



In all things to love and to serve

Irish Jesuit Mission Office Newsletter

Issue 14 – Spring 2015

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Vision

A just and humane world based on Gospel values and Ignatian Spirituality.

Mission

The Irish Jesuit Missions supports Jesuit works in the service of poor and marginalised people, particularly in Africa and Asia.

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www.jesuitmissions.ie



Colette with members of the JRS Goz Beida team engaged in a confectionary course at Djabal Camp, Goz Beida, Chad

Jesuit and Muslim Community Collaboration in Chad

Colette Finneran, facilitator of English as a Foreign Language, works with the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) in Chad.

I am lucky to collaborate directly with refugees in Djabal camp, in Eastern Chad, as part of the Jesuit Commons Higher Education at the Margins (JC HEM) programme. We teach English to two classes of adults with the aim of enabling students to eventually pursue an online diploma with a Jesuit University in the US. The majority of these men and women come from Darfur in Sudan and many have been in the camp for over 10 years. Among them are a number of Chadian nationals from the local town. These students help to broaden the perspective of the group and are a daily reminder of the solidarity between the host

community and refugees and between Muslim and Christian.

Students engage in two hours community work each week as part of the project to support their respective communities. Their community work projects were chosen following a series of group discussions in class to identify the primary needs of their community and possible ways of responding. Students found there are needs common to both the refugee and Chadian communities relating to literacy, conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence as well as hygiene and health promotion. They reflect on their community work collaboratively in class, exchanging ideas and resources and recording them in a journal. We are hopeful

A Word from the Director



Easter is a time of celebrating new hope in our world. Jesus Christ through his death, resurrection and everlasting presence among us is the source of our strength.

The stories in our newsletter this Easter are stories of hope for now and for the

future. We read accounts of our lay colleagues working at home and abroad with the Jesuits in building the Kingdom of God.

Our Father General Adolfo Nicolás SJ always reminds us that our mission is the service of faith and the promotion of justice in collaboration with others. Faith, justice and collaboration constitute the motto of the Jesuits. We cannot work on our own, and our lay partners are core to the fulfilment of our mission in the service of faith and justice.

This mission is expressed in many ways as we read about Colette in Chad helping refugees, especially women, in their schooling with the Jesuit Refugee Service. Brian works in one of the oldest and most important Jesuit projects in Zambia in building up the farm in Kasisi. This project has been helping women and men farmers since the time of Fr. Donal McKenna SJ RIP.

Diana from Kenya works in the Province offices in Kenya sharing by her communication skills the good news of the works of the Jesuits in Eastern Africa.

Winnie is based at our Mission office at home in Dublin, Ireland, in accounts and administration. The work overseas cannot be effectively carried out without her commitment and that of so many others working in collaboration with the Jesuits.

I wish you a very happy Easter. You have been our greatest partners over the years. Your prayers, along with the material and moral support of our missionaries, are an inspiration and source of joy to all of us in the Irish Jesuit Mission office. Thank you all!. And may Easter blessings and peace come to you and your families.

that the friendships formed in this spirit of service, collaboration and justice will be an enduring legacy of this project in addition to the goal of creating future community leaders.

As a JRS staff member, collaboration is formally facilitated at the weekly team meeting where Chadian and international staff report on the activities of the week. The meeting provides an opportunity for all team workers to engage in an exchange of ideas and information and is a new way of working for many. The meeting is carried out in a convivial atmosphere, helped by sweet tea to start and finishing with some roast lamb straight from the market, in the best local tradition!

JRS is responsible for primary and pre-school education for Sudanese refugees in Djabal camp and in Kerfi, a nearby town where refugees are being integrated into the local community. Sudanese and Chadian school principals and inspectors collaborate with JRS project co-ordinators on a day to day basis in the field on questions of curriculum and administration. The transition from the Sudanese curriculum to the Chadian curriculum within refugee camp schools has been a major part of JRS' work in Chad in the past year including teacher training and the provision of books. Other projects include the education and training of women, the inclusion of children with disabilities and the provision of crèches.

JRS works in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and with other NGOs in the day to day mission: sharing facilities; information; extending a helping hand with transport in times of water or fuel shortages. All of the organisations are united in the cause of the refugees and partnership is given priority. Partners meet regularly at the local UNHCR headquarters where issues can be thrashed out and problems shared.

Fr General Adolfo Nicolás SJ reminds us that the Jesuit mission today must always involve three dimensions: "the service of faith, the promotion of justice and collaboration with others in works of faith and justice". In a practical way, this project embodies the spirit of the Jesuit mission by engaging the volunteers and beneficiaries alike in a reflective work of service, advocacy and collaboration. Collaboration is central to our mission and takes many forms.

From my own perspective, it's a privilege to be able to accompany such gentle and resilient people on their daily journey.

Where a Farmer must know his Land

Brian Sheridan is Manager at Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre, Zambia.

For some years I had been thinking out loud about engaging in volunteer work. Each time I expressed these thoughts my wife would reply, “Yes, wait until you retire”. I worked as Career Guidance Counsellor in St. Finian’s College, Mullingar, Ireland. Five years previously I had completed a training course with Viatores Christi in overseas volunteer work.

