from religious leaders who witnessed the distribution on behalf of their dioceses assured the program staff of offering prayers for the progress of the program and the success of the beneficiaries.

*Story Continued to  
Pg 14*

The kits provided were sewing, weaving and knitting machines. Others included; Catering and hotel management items, bakery and pastry items, tools for building and concrete practice, salon and hair dressing, welding and metal fabrication, electrical installation, plumbing and pipe fitting, among others.

By supporting the vulnerable youths with the tools, machines and materials, the SLYI becomes a beacon of hope in the lives of the beneficiaries. This will make them put into practice the knowledge and skills they acquired. The Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) is optimistic of the resilience, self-reliance and responsible persons that the beneficiaries are to their families and the community they live in.

*“The vulnerable populace we meet, serve and share experiences with through the initiative are our greatest wealth. This encourages and strengthens me and all those ARU collaborates within the implementation of the program as we think about the dances, singing with ululation, laughs, which are all expressions of joy.”*

The program is in its last year of phase II under the support of Conrad N. Hilton Foundation that is sacrificing to improve the lives of the most vulnerable population (the youths). 463 youths have already reported to 16 training centres in Gulu and Tororo Ecclesiastical Provinces in Northern and Eastern Uganda.

During the recruitment of the youths by the Centre administrators, the number was overwhelming. The program coordinator received many calls from parents whose children were not selected as the prospective beneficiaries, thinking that, calling direct to ARU would be the best option for including their children. Since there was a limit for the expected number for the year 2025, it was painful to turn down many who desired to be among the beneficiaries. This indicates the relevance of the initiative to the youths, the parents and the community they live in.

We thank ARU administration for the tireless support given to the program staff and the partner institutions for working collaboratively in the support of the initiative. We continue to appreciate our Donors; Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and GSF for their unwavering support to enable ARU reach out to empower the most vulnerable humanity for self-sufficiency.

We are looking forward with hope to continue with this partnership with our supporters in improving and changing the lives of the most vulnerable to become agents of change in society and the world at large.

## Pictorial Highlights of the Distribution



# A BEACON OF HOPE: TRANSFORMING LIVES OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN TO ADVANCE 2025 CHILD CARE REFORMS AGENDA



*A group photo moment after the onsite visitation of the SPOON Partner team at Nsambya babies Home. Courtesy photo.*

**By Caroline Nansukusa – ARU-  
CCCU-CMO**

**C**atholic Care for Children in Uganda (CCCU), under the Association of Religious Uganda (ARU), continues to shine as a beacon of hope, transforming the landscape of child care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Uganda.

Driven by a sister-led and Charism-focused mission, CCCU has worked tirelessly to strengthen the capacity of Religious Institutes to lead child care reforms and ensure every child grows in a nurturing family or community environment. In 2024, CCCU celebrated a year of impactful milestones, guided by their commitment to safeguarding children and accelerating best practices.

## **From Institutions to Families: A Shift towards Family-Based Care**

A cornerstone of CCCU's mission is transitioning children from institutional care to stable family or community environments. In 2024, about 261 children were successfully resettled into families or alternative family environments such as foster or adoptive homes. This milestone was achieved through rigorous family tracing, assessments, and ongoing capacity-building for new child care staff who physically and tirelessly support the vulnerable children and families.

The newly 13 recruited Social Workers and Administrators received practical field training on family reintegration practices, child assessment, and post-resettlement follow-ups.

This hands-on support not only strengthened their professional skills but also shifted their mindset toward family-based care as the gold standard. The results are evident: children are thriving in environments where they receive the emotional, social, and developmental support they deserve.

## **Fostering Hope: Building a Pool of Foster Parents**

Through a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD), the Principal Probation Officer, Mr. Shafiq Butanda and his other staff, CCCU trained 86 prospective foster parents in Uganda's four regions, alongside other 30-Social Workers and District Probation Officers. These trainings laid a foundation for creating a pool of foster parents ready to care for vulnerable children.



