

AWARENESS

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 2023 - ISSUE 73**

SIMPLE AND AFFORDABLE

St Kizito Parish, Shanga, Diocese of Rulenge-Ngara, Tanzania

Situated in the northwest corner of the country, this rural Diocese touches on the borders with Rwanda to the west, Burundi to the south west, and to the east are the shores of Lake Victoria. The generosity of our supporters has recently made itself felt there in a tangible, 'no-nonsense' way, via a grant for £4,600, which has provided a sturdy, durable off-road parish motorbike of the type best suited to the local terrain.

Ordained as recently as 2018, Fr Edwin Faraja contacted us from Shanga to explain his transport needs: "After my ordination, I was appointed as Parish Priest at Shanga parish, which is just 4 kilometres from the neighbouring country of Burundi and has 11 outstations for which I am responsible, as well as the main centre. The transport and communications network here has generally been poor and unreliable for years, and we are cut off from important markets in larger towns, which means the locals are engaged in subsistence farming on a small scale, and they work long and hard to provide for their basic needs from their own efforts."



Father Edwin's request for help is our (in other words your) response to a single missing factor which is holding up all the good work planned - some handlebars!

"My parishioners are spread out over a large area, and I am convinced that the only way I can carry out my work effectively is with a simple and affordable means of transport. I have plans I wish to develop, and want to enhance the whole mission of evangelisation, and preside over Sunday Masses at each of the outstations in turn.

Because it is so infrequent, the people are already delighted to be able to gather for Mass when I am able. I am convinced that with transport, I will be able to meet the purpose of my Ordination, and visit and guide the small Christian groups, as well as respond to sick calls and share time with the elderly in their homes, all without delay, despite the roughness of the roads."



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OVER
49
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

Geraldine Roberts-Stone

Appeals Administrator



Since our previous edition reached you, we have been delighted to welcome our new Appeals Administrator, Geraldine Roberts-Stone. Geraldine has a comprehensive background in the Civil Service (including Communications Officer roles), local government (Library and Information Services) and education.

A qualified English teacher, she specialised in intervention

teaching, supporting pupils designated as disadvantaged, to help them fulfil their potential. Geraldine says:

"In common with many people after Covid-19, I reviewed my work-life balance, personal values and how I wanted my professional future to look. I applied for the role with SURVIVE-MIVA as it represented a chance to use my skills and experience to support vital healthcare and pastoral work in isolated communities. Having most recently worked in educational chaplaincy, it was important to me to continue in a job with Gospel values at the centre."

The staff and trustees extended a warm welcome straight from interview stage, making me feel at home. I'm enjoying learning how the organisation works."

Patron:

Most Rev Malcolm McMahon OP,
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Sue Valentine

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Simon Foran

Appeals Administrator:

Geraldine Roberts-Stone

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.

WE URGENTLY NEED YOUR HELP

Could you join our group of volunteer Speakers?

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

Tel: 0151 523 3878 E-mail: info@survive-miva.org

or visit us online www.survive-miva.org

FUTURE-PROOFING

Hello All,

Welcome to our latest edition, which will take us through to the second half of 2023.

Here in the office, we have been very much at a crossroads since I last wrote, or at least at a halt along the way, and I feel it is high time some important and difficult decisions we've made need to be passed on. Normally, most of us would agree that 'difficult decisions' sounds ominous, like a politician preparing the ground for mass redundancies or cutbacks, or tax increases, but in *our* context, I simply mean situations that are not easy to analyse with precision, in order to find a solid basis on which to decide on the best way forward. Let me explain.

We need to pick up the pieces, as I have written before in these pages, both during the worst of the pandemic and since, and to 'regroup', specifically in terms of our relations with parishes and the booking of parish visits, talks, and appeals for funds. This is almost certainly the way you would have first heard of us, and become aware of who we are and what we do. It is a vital part of the life of the Charity, and the contact we have with you as donors is central to that.

I will never forget nor cease to be grateful to you for the financial support you gave us during the pandemic, when I feared for our future as parishes closed all around, and when everything that gives us purpose and brings us the successes we have, which we show you here, seemed lost, there being no obvious duration nor end to a time which left no-one unaffected.

