

# AWARENESS

[www.survive-miva.org](http://www.survive-miva.org) Getting others back on the road to self-help

Missionary Vehicle Association - UK Registered Charity No. 268745



FREE The twice-yearly magazine of SURVIVE-MIVA - **JANUARY - JUNE 2022 - ISSUE 71**

## MEETING TOGETHER IN SAFETY

### St Louis Dispensary, Diocese of Nellore, South India

For many years now, we have been supporting the tremendous variety of outreach work the Church is engaged in throughout the Global South. To start us off for this issue, here is one request we received from Sr Annamma Savarimuthu, which gives a very succinct description of both the tasks and the challenges such community health work brings:

*"We, the Franciscan Sisters of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, were originally invited (in the early 2000s) by the late Bishop, the Rt Rev P.C. Balaswamy, to work with people affected by leprosy here at Rapur, in Andhra Pradesh.*

*In accordance with the charism of the Congregation, we immediately accepted the invitation, and our Sisters were soon present where most people are fearful and shun those affected, and they applied medicines and comforted them. We also reached out to teach the children of our*

*patients through non-formal education centres and managed to gain admittance for hundreds of such children in the regular school. Our other activities have since grown too, and include the provision of skill trainings such as tailoring, embroidery, and secretarial skills for the young girls, whereas the older ones are organised into 'mahila mandals', or women's groups, where they learn the value of the habit of keeping small savings of their own from their labours. The women gain a lot from being able to meet together in safety to discuss problems and find possible solutions."*

Building on their initial successes, the Sisters began to widen the scope of their work, as Sr Savarimuthu tells us:

*"We also started St. Louis Dispensary to provide treatment to the poor of this locality, and extended our healing ministry in the neighbouring villages through organizing health clinics and awareness programmes. We now cover 27 villages which are in the radius of 22 kilometres.*

*However, our ministry is severely hindered due to the lack of a vehicle. The people in these villages need our services, as they are not able to come to the dispensary due to lack of transportation facilities, and also because of the distance. Hence it is an urgent need to have a dedicated vehicle for the dispensary to continue our work more effectively in the remote areas."*

The Sisters' dedication is representative of that of so many others who have been beneficiaries of our Association, and was featured in the 'few from the queue' section of our last edition. Thanks to donations received from our readers and supporters since then, we were able to provide a grant of £12,000 for the vehicle pictured.



OVER  
**48**  
YEARS'  
SERVICE

**Read on** to see how your support is providing practical, everyday mobility to our beneficiaries overseas, and how your contributions bring hope to so many...

Who's who at...

## SURVIVE-MIVA

**Niamh Mahon**

Speaker and Trustee,  
Birmingham



"I came to live in the Midlands in 2016. I am semi-retired and keep my hand in teaching by doing supply work. My last permanent post was Head of a small Primary School in Surrey. Prior to teaching, I was a senior Sales Executive for a large American IT company and before that I worked in Theatre, Film and TV as an

actor, writer, director and costume designer - I still have my Equity card and continue to write! I serve as a Eucharistic Minister and Minister of the Word, and I am also a town councillor and part of a Community Sponsorship Group bringing a family from Syria over to live in our town. It had never occurred to me that transport was such an issue. It dawned on me that not only were these compassionate workers living a vocation, but that such a simple fix could make their lives and the lives of those they help, easier. Once the obvious was pointed out to me after hearing an appeal in my local church, I knew I just had to sign up to be a Speaker...besides which, I'd been looking for ways to put whatever talents I have to some good."

**Patron:**

Most Rev Malcolm  
McMahon OP,  
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**Appeals Organiser:**

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**Finance Officer:**

Margaret Jackson

**Director:**

Simon Foran

SURVIVE-MIVA is a Catholic Lay Association and a Registered Charity (No.268745) founded in Liverpool in 1974.

We exist to provide funding for essential transport for health outreach work in isolated rural areas, and for the Church's pastoral care in places of difficult access.

We have some 50 lay Speakers based across Britain who make appeals for funds in Catholic parishes via short lectern talks about those we do our best to help in a very practical way.

We are grateful to the Bishops of England, Wales, and Scotland for their support in our endeavours as the only UK-based charity to fund exclusively for transport.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WORK AND HOW TO VOLUNTEER,

Contact us at 5 Park Vale Road, Aintree, Liverpool, L9 2DG.