*A child being resettled with a package after up-lifting the economic status of her parents. Courtesy Photo.*

The collaboration emphasized the importance of partnership between Catholic Care Institutions (CCIs), the government, and families in creating a sustainable foster care system. The success of this initiative ensures that separated children have a loving and stable environment to grow, with the potential for permanent placements in alternatives such as long-term Foster Care or in Adoption if family tracing is unsuccessful.

**Empowering Special Schools with Case Management knowledge, Tools and job-Aids;**

CCCU has broken new ground by addressing the unique needs of schools catering for children with disabilities/special needs. After a thorough needs assessment, CCCU partnered with Makerere University to develop a School-Based Case Management Toolkit. This innovative tool provides a structured process for managing cases of vulnerable children in school settings. The toolkit was launched with a 5-day training in May and a practical training on the tools' usage was conducted towards the end of 2024, which brought together 29 staff members from 16 OVC annex/special needs schools. Participants left inspired and equipped with practical tools to improve care for children with special needs.

One participant remarked, *"This toolkit has opened my eyes to how we can better organize, care for our children while providing the evidence needed to support their individual needs."*

In this year 2025, CCCU plans to provide on-ground support visits and training to staff in these schools to ensure practical implementation and success in the best practices.

**Strengthening Child Safeguarding Across Institutions;**

CCCU together with mother ARU and well selected consultants from Kisubi University, Makerere, CRS among others finalized a revised ARU Child Safeguarding Policy, ensuring its alignment with national and international standards.

In 2024, Staff from the 43 Child Care Institutions/Programs/Special Schools (CCIs/CCPs) were sensitized on this policy, which clarified the distinction between child safeguarding and child protection. Participants expressed gratitude for the policy's comprehensive approach, highlighting its potential to improve both child and staff welfare. The year 2025 will focus on compliance follow-ups to ensure all CCIs integrate these safeguarding measures effectively into their operations.

**Promoting Accountability and Best Practices;**

In October and December 2024, CCCU conducted compliance assessments across 19 residential child care programs to ensure adherence to government standards. The results were encouraging, with most CCIs demonstrating significant progress in transitioning/ repurposing facilities for community-based care. This exercise reinforced the commitment of Administrators and Management Committees to prioritize the transition to family-based care.

CCCU expanded its reach by conducting a country-wide mapping of Religious-run Child Care Programs not yet registered under CCCU. Twelve new programs were identified, including schools for children with disabilities and babies/ children's homes. Two of these programs have already been approved to join CCCU and received urgent nutrition and feeding support. This mapping exercise strengthens CCCU's network, ensuring no child is left behind in the journey toward improved care and protection.



*Dr, Ronald training special school staff in Case Mngement-we were privileged to have a special teacher who was partially blind and uses a brail machine that she is holding on her laps. Courtesy photo.*

CCCU further hosted a high-level stakeholders' meeting with Religious Institute Superiors, Priests, Diocesan Vicar Generals, Administrators, and other leaders which served as a platform to reflect on CCCU's journey, achievements, and future goals. Discussions emphasized collective responsibility and collaboration in ensuring the success of child care reforms with emphasis on a family environment for every child.

To ensure the sustainability of CCI/Ps, CCCU focused on building capacity for fundraising and resource mobilization. The Resource Mobilization Manager supported CCIs in the Central, Eastern, and Western regions to write fundable proposals and develop action plans. This capacity-building initiative equips CCIs with the tools to secure funding for their programs, ensuring long-term impact.

**A Vision for 2025: Sustaining and Accelerating Best Practices**  
As we reflect on the successes of 2024, CCCU remains steadfast in its mission to ensure every child thrives in a safe, nurturing family or community environment. Some of Our plans for 2025 include:

- Conducting hands-on training in special schools to implement the case management toolkit.
- Expanding family reintegration efforts and fostering a culture of sustainable care practices.
- Strengthening compliance monitoring for safeguarding policies across CCI/Ps.
- Enhancing resource mobilization to empower CCCU and CCI/Ps toward financial independence to cause more sufficient support to the vulnerable children and their families.
- Strengthening existing Partnerships as we embark on a robust sustainability model.
- Full support of the newly mapped CCI/Ps and special schools for better child care

The journey towards transforming child care in Uganda is far from over, but with the collective efforts of partners (existing and New), stakeholders, and Religious Institutes, CCCU is well-positioned to achieve its vision of giving every child the opportunity to grow up in a loving family.

