



REPORT OF VISIT TO THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF SHINYANGA, TANZANIA

8-15 AUGUST 2023

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COMMISSARIES OF THE BISHOP OF SHINYANGA**

1. Background

This was our third visit to the Diocese of Shinyanga. The first, exploratory visit was for four days in September 2019 as guests of Bishop Johnson. This was followed by our second visit of eight days in June 2022, our first as Bishop's Commissaries and the first opportunity post COVID to review projects supported by FOAT.

2. Purpose of our visit

The purpose of our visit was to review Care Ministry projects supported by FOAT; to meet with communities working with families of the disabled; to explore opportunities for developing local and global partnerships to support care ministry; to discuss with the Diocesan Leadership Team their strategic plans for pastoral and care ministry and identify priorities for FOAT.

3. Care Ministry Projects supported by FOAT since 2020

- i)** Inception of fruit and vegetable garden at Buhangija Residential School – March 2020;
- ii)** Refurbishment and extension of derelict medical centre at Solwa – opened in 2021;
- iii)** Disability Training for 30 clergy and laity by Amani Centre Leadership team – November 2020, leading to:
- iv)** - Initiation of Kinship Groups of families of the disabled in five or six parishes, including Solwa, Maswa, Ndala, Mwadui and St Andrews Shinyanga;
- v)** Initiation of a Mission Partnership between Earley St Peter's Church in Reading and the Diocese of Shinyanga
- vi)** Financial support for education of two sisters with albinism – Shija and Lucia - to attend Mwadui Anglican Primary School;
- vii)** Financial support for further education for Samuel, a young man with albinism;
- viii)** Financial Support for Safeguarding Training, delivered by FOAT Trustee, Catherine Swanson for representatives from parishes with established Kinship Groups;
- ix)** Emergency Funding to support 29 young girls with a disability at Buhangija Primary School following a Fire in November 2022 which killed three girls;
- x)** Refurbishment of dormitory accommodation and supply of bunk beds for Phase 1 of Ndala Pastors and Evangelists Training Centre;
- xi)** Assisting with the purchase of cars for a) the Bishop and b) the Diocesan Secretary, Rev Stanley Sewando (responsible for Diocesan Care Ministry);

- xii) Initiating a database of regular donors to provide on-going support for Care Ministry needs.

4. Meetings and Visits in August 2023

4.1 Bishop Johanna Nzelu, Lutheran Bishop of Shinyanga



The meeting with Bishop Johanna provided an opportunity for both churches to share their experiences of social and pastoral work to people with disabilities. Before his appointment as Bishop, Johanna was a Lutheran parish priest and Head Teacher of Mwadui Secondary School. He established a residential centre for children with albinism at Mwadui and has lobbied for the rights of people with albinism. He and Bishop Johnson agreed to explore a potential partnership for care ministry to people with disabilities.

4.2 Visit to Nikolaus and his family

Nikolaus is 13 years old and has a physical disability. He lives with his mother and younger brother in extreme poverty. His disability makes it extremely difficult to walk the 2km to school. His mother has joined the Ndala Kinship Group and the family are visited regularly by Rev Stanley and members of his own family. Nikolaus has been 'adopted' by the young people of Earley St Peter's Church who have fundraised to help the family with some basic needs and donated gifts. It was a joy for us to introduce Nikolaus, his mother and brother to the game of Uno. They now share this pleasure with others, thereby helping to reduce their social isolation. One of the challenges for the family is finding funds for Nikolaus to receive medical treatment and a new leg calliper. He still uses the one he was 'prescribed' when he was 6 years old, which of course is much too small.



4.3. Solwa

4.3.1 Solwa Kinship Group



The Solwa Kinship group of families of the disabled meet together approximately monthly led by Rev Zacheus, parish priest (in yellow T-shirt). Families are scattered over a wide geographical area, making it difficult to meet particularly in the wet season. They also lack funds to help with travel costs. However, they gain mutual support through meeting and, funded by a small personal donation plan to start a Microbank (Vacoba) after appropriate training. We have seen through our work with families of the disabled at the Amani Centre, how the formation of a Microbank can help families to support themselves.

4.3.2 Solwa Medical Centre

A partnership agreement (Memorandum of Understanding - MoU) was signed in 2020 between the Anglican Diocese of Shinyanga and the Tanzanian Government Board of Health to open a District Medical Centre at Solwa. The agreement was that the Church should pay for the refurbishment of the buildings, including accommodation for medical staff and supply basic medical equipment, including for the testing laboratory and the Government would pay salaries of medical staff and run and maintain the facility. FOAT secured a substantial grant from a UK Charitable Trust for the refurbishment and equipment supply and the Centre was officially opened by the Bishop in late 2020, medical staff appointed in early 2021 and the first patients attending clinics soon thereafter.