Retirement came in June 2014, after my 65th birthday. That week an email arrived asking if I was interested in going to Zambia to assist the Jesuits there setting up a commercial dairy farm enterprise; I had also retired from running my own 55 cow dairy farm about eight years ago. Since God had blessed me with a healthy family and good health, my wife and I decided it was a great opportunity to give a little assistance back to people who are less well off.



Brian and some of the farmers take a well earned water break

So on the 11th of Oct. I landed at Lusaka, Zambia. The walk from the plane to the terminal building was long and very hot. I was met by a very enthusiastic young priest, Fr Tadeusz Swiderski SJ. We drove to Kasisi Children’s Home just eight kilometres away and where I would live in the volunteer rooms.

The next morning we had a tour around the perimeter of this huge area which is mostly covered in varying densities of bush. The following afternoon Brother Paul

gave me a tour of his organic farm. It was hot. It was very, very hot.

A farmer must know his land. A local farmer from Ballynacargy in Westmeath used to say “You can’t farm from a car.” I got a two litre container of water, a ruck sack, hat and sunglasses and set out on foot around the perimeter and the multiple roads local people use to reach Kasisi. Clearing of the bush began and one bore hole was drilled in the approximate centre of the 500 hectare farm.

In December our tractor, disc plough, disc harrow and land leveller arrived. We employ three local men and one young man from the children’s home. I teach them basic tractor operation skills. When your only exposure to a machine has been a bicycle, it is a huge learning experience. While interested, they are reluctant to ask questions. I see this as one of my major challenges: to empower them to ask questions. They are making progress and it’s rewarding to see them grow in confidence.

Just as rocks are every ploughman’s nightmare in Ireland, here in Zambia it’s the dreaded tree stump that can destroy a new tyre. Three men are employed on clearing; it has been very difficult transferring knowledge of the danger of leaving stumps in the ground and the consequences to tractor tyres. I haven’t succeeded as much as I’d have liked but so far we have been lucky.

We have cleared approx. 30 hectares of light bush leaving the mature trees in place for environmental reasons; the plan is to have at least 100 hectares ready for cultivation for the next planting season. The very tall grass will be flattened by dragging a harrow over it and then disk and plough in to improve the soil. Sun hemp has been planted to improve the fertility of the soil. It can also be used for hay and the seed can be harvested.

Discussions are ongoing as to how to make the best use of the farm in supporting the Jesuit mission in Zambia and Malawi. Meanwhile we will continue with God’s help and our best efforts to improve the skills of the people working here and to improve the soil for the benefit of all.

Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre is supported by the Irish Jesuit Missions. It was founded in 1974 by Brother Paul Desmarais who leads the project. Fr Donal McKenna SJ, an engineer, also contributed greatly to its success.



Seeing and Finding God in all Things

Diana Karua is Communications Coordinator of the Eastern Africa Province of the Society of Jesus.

The phone call offering a position with the Jesuits of Eastern Africa Province could not have come at a better time. I had been discussing my desire for working with a reputable international organization with my fiancé and this was a good opportunity.

In order to fulfil their mission with regard to 'the service of faith,' the Eastern Africa Province is involved in pastoral ministry, retreats and spiritual direction and interreligious dialogue.

Prior to joining the Jesuits, I had only ever heard of the Jesuit Refugee Service, and so I was curious about the projects in which they were involved.

The first few months went by very fast; I was busy with lots of research and getting acquainted with all the projects in the Province. This included field visits to countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and South Sudan. The welcoming spirit of all the Jesuits that I met in those places continue to motivate my work.

South Sudan deeply touched my heart. On the way to the Jesuit community in Rumbek town, I saw many soldiers with guns and wondered what the Jesuits were doing in such a war torn area.

A few days before our arrival, a Kenyan lady had been shot by the local police so I was very uneasy about my visit there. However, it was necessary that I see for myself the work that the Jesuits were doing.

On arrival, my colleagues and I were met by Fr Francis Njuguna SJ, who took us on a tour through the Farm School located in Akol Jal. My impression on seeing the women and children working at the farm made me realize that little developments such as this one and the availability of a water borehole, had already brought a change in their lives.

Having grown up in a small town in Kenya, I was privileged enough to have attended a good school and not know the psychosocial effects of growing up in a conflict zone.

The experiences I had of interacting with former child soldiers — especially in the Jesuit School in Uganda — had an impact on my life.

Speaking to some of the students at Ocer Campion Jesuit College there, I could see that the pain they had gone through, years earlier, continued to affect them. To support the students the school runs a psychosocial support program that allows them to deal with their trauma.

Another experience that affected me deeply was a three day retreat. I had never done any kind of retreat, so when I got the chance to take part in one, I was eager about it.

It was a period of learning and self-growth and because of it my understanding of spirituality and religion has broadened. The yearly staff recollections organized by the Curia Office in the Province have also helped change my view of humanity.