"Together, we continue to build a brighter future for Uganda's most vulnerable children."

# Laudato Si Encounter

"Marking 10 years and its Impact"

## Purpose

To pray, listen and share on the fruits of the first 10 years of Laudato Si and dialogue on the hopes and action required now and in the coming years.



DATE

Friday  
May 16, 2025



VENUE

Munyonyo  
Martyrs Shrine



TIME

9AM - 1PM

Organised by Archdiocese of Kampala

In Conjunction with Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) & John Paul II Justice & Peace

For more info, Contact the Pastoral Coordinator,  
Fr. Dr. Ambrose Bwangatto on +256 774 221878 or  
aj.bwangatto@gmail.com.

# LAUDATO SI'

ON THE CARE OF  
OUR COMMON HOME



POPE FRANCIS



ENCYCLICAL LETTER

# PROFILE STORY WITH ARU COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE: SR. DR. STELLA-MARIS KAMANZI, OLGC

**B**orn and raised in the humble village of Bupfumpfu in Nyakinama, Kisoro District, Uganda and now a religious sister belonging to the congregation of Our Lady of Good Counsel (OLGC), Sr. Stella-Maris Kamanzi, recently added another title to her name, Dr.

For this reason, ARU Communication caught up with her to hear more about her inspiring journey to a PhD in Transforming Education Through Entrepreneurship which she attained at Makerere University at the beginning of 2025.

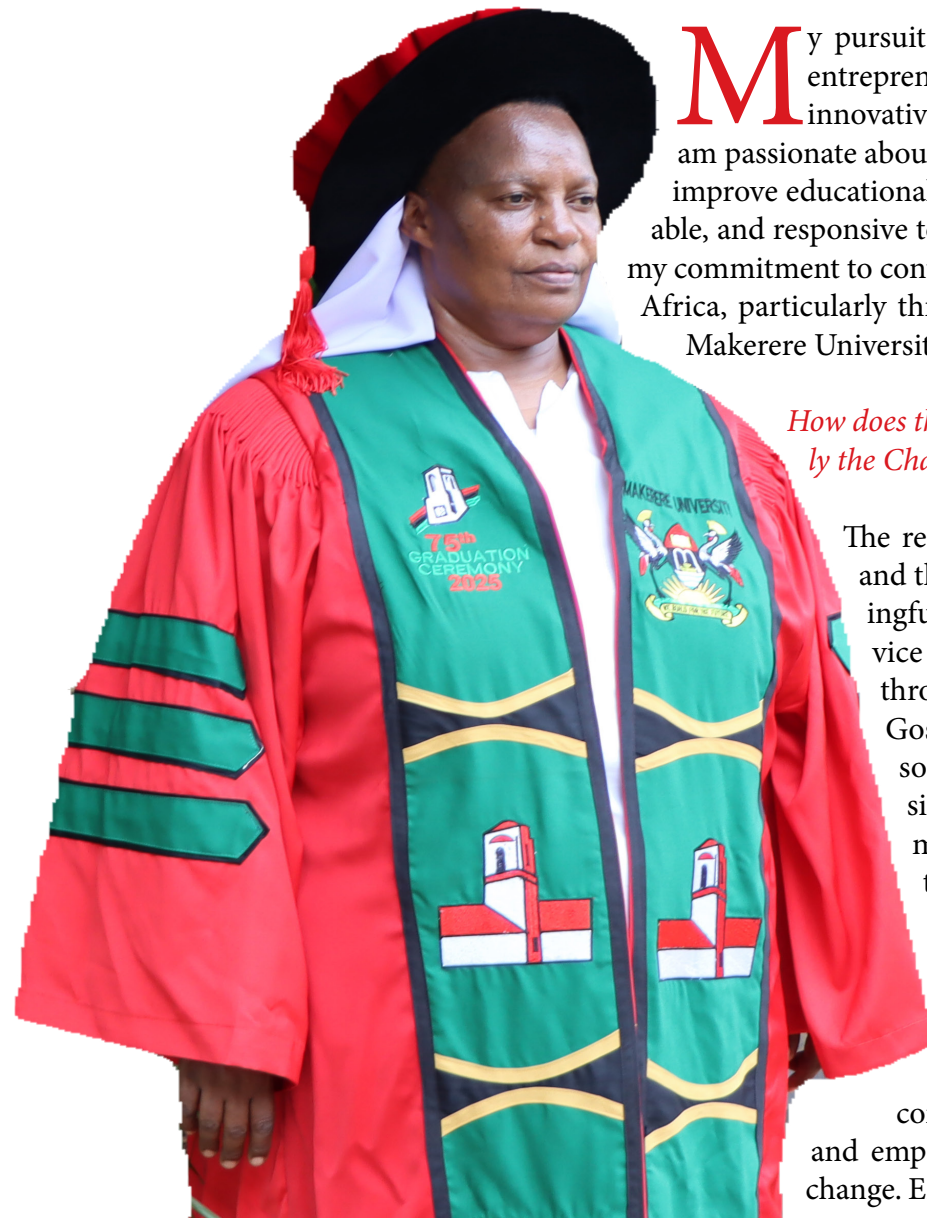
*What inspired you to pursue a PhD in transforming education through entrepreneurship?*