Sadly, about five months after opening the Solwa Medical Centre in 2021, the water supply to Solwa village including the medical centre ceased. This was due to i) a breakdown of the main pump at Lake Victoria which pumps the water to the pipe network, and ii) the poor state of the local pipework. Both these issues are due to lack of investment by Government bodies. Despite intensive lobbying by villagers, local ward representatives and the Church, there is still no mains water supply to the village. There have been countless changes in Local Government personnel in the past two years and no-one apparently taking responsibility to see the situation rectified so that the Centre can reopen.

During our visit we met with the 'new' District Medical Officer, together with Bishop

Johnson and the Rev Stanley. We understand that a new MoU between Government and Church is being prepared. It is expected this will be signed by the end of September. Even if the water supply has not been restored, we were assured that, once the new MoU is in place, the Government will, if necessary bring water tankers to fill the water tanks at the Medical Centre so that it can reopen. With additional pressure being brought to bear on local government representatives with an election looming in 2025, we are moderately confident that Solwa Medical Centre will be back in operation in the next three months.

4.4 Mwadui

The Rev Jacob has been the Parish Priest at Mwadui for the past 11 years; five of these have been under the leadership of Bishop Johnson. Rev Jacob has proven to be very committed to developing care ministry; initiating a Kinship Group in the parish, working with Rev Stanley to identify families of children with albinism in rural communities, working with Church bodies to develop the Anglican Primary School to work towards inclusive education; and has himself fostered two girls with albinism - Shija and Lucia - to enable them to receive an education at Mwadui Primary School, paid for by UK sponsors through FOAT.

At the request of Bishop Johnson, Jacob will be going to college in Mara (500 km from Shinyanga) to study for a diploma in theology starting in September. He has a scholarship from a church organisation. This means he has to vacate the church house at Mwadui and his wife has to return to her home village (Solwa) to live. The Bishop has appointed Rev Ruben to be the priest at Mwadui. Ruben is Jacob's cousin. He has a family of his own (most away at boarding school) and also looks after three of his brother's girls. In order for Shija, Lucia and Efracia to continue to attend Mwadui Anglican Primary School and receive a good education, all three girls will now live with Ruben, his wife and family at Mwadui.

4.4.1 Mwadui Kinship Group



It was a pleasure to meet a few of this group again, alongside outgoing priest, Rev Jacob (left of photo) and incoming priest, Rev Ruben (centre). During the course of our discussions, one of the group expressed her thanks and appreciation that the group now felt empowered to help themselves. With the small personal donation we made, they planned to set up their own Microbank (Vicoba) to help them with funds to support their children's needs.

The lady on the right of this photo (green dress) is Mary. She is a teacher at Mwadui Primary School. She was sponsored by her family and parish to spend six months at the Amani Centre to learn Sign Language.

4.4.2 Mwadui Anglican Primary School



Mwadui Anglican Primary School is situated on Williamson's Diamond Mine compound. It was originally set up by the mining authorities to provide education for the mineworkers' children. It was given to the Anglican Church some fifty plus years ago. It is run as a non-profit organisation aimed at providing education services for all. The state of the buildings is poor, teaching aids are extremely limited but the academic performance of the school is high. There is capacity and a desire to i) register more pupils, and ii) for the school to become inclusive, to educate children with special needs. However, without either boarding facilities or a minibus, children from further afield and/or a disability would struggle to attend the school, particularly during the wet season. Currently just three of the 147 pupils have special needs; two with albinism (Shija and Lucia) and one with moderate sight loss.

Our visit provided the opportunity to meet with the Head Teacher, Staff and Management Team; follow up on discussions and developments from last year; and interact with some of the children. We were pleased that since last year, the school had followed our suggestion of encouraging the parents and children to discuss ways to i) improve the school infrastructure and ii) refurbish an adjacent house owned and offered by the mine for conversion to dormitory accommodation. Parents are now contributing a small amount annually for refurbishment; one of the classrooms had already been painted, toilets repaired and renovated. However, plans for dormitory accommodation had been temporarily suspended as a) the mining company had been forced to take back the house it had offered for dormitory accommodation to re-house families displaced by the mine flood earlier in the year, and b) the recent Government legislation prohibiting boarding for children in Standard 4 and below except in special cases. . . which could include children with Special Needs.