As we emerge from that unreal situation, we have had to make careful decisions as to the medium-term future, by which I mean the next three to five years, in terms of our projected income and expenditure - where will it come from, and how shall we best invest it?

Parish talks and appeals for funds pre-Covid used to number some 200 per year. Last year they were reduced to 44. Were it not for your rallying to our cause, and the receipt of some unexpected and most welcome legacy income, our general funds would have been greatly reduced. For this reason, we have looked at our options, and recruited Geraldine, who, working part-time in tandem with Sue (see 'Who's who' opposite,) ensures we have increased our parish contact time by fully 100% on previous years. It is our hope that by reaching out in this way, we may bring about a positive advance towards whatever 'new normal' awaits us, and 'maximise the return' on our investment for the future.

That's why I mentioned the difficulty of deciding on the allocation of funds, but we have opted for an investment of time and resources in this area in order to increase our 'parish' income proportionally (we hope!). That this option is a 'known unknown' is about all we can say for now; it may take a couple of years for us to have solid figures to compare and re-assess. So far, so good on that front. The decision has been taken.

One absolutely 'known known' is that we cannot stand still, as we were forced to during parish closures and lockdowns. *We are still here though, folks*, and in good health too thanks to you.



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

Apart from our unending task of adding to the number of vehicles we fund for all sorts of work in all sorts of places, as we continue through the early twenties and beyond, we want to reconstruct - *not to reproduce what was* - but to build and design something *new and different*, something that can be maintained, improved on, and updated as the years seem to flash by, whilst taking care never to deviate from the simplicity and practicalities of the charitable objects we have always valued. By this 'something', I mean a refit of our 'engine room'.

I have been aware for years now that in terms of the Charity's IT provision, for example, we have been skating on very thin ice in some areas - although not all - and have not invested in it anything like as much, nor as often, as is recommended by the boffins, or, as we know him, James Bainbridge, the IT Co-ordinator for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and a good friend of the Association, who has gently warned us of the risks of not keeping up to date.

In some ways, over the decades, at SURVIVE-MIVA we have been trendsetters, whereas in others, there are aspects of our operation that could rightfully claim their place in a technology museum. The long-toothed among you will remember floppy disks, and before them, the cardboard ones roughly the size of a 45rpm record that were used to store information. We had those, of course, and in 1997, thanks to the fact that we had connections with a supportive fledgling business at the time, we also had a website. The fact that no-one here knew quite what purpose it served was beside the point - *we had one!*

We also progressed, in matters of storage and backups, from floppies to CDs, then on to USB ports and ever diddier removable memory sticks, and then, the big daddy of them all, *removable hard drives*, which we still currently rely on! All these are, of course, methods of storing and restoring systems in case of loss or of files becoming for whatever reason corrupt and unusable, but are themselves all subject to the same fate. Mechanical devices break.

So what of the museum pieces? By these I refer not so much to the machines themselves, but to the computer programmes they contain on their drives, through which our information is processed and made useful in the first place. This is how we know which parishes to ring or (increasingly) e-mail to ask if we can visit, and in what date order. It's where we store our financial history, and details of how much we raise and can spend, it shows us who has requested a grant, and where they are based, as well as our response to each individual, going right back to the mid-nineties, in such a way that our IT provision is ipso facto our archive and history as a charity. Anything before that we have on paper in a series of box files, one for every grant, although documents originally printed on fax paper have long since faded and joined the works of Ozymandias.

It was Bob Marley who sang "*In this great future, you can't forget your past*", but I don't think he meant we should never update things. The fact is that we need to invest in the future as far as our *programmes* are concerned too. The language our key databases were written in, in the mid-nineties, is no longer readable by any modern pc. If they were to fail, although we have backups, we run the risk of not being able to reinstall them, a bit like trying to put a 78 into a CD player. (*CD player?? - aagh! even my analogies are becoming obsolete these days..!*)

This is the 'thin ice' quandary I mentioned earlier.

The prevailing attitude has always been a sort of '*if it ain't broke...*' approach - '*...yes but it does the job...what it says on the tin...*' and so on, and it's undeniable that this has been the case. However, tailor-made programmes that work and have worked for decades in one context are now rapidly failing the 'future-proofing test', and there's not a lot we can do except recognise that. I don't count myself a technophobe at all, but I do find a lot of this 'stuff' difficult, or in modern parlance, 'challenging', but given that it is going to happen anyway, I reckon I might as well embrace it.