**M**y pursuit of a PhD in transforming education through entrepreneurship was driven by a belief in the power of innovative educational models to create societal change. I am passionate about exploring how entrepreneurial approaches can improve educational outcomes and make institutions more sustainable, and responsive to community needs. This journey was fueled by my commitment to contributing to the evolution of higher education in Africa, particularly through the Entrepreneurial University Model at Makerere University.

*How does this align with your religious calling and specifically the Charism of your congregation?*

The response closely aligns with my religious calling and the charism of my congregation in several meaningful ways. As a religious sister committed to service and transformation, my focus on education through entrepreneurship is deeply rooted in the Gospel values of stewardship, empowerment, and social justice. My congregation's charism emphasizes holistic human development, service to the marginalized, and promoting sustainable initiatives that uplift communities.

By focusing on transforming education through entrepreneurship, I aim to foster self-reliance, innovation, and ethical leadership in higher education. This approach aligns with my congregation's mission to nurture human dignity and empower individuals to become agents of positive change. Entrepreneurship in education not only promotes



sustainability and reduces dependency but also equips learners with practical skills to address societal challenges. These values resonate profoundly with my vocation and the broader mission of the Church in education and social transformation.

*How has your faith/ being a religious shaped your approach to education and entrepreneurship?*

My faith and religious vocation have shaped my approach to education and entrepreneurship by grounding them in ethical leadership, service, and a commitment to the common good. I view education as a transformative tool for empowerment, human dignity, and social justice, seeing it as a ministry that nurtures holistic development and moral values.

inclusivity. I believe education should foster innovation, self-reliance, and a spirit of service for the betterment of communities, not just individual gain.

Ultimately, my faith guides my advocacy for job creation and self-reliance, challenging me to seek solutions that are not only innovative but also compassionate, equitable, and aligned with the mission of uplifting humanity through education.

*Many have shared their experiences of pursuing a PhD as hectic and stressful, how were you able to balance your spiritual life and academic demands?*

Pursuing a PhD is undoubtedly a demanding journey, requiring intense focus, discipline, and perseverance. However, my spiritual life has been my anchor, providing strength, clarity, and balance amidst academic pressures.

Prayer and meditation have been central to my daily routine. Beginning and ending each day in prayer allows me to find peace, renew my purpose, and surrender my struggles to God. This practice has kept me grounded, reminding me that my academic work is not just for personal achievement but a means of service to others.

The structured nature of religious life, with its emphasis on prayer, community, and service, has helped me manage time effectively. Living in a faith community provided emotional and spiritual support, ensuring I did not walk this journey alone. The encouragement from my religious sisters and mentors was invaluable in keeping me motivated.



*What role do you think religious values play in the development of education and entrepreneurship?*

Religious values are vital in shaping education and entrepreneurship by providing an ethical foundation, promoting social responsibility, and fostering innovation.