While the benefits of inclusive education in a school such as Mwadui can easily be identified, it will certainly be a struggle for the school to raise funds to build a dormitory or purchase a minibus. Equally it's hard for FOAT to devote time and efforts in seeking funds for these projects. However, as education is key to helping the rehabilitation of people with disabilities, if any organisation would like to fund one or both of these initiatives, FOAT would be pleased to facilitate arrangements.

4.4.3 Shija and Lucia



It was a pleasure and one of the highlights of our visit to meet with Shija and Lucia once again. They are clearly thriving and keen to learn. Shija was elected Head Girl of Mwadui this year. She will be sitting her Standard 7 National Examination at the end of September and is expected to pass, thereby allowing her to progress to secondary education. It is hoped that she will attend the Lutheran Secondary School on the Mwadui Mine Campus, thereby allowing her to continue to live with her sibling and foster sister.

Lucia has benefitted from the commitment of the Mwadui staff to provide additional help out of school hours to assist her educational development and the nurture and love shown by her foster family. Without the financial support for their education provided by a UK sponsor via FOAT, none of this would have been possible and it is likely these girls would have remained in the village with their 11 siblings, receiving little or no education or prospect of improving their life chances.

FOAT and the Shinyanga Care Ministry team are keen to improve the life chances of many more children like Shija and Lucia.

4.5 Ndala

4.5.1 Ndala Mission and Evangelism Training Centre

Throughout Tanzania it is the Christian Churches which provide many of the 'social services' which are more commonly provided in the West by government bodies. In Shinyanga there are many families with disabilities, in particular albinism, families who have no one and nowhere to turn for help. The Anglican Diocese of Shinyanga has many villages with no church representation, hence it decided to start the Mission and Evangelism Training Centre (METC) to train ordained and lay ministers/evangelists to enhance church ministry thereby reaching out to those disadvantaged by poverty and disability. With this in mind, in 2022 FOAT was pleased to be able to:

- raise funds to contribute to the refurbishment of dormitory facilities and
- secure a grant towards the training of the first cohort of 40 evangelists to be involved in church planting and identifying and empowering community members with children with disabilities.

We were pleased to meet with these students and, at the suggestion of Bishop Johnson, introduce the concept of solar cooking. The potential for solar cooking in a region which has almost guaranteed sunshine every day of the year, is enormous. We encouraged the evangelists to experiment with the prototype and consider how families could adopt this method of cooking, thereby protecting the environment and themselves from the dangers of collecting wood.



Meeting in the courtyard at METC



METC Cookhouse



The concept of solar cooking

4.5.2 Cooperation with Ndala Compassion Centre

METC is located next to the Compassion Centre at Ndala. The students at METC are able to use the Compassion classrooms during the week and look forward to challenging the Compassion Centre staff at football on a Saturday afternoon!

Compassion, through its network of supporters worldwide, helps some of the poorest children in society <https://www.compassion.com/> On Saturdays, 'Compassion Children' come to the Centre for education classes to enhance their social, developmental and life skills and for the youth to attend classes in tailoring, IT, welding and a variety of other vocational skills. During the week, Compassion focuses on nursery and maternal education.



Meeting Compassion Centre Staff



Lunch!



Baby sensory room

4.6 Samuel

We were delighted to be greeted by Samuel at Ndala where he is staying and learning with the METC students between finishing his IT introductory course at Shinyanga Veta (FE college) and starting his IT Certificate course in Mwanza in October.



The staff at Ndala Compassion Centre have been pleased to help Samuel to build on his basic computing knowledge by teaching him about IT peripheral hardware and internet and helping him with his interpersonal skills. Samuel is most grateful for his education sponsorship and the opportunities Ndala has afforded him.

4.7 Maswa Parish and Compassion Centre

The Rev Godfrey was appointed Priest in Charge at Maswa in 2018. Since then he has done much to develop support networks for children in need, including a Kinship Group for families of the disabled. He spearheaded an initiative to establish a Compassion Centre at Maswa which officially opened in 2019, facilitating outreach and reducing the stigma for attendance by children with disabilities. After hearing about the Amani Centre through the training sponsored by FOAT, the Parish paid for one of the Compassion teachers, Malik to go to Amani to learn sign language. Rev Godfrey, who has a disability himself, is working on innovative projects to help young people attending the Centre to learn skills to support themselves in the future. These include making decorative garden items using towels and clay – some of these were on display in the grounds around the church and centre.