There is plenty to embrace, mind. We shall soon have the advantage of our volunteer Speakers (please consider joining up!) having card readers to take donations, which will save on admin and therefore money (don't worry though - for as long as the forces of the future allow us, we will be most pleased to carry on accepting cheques!) We will combine certain databases which when streamlined will be much more efficient (more money saved), we will integrate our re-designed website with our accounts, manage standard documents and tasks like claiming Gift Aid from HMRC more easily, and be able to generate our own QR codes. These are those little black and white mosaic thingies which your phone can scan so you don't have to handle cash or credit cards when you make a donation - amongst a host of other applications. All of this will be preserved in the 'cloud', so it is forever available and intact...er...as long as you have a working internet connection...*Hmmm...*

For the first time in a generation, then, we are investing in the unknown in many ways, readily taking on all-comers in the white heat of what awaits, but we do it with confidence, and a conviction that we are doing the right thing at a long-overdue time.

Though small, we have always punched above our weight, and are doing so again, fighting the good fight on behalf of the next generation, whose turn it will be to ensure the best possible provision for the long-term sustainability of the Association.

By doing that, they will be providing the best possible service to our beneficiaries, who will now take over these pages from me.

Thank you for believing in us.

God bless,

Simon Patrick Foran

Director.



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NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

Regular readers will know by now that in each issue we do our best to keep you up-to-date with the progress being made by those you have supported. Whilst we recognise that there are no easy or quick solutions to the problems our beneficiaries face each day, we do know that being mobile does enable them to tackle jobs they would otherwise have great difficulties doing.

Over the decades we have provided health and pastoral outreach transport - a mix of almost seven thousand vehicles all in all, including 4x4 pickups, motorbikes, scooters, auto-rickshaws (sometimes known as 'tuk-tuks'), plenty of bicycles, and the occasional outboard motor, with or without a boat or small launch attached. Here, we report back on a recent grant for two such modes of transport. We aim to provide a practical means for people with skills and experience to share what they have with the people in isolated places around them, and in those parts of the world where the roads are rivers, a launch is what best gets them out and about.

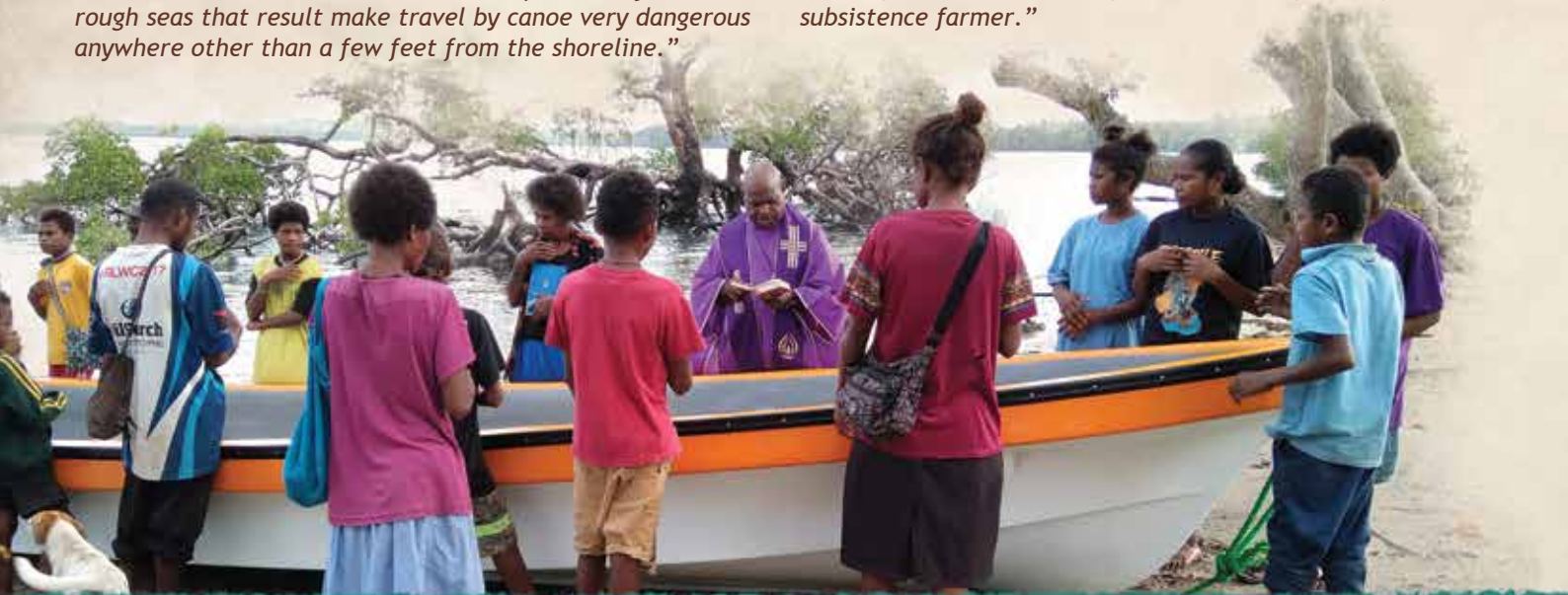
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Misima and Nimoa Parishes, Diocese of Alotau-Sideia