Mary Apet (left) and her friend enjoy the fruit of their labour in the Farm School in Akol Jal, South Sudan

This was especially helpful to me during my pregnancy and after the birth of my daughter. The guidance and support that I got from the Jesuits were incredible. I was privileged to have my daughter baptised by the Jesuits.

I am a better person and I feel blessed for the opportunity to collaborate with the Jesuits and to be part of this greater mission.

I am able to see and find God in all things.

I Believe in People, in Men and Women for Others

Winnie Ryan is Finance and Office Administrator at the Irish Jesuit Missions in Dublin, Ireland.

I like working for the Society of Jesus, they have a vision of the greater good and try to hold that before them in all their dealings with others. I feel there was a reason why I found my way into this organization. I hate injustice. The Jesuits challenge it; it is at the core of what it means to be a Jesuit.

The Irish Jesuit Missions (IJM) is different than other Jesuit organisations; it offers support to other Jesuits and their works overseas. The IJM is far more than just a funder. We know that circumstances can be rough and that life can be very hard for the Jesuits and volunteers. We offer encouragement and support in addition to funding. We want everyone to succeed in their goals. If you lose hope, there's no point in doing this job.

In Ireland, the Jesuit schools promote in their students a spirit of responsibility towards others. I love the saying "men and women for others". This is what keeps me focussed and motivates me.

I believe that education is the way forward especially for girls and women. I have met some strong women in the Jesuit projects in Kangemi, Nairobi who have been educated as little girls through to third level. As adult women, they want to give something back to their former school and community.

For instance, at the moment in South Sudan, education may only increase a girl's dowry value in the number of cows her father receives when she marries. This may be hard for us women in the developed world to accept but it is not our role to push our values onto them. Eventually, as her children and their children become more educated, the real changes will follow. It's wonderful to see how women can become self-financing and no longer be dependent on others!

To me, that is the perfect ending to a project's story.

**"If you lose
hope, there's no
point in doing this
job."**



As a woman, it can be more difficult to collaborate effectively as I always deal with the men that lead the projects. In some countries, the role of women as subordinates is normal. Men may not be comfortable receiving training from, and working on an equal footing with a woman. There are some wonderful local women working on community projects and usually behind every successful project there are the women!

The most satisfying project I've worked on so far was in Zambia, there is a lot of collaboration there between the Jesuits and laity. I was asked to assist the setting up of a financial management system with the Province treasurer, Fr Tadeusz Swiderski SJ. He loved what he was learning and it was an absolute pleasure to work with him. Throughout the process I realized that he was a priest first and foremost. I have huge respect for him and a real understanding now of what it means for a person to be called to service.

When training for other Jesuits in Zambia was arranged, I was terrified that they would reject me, as a woman and not a native of the country. Needless to say my fears were very much unfounded! I made the training personal and asked them to reflect on how to protect themselves in terms of financial accountability. Lots of interesting questions followed and I am confident the training improved their skills as follow on reporting and accounting have shown. Whatever knowledge they have they will share with others.

I do believe in God, or whatever name people want to use. The multi faith approach appeals to me and my sense of justice. There will be a breakthrough even if it takes generations. Above all, I believe in people!

Mission News

● Irish teachers visit Uganda

The inaugural visit of teachers from Society of Jesus Irish schools to Ocer Campion SJ School in Gulu, North Uganda, takes place during the Easter holidays. The visit is lead by Brid Dunne, Development Education Coordinator at the Irish Jesuit Missions, to build new partnerships between Jesuit schools in Ireland and in Eastern Africa.

The Director Fr. John K. Guiney SJ, in the Induction Day to the teachers, emphasised the key elements of this partnership are accompaniment, service and advocacy.

● Neil O'Driscoll SJ

Fr Neil O'Driscoll SJ died peacefully in St. Vincent's Hospital on 27th January, aged 81. He was 50 years a priest, half of which was spent in Chikuni and Namwala, Zambia. He returned to Ireland 20 years ago to a new ministry of giving retreats and running the parish in Galway. A man of strong loyalties, he was a



Jesuit profoundly happy in his vocation, right up to his last years at Cherryfield Lodge, Dublin. May the Lord reward him.

● Xavier Network

The worldwide Jesuit Xavier Network was hosted in Dublin, Ireland at the end of March. Representatives from Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the UK Jesuit Mission Offices met with Fr John K. Guiney SJ and Fr Martin Curry SJ from the Irish Jesuit Missions.

● House blessing

The Irish Jesuit Missions office celebrated its new location with a house blessing and gathering of friends and colleagues on the 2nd March. Fr Donal Neary SJ officiated and reminded all present that they were gathered to remember, and to be renewed, in the mission of Faith and Justice that looks outside our own small world, to pray and to hope.

● Seán Coughlan SJ

Fr Seán Coughlan SJ, who works in Hong Hong, is in Limerick, Ireland at present taking care of his sister who is unwell. Our prayers are with them both.



Spring Appeal 2015

Please help us to continue supporting our missions abroad.

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and post to **Irish Jesuit Missions, 20 Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin 1, Tel. 01 836 6509**

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In all things to love and to serve