**In Education:** Religious values support holistic development, focusing on intellectual growth, moral integrity, and compassion. Faith-based education emphasizes character formation, instilling virtues like honesty, discipline, and respect for human dignity. This approach produces responsible, ethical, and service-oriented leaders. Religious institutions have also played a key role in making education accessible to marginalized communities, rooted in the values of justice and the common good.

**In Entrepreneurship:** Religious values guide ethical business practices, social responsibility, and sustainability. Faith-driven entrepreneurs prioritize fair trade, environmental care, and community well-being, viewing business as a vocation to uplift others. Religious teachings promote resilience, hard work, and trust, which are essential for entrepreneurial success. By integrating ethics into business decisions, religious values foster businesses that contribute to societal transformation, not just profit.

In conclusion, integrating religious values in education and entrepreneurship fosters integrity, ethical leadership, and collective upliftment, driving sustainable progress for the greater good.

*What are you most grateful for as you celebrate this achievement?*

I am deeply grateful for God's grace and guidance, which have sustained me throughout this journey. I am especially thankful for my religious community, whose prayers and unwavering support have been a constant source of strength and to all my friends. I also appreciate my mentors, supervisors, and colleagues for their invaluable guidance in refining my research. I am grateful for the gift of education as a transformative tool and reaffirm my commitment to using knowledge to serve others, especially in advancing education and entrepreneurship in Africa.

**Expanding my work in Catholic Care for Children in Uganda (CCCU)**

As the National Programme Coordinator of CCCU, I will continue strengthening child welfare programs by integrating innovative and sustainable approaches to social work, education, and community empowerment. My research findings will inform efforts to enhance financial sustainability in faith-based initiatives.

I plan to publish my research in reputable journals, contributing to scholarly discussions on higher education, funding models, and entrepreneurship.

I look forward to collaborating with local and international institutions, engaging in research projects, and contributing to Africa's educational transformation. Ultimately, my goal is to serve, inspire, and contribute to meaningful change in education and society.

*What piece of advice would you give to people who may still be struggling with their studies?*

Stay focused on your purpose, manage your time wisely, seek support and guidance, stay resilient and embrace challenges, take care of your well-being, trust in God and believe in yourself.

## THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FADED: A JOURNEY HOME



*In the Photo is the CCCU staff, St. Philomena Baby's Home Staff where Aaron grew up from and Aaron's family members posing for a group photo with the goat project of Aaron during his case closure in Iganga district.*

Photo by ARU.

**By: Sam Bernard Gumisiriza, ICT manager & M/E Officer -ARU-  
CCCU**

**A**aron's life began with a loss. Like a tender seedling uprooted by a storm, he lost his mother at birth and his father two years later in a tragic car accident. Alone and vulnerable, he was placed in St. Philomena Babies Home on 24th February 2012. There, amidst the walls of care and compassion, he found refuge. The home became his cradle of hope, providing food, medical care, education, and a warm embrace of love.

Before his father passed away, Aaron had moments of bonding with him at the facility—like the gentle touch of the sun on a cold morning, those moments left a warmth that never faded.

But when the darkness of death claimed his father, Aaron's story could have ended in despair. Instead, a new chapter began with the embrace of his paternal uncle, Mr. Kajamiti Amos. He visited the boy regularly, his presence a steady lighthouse guiding Aaron home. During the holidays, Aaron was welcomed into the family circle, learning the rhythm of belonging.

Understanding that stability is the soil in which a child's future grows, Sr. Teddy, the Administrator, sought sponsorship from CARITAS to cover Aaron's school fees. Meanwhile, Amos, though humble in means, bore the weight of other expenses. In an effort to root the family in financial security, Sr. Teddy enrolled Amos in a Family Economic Start-up Capital Program. Like a farmer planting seeds for the future, Amos started a goat-rearing project. With time, the herd grew, and he sold the goats to support Aaron's schooling and personal needs.