Tel: 0151 523 3878 E-mail: [info@survive-miva.org](mailto:info@survive-miva.org)

or visit us online [www.survive-miva.org](http://www.survive-miva.org)

## GEARING UP TO START FROM SCRATCH

WELCOME, readers, both new and established, to our latest news. I hope this issue finds you in good spirits and all fully jabbed by now, as well as being 'boostered' and 'flu-proofed', too, where relevant.

Another half-year has gone by since I last wrote, and I think we can all agree that in terms of combating the virus via vaccinations, there has been a great deal of success, in that many of the restrictions have eased, and a collapse of our health system has (so far) been avoided - although the situation is very 'fluid', as they say - or 'still pretty dire', as I myself would have it...but each to their own.

Here in the UK, we have much to be grateful for, even though there are plenty of other industrialised countries with higher take-up rates than ours, at over 80%. Commentators elsewhere have pointed out that the new reality for those in the 'rich' countries (economically speaking) will be for a future of periodic new strains and new variations of the vaccine, which will mean we will be able to treat the virus in the same way we treat the flu', with an annual jab or booster according to our underlying health conditions. This is pretty much what is happening here already.

Meanwhile, in Africa, the WHO's figures for those fully vaccinated is just under 5%.

At the same time, there are more than enough vaccines to cover the needs of all - billions of them - but they are in the 'wrong' place, in storage in Canada, the US, UK and in the EU. This shouldn't come as a surprise so much as a scandal, although it is nothing new in one sense. So often huge projects seem to fail to fully mature, or even (literally) get off the ground, and those in charge, usually inter-governmental agencies, continue to start but never finish their albeit laudable initiatives. The majority of the Millennium Development Goals, for example (with important exceptions), were never attained, even fifteen years after their inception, ([ourworldindata.org/millennium-development-goals](http://ourworldindata.org/millennium-development-goals)) and in terms of vaccines, we can expect the rural poor to be the last to benefit.

In a previous issue, I wrote that we looked forward to receiving requests for transport to help distribute these vaccines overseas, in the same way as we already do for inoculations against the common illnesses like polio, MMR, malaria, hepatitis and so on. They form a fundamental part of almost all the health outreach programmes we are able to support thanks to you. However, as I write, and although we issue a Covid survey questionnaire to all applicants, I don't remember anyone so far specifically mentioning that they were about to begin a campaign of initial covid jabs - never mind secondary top-ups or boosters. *Plus ça change...*

Right now, it is as if here we have gone into neutral, whereas our beneficiaries are still waiting to get into first gear.

In Spanish there is a proverb which says '*el que mucho abarca poco aprieta*' and so far, I have failed to find what for me would be a satisfactory translation.



All images in this edition provided by those you have made mobile.



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'He who grasps all loses all' is one such. Imagine trying to pick up a whole shelf of books with your arms stretched as widely as you can - they are bound to collapse in a heap at your feet unless you are a circus strongman. It's something similar with warehouses stocked with boxes of vials going to waste - the difficulties involved in picking them up and moving them across the continents to be safely distributed to rural places of little pre-existing infrastructure (our beneficiary 'constituency') does not seem to have been anticipated by any of the powers that be. Or did they just over-produce in the first place to ensure we here were covered, come what may? I should perhaps add that I am aware that my cynicism grows with each passing year, but even so...

At SURVIVE-MIVA we have never bitten off more than we can chew (maybe that's the translation I have been looking for) and have never got in over our heads. We are not, nor could we be, a disaster or emergency relief agency, which is a highly specialised job requiring huge infrastructure and resources well beyond our means. Our Association has always been a small player in our interventions abroad, and we have always recognised as much, but, just as Mother Theresa, (the beneficiary of our 79<sup>th</sup> vehicle) encourages us: "*Be faithful in small things, because it is in them that your strength lies.*"

Does this apply to you? Do you have untapped strengths, do you think? Unlike many charities with a developing world focus, we have no staff nor offices overseas, and so cannot offer the possibility of volunteering there. However, as the only UK-based charity which funds exclusively for different forms of essential transport for outreach work, we are always glad to receive enquiries on how to help us raise funds here in the UK.

Since our founding, the majority of our income has come from making appeals (giving short talks) in Catholic churches up and down the dioceses of England, Scotland, and Wales, and we are always eager to increase the number of volunteer Speakers we have.