In his initial request, Bishop Rolando Santos first gave us some background information, writing: *"This Diocese was created in 1966, and has grown over the last 56 years, but is still relatively small, having been put up later than others in the islands. Communications have always been a problem because the communities that make up the parishes are scattered and remote. The weather is often windy and the rough seas that result make travel by canoe very dangerous anywhere other than a few feet from the shoreline."*

Nimoa parish is a three- or four-day boat trip from the main capital, Alotau, and is one of just nineteen in all, although there are dozens of communities attached to each, dotted about on the small islands that make up the Calvados Chain or archipelago. Flat, and surrounded by an abundance of forest and vegetation, the area is rich in natural resources, although the gold mining which once dominated the economy has now been stopped due to the degradation of the environment. Locals depend on garden produce which they can sell in local markets, along with fish.

PP Fr Robert Timi says: *"The opportunity to take advantage of larger markets in Alotau itself is limited because commuting is expensive. They have to pay the boat fares, which are expensive, and then there is a charge for freight - their produce - too. Added to that is the day-to-day expense of living in a town, which again, is not easily met by a subsistence farmer."*



Getting others back on the road to self-help



Father Robert continues: "Weather patterns are unpredictable and affected by climate change which has an impact on people's lives. During the long dry season [between May and September], food can run short, which is when locals depend on non-perishable goods which have to be purchased from the store or in local canteens with money saved from their earlier endeavours."

Bishop Santos informs us that Nimoa is the biggest in the Diocese, with forty centres and an estimated 7,000 parishioners. Providing pastoral care on a regular basis is a priority: "I have been sailing on traditional canoes for twelve years, and it is irregular and very slow. Because of this, those living on small islands miss out and often live and die without receiving the Sacraments."

From Misima, meanwhile, PP Fr Sam Phasz writes: "Because only four of our nineteen parishes are located on the mainland in Milne Bay, we depend for the large part of our work and the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, 'Sailing in Communion with Christ', on the traditional dugout canoes, although this is dangerous, especially due to the frequent but unexpected cyclone warnings we receive, which leave our plans in ruins and the people disappointed at our absence. Our request for two 23 foot launches and a powerful 40 horsepower engine will help us bolster what we have so far achieved in our communities and with those new to the Faith. Also, my aim is for our young Church leaders to be better trained to carry out the work of the Church, and one day to take over the ownership of their own local churches and lay leaders, as I believe that is how we can become truly self-reliant and self-supporting."

Fr Sam has made sacrifices of his own over his time in his island ministry, and tells us: "After my ordination in 2007, I was sent to the far eastern parishes of the Rossel islands, and during that time, we were really short of priests, so much so that I was asked to be caretaker Parish Priest for all four parishes for my first three years. During those years I walked and sailed to and fro from each parish and its surrounding settlements, and did my best, but failed many times to reach my destinations."

Living in such isolation may be a mixed blessing, but it does mean that communities are tightly-bound, and needs and priorities are shared - as are the resources available - because everyone knows they are interdependent.