With each passing year, Aaron's sense of identity blossomed. His godparent ensured that his faith was nurtured like a vine climbing towards the heavens. He received his First Holy Communion and later became an altar server, standing at the heart of the church like a candle illuminating the path for others. More remarkable was the transformation of his elder brother. Moved by the Eucharistic celebration at home, he converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism, deepening the family's spiritual roots. Now, as a Senior 2 student, he excels in his studies, preparing for confirmation and singing in the church choir—a song

of redemption echoing through their lives.

Then came the day of closure—not an ending, but a new beginning. On 25th January 2025, in Bulanga LC1, Nantamu Ward, Iganga Parish, Jinja Diocese, the case of Aaron Mublabbi Warren was officially closed. The ARU-CCCU team, St. Philomena Babies Home administrators, PSWO of Luka District, and Aaron's family gathered, their faces glowing with joy. Carol Nansunkusa, the Case Management Officer, announced that Aaron was no longer vulnerable. The family's goat-rearing project was thriving, providing stability and security. "Though this case is closed on paper," she assured, "we remain friends and family."

Madam Mwajuma, the PSWO, beamed with pride, having witnessed Aaron's transformation from an orphaned boy into a young man with a family and future.

Aaron, eyes bright with gratitude, promised never to take for granted the love that had been showered upon him. Sr. Euphrasia Masika, Director of ARU-CCCU, handed Aaron over to the local Catholic Church, urging him to grow in faith. Fr. Mark Duggan, the parish priest, stood with open arms, welcoming Aaron as a new member of the Catholic family, his joy overflowing like a river after the rain.

Aaron's story, once marked by sorrow, is now a testament to the power of love. Like a tree once battered by the wind but now standing tall with deep roots, he has found his place. His journey reminds us that no child should walk alone, for with love, support, and faith, even the most broken stories can be rewritten into something beautiful.

***Though this case is closed on paper, we remain friends and family.***  
Carol Nansukusa - CMO



**Aaron in the, middle holding his case closed file at his new during the case closure.** Photo by ARU.



**Aaron (centre) after being handed over to the local church community shortly after case closure.** Photo by ARU.

# FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING; WITNESSING HOPE AS A POWERFUL CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATION

By Ndagire Joanita Joshirah, founder and CEO of Mwangale Foundation and Ugandan representative, Global Migrant Workers Network (GMWN).

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Survival is not for the faint of heart. It's a testament to the strength of those who persevere, not a reflection of weakness on those who don't. As a survivor of human trafficking, I've had to find solace in my convictions to push forward.

My name is Ndagire Joanita Joshirah, and I'm a Ugandan living in Kampala. After escaping trafficking in 2017, I faced a new, daunting challenge: an unknown illness that left me debilitated. Despite numerous medical investigations, the cause of my suffering remained unknown. I went through pain which made me lose all hope.

In a desperate bid to find meaning, I turned to God, asking to return home to see my family one last time before I passed away. Little did I know that this plea would mark the beginning of my journey toward healing and purpose.

Upon my return, I connected with Omuti Kreative, a community-based organization that provided me with a platform to share my story. This opportunity sparked my advocacy work, which eventually led me to collaborate with other organizations like ARU and JP2JPC.

However, my health struggles persisted, and in 2022, my condition worsened. The pain became unbearable, and I was diagnosed with a nervous system breakdown. The treatment was painful, but I'm grateful to have emerged stronger and healthier after five years of endless pain.

Today, I'm the proud founder and CEO of Mwangale Foundation, an organization dedicated to combating human trafficking through survivor support, skill development, and awareness creation. We harness the power of art to bring attention to this critical issue, believing that visuals can convey the harsh realities of trafficking.



I am also honored to serve as the Ugandan representative on the leadership team of the Global Migrant Network (GMWN), an international organization that supports grassroots survivor and migrant worker-led initiatives.

As I reflect on my journey, I'm reminded that hope can be a powerful catalyst for transformation. Despite the darkest moments, I've learned to never give up on myself. My story is a testament to the human spirit's capacity for resilience and redemption.

#### **Empowered for a Brighter Future**

As I move forward, I remain steadfast in my commitment to combatting human trafficking, promoting

awareness about safe migration practices, and exposing the tactics of irregular migration.