It may be that you have thought on the odd occasion that you would like to do something direct for us, by giving of your time, perhaps. In essence, all that is required is speak for 3 or 4 minutes at the end of Mass, to get our message across, and we can help you to do that by providing all the material, content/text and support you might need.

You do not have to be a seasoned raconteur - just the opposite, in fact - we like to think we are short and sweet, to the point, and about as practical as you can get!

Perhaps you have considered this in the past, but not taken it up, or you may have been wondering about volunteering your time somewhere but not found a suitable outlet. So many of you reading this think us worthy of your financial support, may we also count on you for some of your time on a few weekends throughout the year? Maybe you too can speak up and out for the benefit of those who lack a tangible way of taking their expertise to those isolated communities in need of it.

We like to keep things simple, so just drop us a line or give us a ring for a chat, or have a look at the 'volunteer' page on our website. We are in real need of more Speakers, even though we are just beginning to get back on our feet and contact parishes, after a two-year break in appeals, and are having to start from square one after 48 years. Please do give it some thought.

And finally, a special word of thanks. Each issue I find myself, time and again, in the fortunate position to be able to thank you all for your support, which, right throughout this pandemic and in the decades before it, has been unflinching, indeed outstanding, and I do so now, very gladly, once more. You have the respect and gratitude of everyone in the office, and that of our Trustees too.

It was during a discussion about this with Margaret, our bookkeeper, that she drew my attention to a group of our supporters and donors who scarcely if at all hear from us, or get the recognition and thanks they deserve. Our day-to-day running of the office always includes replies to queries and frequent 'thank yous' for donations from parishes and well-wishers, of whom there are many. However, Margaret pointed out to me a long-standing omission amidst all this - *those of you who give regularly by standing order.*

I have to say that I was left feeling very uneasy, as although no individual can be expected to know all the ins and outs of the running of the charity, I do feel that in the past I have failed to see just how much those who contribute by standing orders have been a mainstay in how the Association has been able to carry on. Some of those who give regularly by this method give each month, others quarterly, others each year - there are lots of variations - and each person, of course, can choose for themselves the amount and frequency of what they choose to donate.

In part it is down to this flexibility that the generosity behind it has escaped me. Quietly, with no note or fuss, no acknowledgment, nor any receipt required in nearly all cases, these regular donations appear on our bank statements - and have been doing for years - but until now, those responsible have rarely received a word of thanks from me.

I am grateful to Margaret for bringing this to my attention, and am relieved to be able to use this page to go some way towards righting things.

*Mea maxima culpa*, everyone.

Thank you all for your kindness, and may the road rise up to meet you.

Simon Patrick Foran,  
Director.





# NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

Each issue we do our best to keep you up-to-date with the progress being made by those you have supported. There are no easy or quick solutions to the problems our beneficiaries face each day, but we know that being mobile does enable them to tackle jobs they would otherwise have great difficulties doing. Here is an update on just some of the work being carried out:

## TANZANIA

### Eletra Bosco Health Centre, Heka, Diocese of Singida

To be found in central Tanzania, this Diocese dates from 1972, and has a population of one and a half million, the majority of whom are Muslim, amongst whom 13% are Catholics, living in just twenty-nine parishes spread over 50,000 square kilometres - a 'catchment area' over four times the size of Yorkshire, England's largest county.

One parish priest of the Diocese tells us: *"These are typical missionary areas demanding primary evangelisation in a context of different people with different belief systems. Our own witness has demanded that we respect this on the grounds that we are all children of the same God, but without compromising the Faith. In fact, the whole Diocese has been at the forefront of the dialogue of ecumenism amongst all denominations."*

As far as the Church's health work is concerned, Fr Bernard Ngallya is the Diocesan Health Secretary, and described the needs in his community thus: *"Eletra Bosco is one of the health facilities to be found in the southern part of the diocese, where incomes are especially low, and the terrain quite rough but passable in the dry season."*

*We are making our request for an ambulance to be used as an outreach vehicle, not just in emergencies, but to enable our staff, both doctors and nurses, to go regularly to the outlying stations. There are sixteen villages altogether in the surrounding area who need proper treatment and health education without delay. Many expectant mothers give birth at home, which is far from ideal in cases of*

*prolonged or obstructed labour, although if they could reach the health centre, the number of safe deliveries would increase immediately."*

The vehicle pictured was the result of a ten thousand pound grant, and is manageable to run, and affordable to maintain.