The boats are already being put to good use for all sorts of initiatives: "We need to be able to make visits to the old and less mobile, and take them to the health centre when needed so that healthcare can be made accessible on a wider scale, and to move around and do this in our parishes regularly, given the demand is onerous. We have to teach in schools too, and help strengthen the Faith through consistent awareness campaigns and the promotion

of justice and peace among those areas where conflict has occurred in the past. This has been due to a lack of mutual knowledge of customs and practices in different areas, where some rituals are in fact harmful to good relations and common progress. We need to promote the care of the environment which sustains us, and widen the impact of our Family Life and Child Protection office in people's understanding of what their duties and responsibilities are, as parents and guardians of the future."



Bishop Santos explains further: "Christianity has reached the outer villages and locals have reacted well. They maintain a partial reliance on their traditional beliefs, with such things as extended family ties being given great importance, and activities like clan meetings and celebrations put the emphasis on the bonds that exist between families who are often dispersed - all of which is vital and must be cherished.

In reality, today, thanks to the practice of inculturation, [taking an inclusive, positive approach towards some pre-existing customs and recognising them as valid] many things are integrated into the Mass, like hymns and the prayers of the Faithful being sung and recited in local languages, and very often the offertory procession, for example, will be presented by dancers in traditional dress and using locally-produced vessels."

The provision of grants for small boats and outboards, or 'peque-peques' as they are known in the Amazon, is not hugely representative, in itself, of a 'typical' grant [if there is such a thing], nor of the widespread and very varied contribution to the work of the international Church you habitually bring about thanks to your donations.

Nonetheless, though infrequent, it is a very apt example and a timely reminder of how our own commitment to others stems from them, not us. They know what best suits their everyday reality, and they know best how to get on and get things done, and so once our part is played, we simply say to Frs Robert, Sam, and to Bishop Santos and the rest, on behalf of you all: 'Bon voyage'.





INDIA

Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, Diocese of Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh State

Provincial Superior Sr Philomena George is our contact in Ambikapur, and co-ordinated this grant for three mopeds. She told us:

"Ambikapur Province of the Ursuline Sisters is working in one of the most forgotten and economically poor states, Chhattisgarh, in north India. We are also working in other states like Odisha and Madhya Pradesh where Christians are not looked on favourably by the state-run agents like fundamentalist Hindus and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), who have also carried out acts of violence against Muslims. Most of the people in Chhattisgarh are 'tribals' and 'untouchables', who live on the banks of lakes or water canals in the jungles and thick forests which are very far from cities. They have no political role to play and are ignored by those in power. They just live on what they produce from small bits and pieces of land. Both girls and boys are sent to big cities in search of work as a consequence of this, a practice fraught with all sorts of danger.

There are still some amongst them who just worship nature and live with the strongest superstitions as part of their customs and traditions, so the Sisters are mainly concentrating on the overall development of these tribals and untouchable Dalit people. We are nurturing them in their Catholic Faith and traditions, and are working hard for their growth and development in a positive way,"

We have already seen from the work of Bishop Santos how mutual acceptance and inclusivity have long been part of the relationship between the Church and those new to the Faith, although some of the superstitions of old persist:

"Tribals are very superstitious about having a girl child. The girls are given the least importance in the family and in the society. That's why the girls are sent to graze cows, buffalos or sheep or they are sent to work as maids for the landlord's families where they are regularly subjected to abuse. In search of a livelihood some girls are sent to big cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata and some even to Dubai. In the process some girls are dragged into prostitution, drugs and smuggling and some mediators sell these girls permanently to brothels in these big cities.

We the Ursuline Sisters go to different villages in the jungles and attend the poor sick people and spend some time with them and distribute necessary medicines. We spend a lot of time with the old and the bedridden people, and talk to them. They feel happy and that there is someone that cares for them, even in the jungle.

But the Sisters are finding it very difficult to visit these people where there is no public transportation at all. There are no proper roads to visit. It is not possible for a four-wheeler to reach these villages. It is only possible for scooties [two-wheelers] to do this. The Sisters walk for miles to visit these families, and sometimes it gets very late in the evening with the Sisters walking at night in the jungles to come back to the convent. There were Sisters that were bitten by snakes while walking at night, some were attacked by the wild animals. Some were attacked by robbers. It is not safe for them to walk at night, so we humbly request your kindness to help us buy scooties for them. The poor tribals, especially the old sick people, cannot walk for miles to get medicines, but with a scooty the Sisters can easily have access to these people, treat and distribute medicines, and make them feel that they are not forgotten, but let them see that they are loved and cared for, by us at least."