I am dedicated to advocating for the rights of migrant workers, supporting survivors and victims, and empowering those affected.

I firmly believe that a future filled with freedom, peace, and justice is near. I aspire to continue inspiring others who have faced rejection, pain, hopelessness, and low self-esteem, reminding them that nothing is impossible if they reject the forces that hold them back.

Through my journey, I have learned that resilience and determination can overcome even the most daunting challenges.

I stand as a testament to the human spirit's capacity for hope, healing, and transformation.

To those who have stood by me, prayed for me, and offered unwavering support, I extend my deepest gratitude. Your love, encouragement, and faith in me have been instrumental in my healing and growth. May God bless you abundantly.

The Mwangale Foundation's slogan, "A second chance to life," resonates deeply with me. It serves as a poignant reminder that life can push us to the sharpest corners of the earth, but with determination, faith, and support, we can rise above adversity and thrive.

## **FINDING LIGHT IN THE DARK – A JOURNEY OF HEALING**



*This is an internet courtesy photo demonstrating a person who is undergoing mental disturbances and needs counselling and rehabilitation to restore mental health.*

**By. Sr. Editrudis Kajuna - OLGC**

**For more info: Counselling Hub**

**Call: +256 789 938 990**

**Email: [counselinghub@aacss.net](mailto:counselinghub@aacss.net)**

For a long time, Angela (not real name) felt as if she was drowning under the weight of life's pressures. Every day was a battle between family obligations, work responsibilities and personal well-being. She tried to keep everything together, but inside, she was exhausted and overwhelmed. Anxiety and despair became her silent companions, whispering doubts that she was failing the very people who depended on her.

The breaking point came when she could no longer pretend that everything was fine. She withdrew from loved ones, became easily irritated over minor issues, and felt completely disconnected.

Work suffered. Sleep became elusive. A lingering sense of disgust at herself settled in. That's when she made a courageous decision to seek help from a religious sister who was also a counselor.

At first, she was hesitant, uncertain whether opening up was the right choice. But desperation pushed her forward. What she found was beyond her expectations—compassion, understanding, and a safe space where she could finally breathe.

“For the first time in a long time, I could talk about my struggles without fear of judgment,” she recalls. Her counselor helped her realize that she was carrying more than she could handle. She was drowning not

because she was weak, but because she had never learned how to set boundaries, prioritize herself, and acknowledge her own needs.

Through therapy, Angela embarked on a journey of self-awareness. She learned to accept her limitations, recognize her strengths, and tap into resources she never realized she had. Among the many lessons, one stood out—mindfulness; learning how to be present in the moment which helped to calm the endless noise in her mind and gave her clarity she had long lost.

Session by session, she began to feel lighter. She reconnected with family and friends, regained her energy,

and found joy in life again. Most importantly, she learned that self-care was not selfish but necessary.

Looking back, Angela is grateful for the decision she made to seek help. “It wasn't easy, but it was the best thing I could have done for myself and my family,” she says. “Healing is possible, no matter how lost you feel. All it takes is the courage to take that first step.”

Thanks to the Religious Sisters Counselors Network Initiative (AAC:SS), Angela is not just surviving—she is thriving. And now, she encourages others: if life feels too heavy, don't carry it alone. Help is there, waiting for you to reach out.

## FROM STRUGGLE TO STRENGTH: A STORY OF HOPE AND TRANSFORMATION THROUGH IMPROVED NUTRITIONAL AND FEEDING CARE



*A severely malnourished John on arrival at Vincent Pallotti Transitory Nursing Home in May 2024. Courtesy Photo.*

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

**E**nsuring a meaningful and fulfilling life for vulnerable children is at the heart of the ARU-CCCU program. Through its dedicated projects, the program tirelessly supports children's well-being, both in family environments and alternative care settings.

CCCU is delighted to share a story of Hope and resilience in this Jubilee Year of Hope, a story of a life transformed through improved Nutritional and feeding care, and that

is a story of a four-year-old John (not his real name), whose life took a dramatic turn after receiving specialized nutrition and feeding support.