We have since heard back from Fr Bernard: *"Thanks to the ambulance, we have really scaled up our work, especially vaccinating the under-fives, more than 80% of whom have now had their jabs. For the moment, all births are taking place safely, as they are attended by skilled health personnel, either in the villages or in the clinic, and we encourage breastfeeding from the very first hour of life."*

Some challenges still remain, however, as the latest news from Eleka shows: *"One continued challenge remains the deeply engrained belief in customs and traditions. These include the use of some herbal remedies which are largely ineffectual and even dangerous, and the belief that giving birth at home is always to be adhered to, when this too is often full of risks. We believe that in time, given the means and access we now have to spread our health awareness message, this problem will grow less common."*



Getting others back on the road to self-help

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## INDIA

### Vilafor Health Centre, Reddiyapalayam, Diocese of Pondicherry and Cuddalore

Sr. Mary Hilda Bethl is our contact at this centre, and describes their work thus:

*"We the Bethlehemite Sisters started Vilafor Center in Pondicherry in the year 1993 to take up social and health ministry in this locality. We started giving general awareness on communicable and non-communicable diseases to the people in the slum areas. We regularly organise health camps and health clinics in the slums and in the remote villages.*

*On the social development side, we have promoted women's self-help groups and we regularly teach them on their rights. We established evening study centres in the slums to improve the academic performance of the poor children. Now we have extended our activities to 13 more villages which are in the radius of 15 kilometres.*

*We face lot of difficulties without a vehicle in this mission and we are not able to go to the distant villages on a regular basis. This has become a huge hindrance to continuing, expanding, and consolidating our activities without our own transport.*

*Therefore, I humbly request you to extend your financial support to procure a vehicle for Vilafor centre. Your kind help will surely help us to improve the health condition of the people and the wellbeing of children and women in our operational villages."*

Sister Bethl later showed how once our £11,000 bank transfer has been completed, there is still important documentation to be obtained at their end before things start moving:

*After getting your grant from our Provincialate office, we contacted the dealer and procured the four-wheeler. Next, the necessary registration for it was done. We also insured the vehicle and an experienced driver was appointed.*

*We are now able to cover all thirteen villages regularly as we have dedicated transport of our own. Our services greatly help the people in the villages to improve their health conditions and follow preventive measures. We organise regular health clinics and awareness programmes in our operational villages.*

*It is all because of your timely support. We are now able to coordinate our women's developmental programmes and regularly monitor evening study centres. We come back safely in the evenings after our ministry. We are ever grateful to SURVIVE-MIVA and all its supporters for their timely financial aid, may God reward you."*



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# TANZANIA

## Kibehe Parish, Diocese of Rulenge-Ngara

After a series of four-wheelers, we now go back to basics in the form of 'non-motorised two-wheelers', or what most of us know less technically as the common, virtually maintenance-free, good old bicycle.

Fr Respicius Rugemalira is PP of Kibehe, and shows us once more the big impact a comparatively small contribution from our donors can make to parish life, and at the very simplest level. He tells us:

*"We were established back in 1996 as one of the 24 parishes in the Diocese, and we currently have 8,225 Faithful clustered in eleven outstations, with a total of 64 Small Christian committees in active operation. They are reachable according to the rains, and our roadwork is characterised by just 25kms of tarmac, the majority being dusty or muddy tracks - although the rains are generally moderate here - and passable on two but not four wheels when they become narrow."*



As we have said throughout our existence as an exclusively transport-focussed charity, our decades of intervention do not mean we somehow know better - in any way, shape, or form - than those who are, literally, *on the ground*. They know where they are most needed and in what numbers, and it is they who decide on the most suitable means of getting there. Fr continues:

*"Communication has improved for some after the establishment of patchy mobile networks, and we have electricity coverage for 30% of the parish, although there is none connected to households in the villages. There is just myself and our 15 fully-trained catechists working here."*

*The only safe, reliable and affordable means of transport for them is bicycles, and we have placed a priority on this, but our local contribution will only meet the transport costs from the dealer, and the assembly costs will be made zero by each catechist according to their skills and helping each other.*

*As well as the obvious advantages like improving pastoral care and the provision of regular services for everyone, whatever their community, there are other important but less immediately visible benefits that come as a result. The catechists can improve their experience by being able to participate in exchange programmes elsewhere and can come in to the parish centre as their isolation is much reduced. They can also plan their work and manage both pastoral and family commitments outside these times, which in our culture is a very important responsibility."*

In these circumstances, and at sixty-eight pounds each, a bicycle for each catechist seemed like a great investment of your generosity!