Our grant of just £2,635 covered the cost of the three mopeds and led Sr Philomena to tell us: "Thank you for your treasured gift. May our beloved Mother Mary always stay with us and pray for us all, as she prayed at the foot of the cross."



Getting others back on the road to self-help

ALWAYS ON THE MOVE...

OVER
49
YEARS'
SERVICE

In common with previous issues, in this edition of our magazine, the initiatives 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 targeted part in supporting the indigenous Church's health and pastoral work overseas, whilst keeping things as clear-cut and simple as possible.

This means that the health camps 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 continue to give to support a variety of dedicated 'key' workers, some of whom are quoted here:

HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT WORK IN INDIA

"Our Congregation, the Seva Sisters of Mary, was established in Madras [now Chennai] in 1974. Our aim is to run non-profit-making dispensaries, clinics, nurseries, adult education classes, and evening study centres. We work against child labour and school drop outs, and promote small saving schemes and credit unions with the object of forming financial independence and allowing people to better themselves. In just one project in Manali New Town, for example, we have 25 villages to cover and walk up to 16k [10 miles] to reach the furthest. Our own medical survey showed that none has any access to basic health facilities. Our charism is to work for the marginalised sectors, but due to the lack of financial support, we are not able to reach out to the people fully, so we turned to you."

Sr Vanak Arasi SMSM

PASTORAL SUPPORT IN GHANA

"Most of the roads here could only be accessed by tractors or off-road motorbikes. Our Diocese is one of just twenty in Ghana, and itself cover over 11,000 square kilometres [over 4,300 square miles] or one tenth the total area of the country. We know that without transport it is very difficult to implement our pastoral plans, and in some more remote areas, for now it is impossible to make progress in anything but the most limited way. Our moderate, cost-effective aim is not to have a four-wheeler stationed at every parish, as we know this is unsustainable, but to equip the five furthest parishes with a motorbike, each costing just 2,300 pounds Sterling. In this manner, the frequency of visits to the outstations can be more regular, and we can assess people's needs at first hand. We can better plan our programmes of leadership formation and development education, and the administration of the Sacraments will receive a great boost."

Fr Emmanuel Barwvah

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN TANZANIA...

"Our Diocese of Bunda dates from 2011, so is very newly-established. We have eighteen parishes, and mine, Mabui, is on the shores of Lake Victoria. I have 26 outstations in all, with 106 small Christian Communities operating amongst them. In the circumstances, we rely on our 76 trained catechists to reach these groups for Sunday services of the Word, in my absence, for teaching in both our primary and secondary schools, as well as for implementing other socio-economic projects, and awareness-raising to combat the high incidence of malaria, HIV/AIDS, poor housing and nutrition. One priest cannot visit all 26 places to celebrate Mass, nor is it possible to serve the elderly and sick in prayer and/or Holy Communion. A bicycle for each worker would make so much of this possible."

Fr Peter Maraga

...AND IN UGANDA

"We have just ten canonically established parishes in our Diocese, Kotido, which covers over 5,200 square miles, [twice the size of Cumbria] and only 21 active local clergy. This means that meeting up with our parishioners is difficult, though with a parish motorbike a priest can travel further than on foot or by bike, and make progress with our planned outreach programmes. Between us, we have almost 200,000 Catholics in our care, the fruit of years of dedicated work by our predecessors, and in my case, the furthest communities that make up the fifty thousand or so parishioners of my parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary, are 35 miles away. The route to them is impassable on four wheels, but there are rough tracks which reach them. The only way I feel I can be relevant in my service as a priest is when I am in a position to move to the people."

Fr Wilfred Okello

Could you join our group of volunteer Speakers? **WE URGENTLY NEED YOUR HELP**



www.survive-miva.org

END OF THE ROAD?

OVER
49
YEARS'
SERVICE

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:*

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For more information on what we do please visit us at 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.