When John arrived at St. Vincent Pallotti Transitory Nursing Home in May 2024, he was severely malnourished, weighing just over three kilograms. Diagnosed with cerebral palsy, he struggled with chewing and swallowing, turning every mealtime into a painful ordeal. Feeding him while lying down not only made meals inefficient but also put him at risk of aspiration.

His caregiver, overwhelmed and exhausted, was on the verge of giving up hope.

Determined to make a difference, the Religious Sisters at St. Vincent Pallotti, who had received training through the ARU-CCCU-SPOON Nutrition and Feeding Project, put their expertise into action. They carefully adapted John's diet, modifying food textures using locally available ingredients to suit his needs. They implemented specialized feeding techniques, ensuring he was properly positioned for safer and more effective feeding.

Within weeks, John's condition began to improve significantly. His weight steadily increased, and he became more engaged during mealtimes. The new approach not only ensured reception of sufficient nutrients but also strengthened his ability to chew and swallow.



*In the photo is a significantly improved John; healthy, happy, and achieving critical developmental milestones.*

As a result, he was able to participate in physiotherapy and occupational therapy, which further supported his developmental progress.

Today, John is a completely different child—healthy, happy, and achieving critical developmental milestones.

His transformation has not only restored hope to his caregivers but has also inspired many others facing similar challenges.

*"Because of John's progress, many caregivers are now motivated and eager to learn how to better support their children's feeding journeys," says Sr. Sylvia, CCI Administrator at St. Vincent Pallotti Transitory Nursing Home.*

John's journey is a testimony to the power of proper nutrition, evidence-based feeding techniques, and committed caregiving. His success story reinforces the importance of empowering childcare institutions and families with the right knowledge and support—proving that with dedication and informed care, every child has the potential to thrive in a loving and secure environment.

## ARU BRANCH COORDINATORS MEETING AT THE SECRETARIAT KAMPALA



*ARU branch Coordinators share a light moment with some of ARU administrative staff.* Photo by ARU.

**Sr. Stella Watsema, National Coordinator, Religious Sisters Communicators Foundation - RSCF**

The branch coordinators meeting at the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) intended to bring together the different branches in the country, share information and messages from the Superior Generals' conference. They were reminded about the theme of the Jubilee year as A Call to Walking Together Towards Achieving Peace in Religious Communities. And to inform them about the vision and mission of the ARU.

Another reason for the meeting was to share about the Jubilee year. Co-

ordinators were asked to share information with their members and participate in organizing the jubilee year celebrations at

their different levels as ARU branches though most coordinators reported to have celebrated on the 2nd of February 2025 at the feast of the presentation.

In her sharing with branch coordinators, the Assistant Secretary General Rev. Sr. Dr Jane Yatuha- OLG pointed out the main characteristics of pilgrims of hope:

The first characteristic she said was to live as pilgrims shifting mindset to adopt that we are not of this world but in the world and the world is not in us; Secondly, she said to live as pilgrims, there is a war to fight. The flesh and its passions. She said, “to be pilgrims of hope you have to

... speak for Jesus, have to be good servants, and need to be hospitable”.

... called upon all branch coordinators and other religious men and women to read the The papal bull, titled “Spes Non Confudit,” meaning

Rev. Sr. Dr Jane Yatuha once again “Hope Does Not Disappoint,” that is: the document Pope Francis wrote for the celebration of the Jubilee year of Hope 2025. She ended by calling upon all consecrated people to be strong in hope, faith and Charity.

# Pictorial Highlights of Some Workshops



*The Religious converge at Namugongo Martyrs Shrine to Inaugurate the Jubilee year 2025. Photo by ARU.*



*ASEC Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI) executive Secretaries and other delegates share a light moment after the convention in Kampala , 2025. Photo by ARU.*



*Uganda Spiritual Fromation Centre (USFC) Participants of Sabbatical and Renewal pay a visit to ARU at Sec.*



*Capacity building workshop in session at ARU Secretariat in March 2025. Photo by ARU.*



*Some of the participants in the facilitation workshop share a memorial light moment shortly after the workshop at ARU Secretariat.*



*In session is a mental health workshop by Life Net International in collaboration with ARU and the Counselling Hub in March - April 2025. Photo by ARU.*