Getting others back on the road to self-help

# A FEW FROM THE QUEUE

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In common with issue 70, in this edition of our magazine, the requests featured below all have the same basic, defining characteristics, and involve projects and plans which are about as small scale and localised as can be. We wish to continue to play our part in supporting the Church's health and pastoral work overseas, whilst keeping things as clear-cut and simple

as possible. This means that the projects and outreach journeys carried out are designed exclusively for the benefit of others *by those who live in the same community* as their people, and who speak their language. Once more, and as always, we are grateful for any help you can give to support these dedicated 'key' workers.

Here are some examples:

## BANGLA DESH

Fr Anthony Gomes has requested help to fund a parish motorbike. He is based in the Archdiocese of Chittagong, and tells us: *"The Archdiocese is five hundred years old, and the biggest in terms of land area, with a great diversity in geography, and thirteen different tribal communities living in the hill tracts to the eastern side of the Archdiocesan limits. In total there are just eleven parishes and three mission centres, but there are innumerable sub-stations stretching from one end to the other, with some 33,000 Catholics in all. My parish is located in the hills bordering India and Myanmar [formerly Burma] and it is my responsibility to minister to 6,675 souls scattered over 65 hard to reach tribal villages. It is a rapidly growing parish and on average 80-100 adult baptisms take place each year."*

Of the villages Fr Anthony struggles to reach, he tells us that 18 of them are more than fifty kilometres, or thirty miles away. *"There are no proper roads in this disadvantaged area, and no public transport so people feel very abandoned. I want to change this, but we need to walk for long hours, sometimes up to twelve at a time. If the parish had a motorbike, we could provide more frequent pastoral services and celebrate Mass and the Sacraments more frequently in all the villages."*

## MALAWI

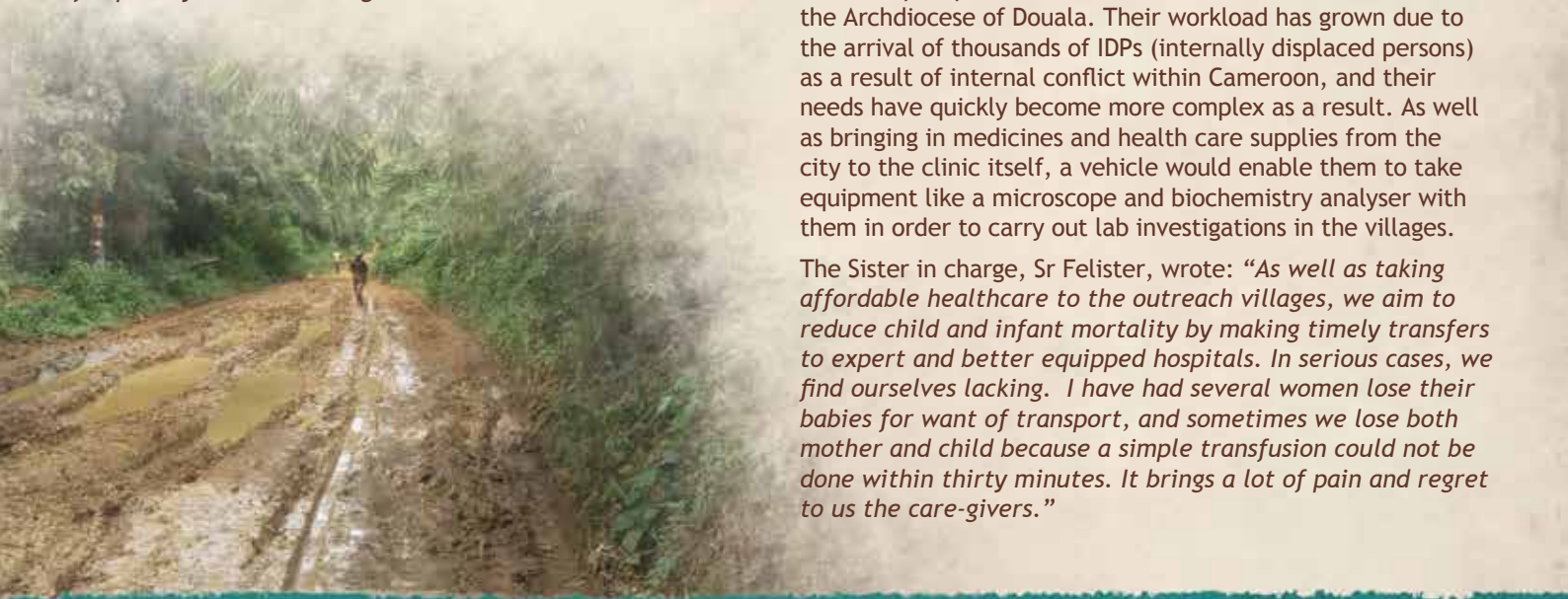
From one of the eight dioceses that make up the country, another request, this time for bicycles, is also in the pipeline. Fr Bernard Silungwe says: *"Like many other parishes, here there are long distances between the outstations of the main parish and we have divided the area into four zones, each with a fully-trained catechist, an assistant, and several volunteer catechists undergoing training. All of them work closely together and report back to the central parish. Some of the volunteers have 3 or 4 or up to 5 prayer centres to oversee, covering the needs of 12,000 parishioners in all."*