Children from the Compassion Nursery School

4.8 St Andrew's Shinyanga Kinship Group



Empowered and motivated by the parish priest, Rev Joan, the Kinship group at St Andrew's meets regularly and has begun making soaps, body creams, foodstuffs and textile products to sell. Encouraged by their initiative, we made a small donation to assist with marketing their products.

4.9 Buhangija School

4.9.1 The Garden (Shamba) Buhangija is a government inclusive school accommodating children with visual and hearing impairments and albinism. In 2020, when COVID restrictions meant gifts of food by local donors ceased, the children were facing starvation. Alerted to this by the Care Ministry team, FOAT launched a fundraising campaign to i) provide emergency food aid, and ii) establish a vegetable and fruit garden (Shamba) in the grounds of the school. This was not only to provide food for the children but also to be an educational aid and ultimately for surplus crops to be sold as a source of income generation for the school. Since its inception, the garden has faced a number of challenges – pests, funds to pay for water in dry season - and the most recent, the reduction in land area as the government took nearly half of it to construct a new dormitory following the fire. Despite these setbacks it was pleasing to see vegetables growing on the original garden site and early developments to establish a garden on a new site in another area of land on the Buhangija Site.



Existing Shamba



New site for Shamba



Filling buckets to water fruit trees on the new Shamba

The challenge of water supply still remains. There is potential for water capture from gutters and tanks on buildings on the edge of the site at a cost of £1,150 and the school has identified a location for a deep well on the new site, cost £2,500 but lacks funds for either of these projects.

4.9.2 After the fire

The disastrous dormitory fire of November 2022 killed three girls with a visual impairment and left 29 others with no clothing, bedding, school books etc and a very traumatised school community. FOAT launched an appeal to raise £3,500 to replace the

children's belongings, purchase games and invest in the garden to help with therapy. During our visit, we saw evidence of the construction of the new dormitory by the government and the children appreciative of the games and puzzles previously provided and eager to play with the new ones we took! It is of course difficult to judge the long term effect of the fire on the children, but the staff were genuinely appreciative of FOAT's contributions and asked that we continue to support investment in the garden as a means, not only of enhancing the children's diet but providing education, therapy and a source of income for the school in the future.



Of concern . . . Buhangija staff advised us that they were waiting for the government to install fire alarm systems in all dormitories. On further enquiry we discovered that there was currently no system for sounding alarms/bells/flashing lights to alert children to fires and no regular fire drills. On raising our concern about this and suggesting simple, inexpensive solutions, the staff agreed to make this a priority for action. The Care Ministry team will be following up.

5. Conclusions and next steps

There is no doubt that the Care Ministry team in Shinyanga, under the direction of Bishop Johnson, has achieved a great deal to improve the lives of people with disabilities since it began in 2019. FOAT is pleased to have been involved in facilitating some of these initiatives and looks forward to continuing to support its work in the future.

The Diocese of Shinyanga is one of the poorest in terms of financial resources in Tanzania. It has no funds even to pay its clergy, very few of whom have been formerly trained beyond primary education. What it lacks in money, it gains in terms of drive, determination and enthusiasm to educate and empower communities to use their God given resources to help themselves.

The strategy for the development of Care Ministry is to focus on the training and development of pastors and evangelists to work in their communities to help people to help themselves. Alongside this is a desire to improve the educational opportunities of those living with a disability through educational sponsorship projects such as the garden at Buhangija School and developing social empowerment projects within kinship groups.

Following discussions with Bishop Johnson, it was agreed that as his Commissaries we focus on seeking new individuals and networks to support Care Ministry; and strengthen and empower the existing networks to raise awareness of the needs of Shinyanga Care Ministry. In terms of fundraising, Bishop Johnson requests FOAT to:

- Build up a database of regular supporters to generate a reliable source of income for the Diocese to conduct Care Ministry;
- Seek funds to contribute to the costs of training the second cohort of evangelists to attend six months course at Ndala – minimum £2,000 (this excludes funds to pay teaching staff);
- Seek funds for refurbishment of Phase 2 of Ndala training centre to expand capacity for training pastors - £22,000;
- Seek funds for water projects at Buhangija to enhance the garden to provide a regular supply of food for the school; assist in the education and development of the children; and provide a source of income - £1,500 and £2,500;
- Seek an organisation(s) to partner Mwadui Primary School to assist its fundraising for school resources; and a bus and dormitory to facilitate its development to become an inclusive school.

Bridget Green

Bishop's Commissary and FOAT Trustee

14/09/2023