Fr Bernard has asked for a grant for a total of 28 bikes, as getting from one place to the next is the biggest challenge the parish faces. The catechists currently walk, but a bike would make conducting funerals and Sunday services more regular. Created by Pope Benedict in July of 2010, the Diocese is still young and growing, and Fr Bernard tells us: *"The motto of our Diocese, on which we focus all our apostolates, is 'We shall go to them', so our basic job is to be able to reach out to people to meet their respective needs."* The provision of a set of bikes would be a real boost for those aiming to do just that.

## CAMEROON

The Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus have contacted us for help to purchase a vehicle for their health centre in the Archdiocese of Douala. Their workload has grown due to the arrival of thousands of IDPs (internally displaced persons) as a result of internal conflict within Cameroon, and their needs have quickly become more complex as a result. As well as bringing in medicines and health care supplies from the city to the clinic itself, a vehicle would enable them to take equipment like a microscope and biochemistry analyser with them in order to carry out lab investigations in the villages.

The Sister in charge, Sr Felister, wrote: *"As well as taking affordable healthcare to the outreach villages, we aim to reduce child and infant mortality by making timely transfers to expert and better equipped hospitals. In serious cases, we find ourselves lacking. I have had several women lose their babies for want of transport, and sometimes we lose both mother and child because a simple transfusion could not be done within thirty minutes. It brings a lot of pain and regret to us the care-givers."*



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# END OF THE ROAD?

OVER  
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We hope you found this issue of 'Awareness' informative, and you have enjoyed reading about those your donations help. We also hope that we have managed to illustrate just how important mobility is for those who work so hard for others. We are the only UK-based Catholic charity which funds exclusively for all different modes of transport. Making a donation will help ensure this is not the end of the road for the aspirations of so many people.

## CAN YOU HELP? You can contribute to our work in any of the following ways:

- Ask us to send you a Standing Order form to make a small regular payment
- Donate via bank transfer:  
**PLEASE USE YOUR POSTCODE** as your reference.  
Sort Code 08-92-99 Account Number: 65628977
- Donate online by visiting [www.survive-miva.org](http://www.survive-miva.org)
- Remember us in your Will by leaving a legacy
- Represent us by becoming a volunteer and giving a short talk in parishes in your area - contact us for information and full guidance on this.
- Add my contact details to your mailing list to receive the 'Awareness' magazine - just twice a year.

## DONATION FORM AND GIFT AID DECLARATION

Please detach this page and send to SURVIVE-MIVA, 5 Park Vale Road, Aintree, L9 2DG Merseyside

I wish to donate the sum of £ ..... to SURVIVE-MIVA (Reg. Charity No. 268745).

By cheque  postal order  CAF voucher  made payable to 'SURVIVE-MIVA' (please tick appropriate box)

Or, please debit my: Mastercard  Visa  Maestro  Delta  Charity Card

Card no: .....

Expiry date: ..... / ..... Valid from: ..... / .....

Tick if you require a receipt  E-mail address: .....

Please provide your address below.

Prefer to receive 'Awareness' by e-mail, rather than by post? Please tick this box

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NB: Please let us know if your name, address, or tax status changes, or of you would like to cancel this declaration, so that we can update our records.

For more information on what we do please visit us at [www.survive-miva.org](http://www.survive-miva.org)

Our goal is to provide you with as much information as possible about what we do, and make browsing and supporting us much easier. Let us know what you think - we will be very grateful for your feedback and suggestions for improvements.