

Latest News – July 2022

Trustees Bridget and Leslie Green visit Shinyanga

Care in the Community – Social Support and Economic Empowerment

Bridget and Leslie were pleased to visit groups of families of children with disabilities in four different parts of the Shinyanga Diocese who are now meeting regularly for mutual support and in some cases beginning economic empowerment projects.

Solwa Parish

As with all the rural parishes in Shinyanga Diocese, families of the disabled are scattered across a huge geographical area. On the day of our visit, some fifteen families came to meet us. We were told of more who wanted to come but could not afford the 'dala dala' (minibus/taxi) fare. The local priest, Zacheus is committed to building a strong support network but faces many challenges, not least of which is money – for travel and outreach work, for training the families, for project start up funds and even to complete the church building you see here. We were pleased to be able to make a small personal donation while we were there and have since learned that the families of the disabled have now initiated a VICOBA (Microbank) with these funds. The group now meets once a week and have so far contributed £40 themselves. This is very encouraging news.



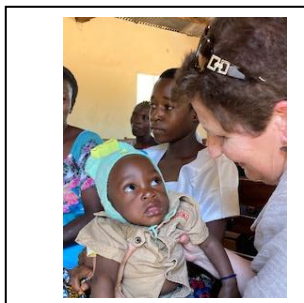
Kitangiri Parish, Shinyanga Municipality

Deacon Joan was appointed to this parish some nine months ago. In addition to parish commitments she also works full time as a teacher in a local primary school. Following her appointment, she immediately took the initiative to bring families of the disabled together for mutual support. Now over 30 families meet regularly and, with financial support from Joan, have been taught how to run a small business. They now make soap products and batik material to sell, thereby generating an income to support themselves and their families.



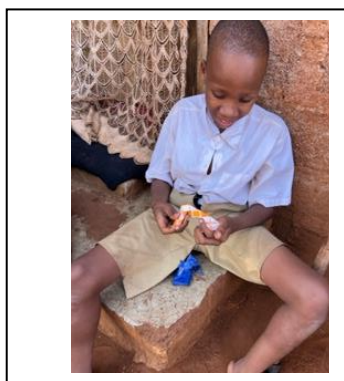
Maswa and Mwadui Parishes

Bridget and Leslie met more families of the disabled in the parishes of Maswa and Mwadui, brought together by their respective parish priests, Rev Godfrey and Rev Jacob. Both groups are keen to start their own Microbanks but lack start up funds. If you would like to contribute to this, please contact Leslie contact.FOAT@gmail.com



Nikolaus and the Comfort Women's Group

FOAT is pleased to have facilitated a partnership between Earley St Peter's Church in Reading (ESP) and the Anglican Diocese of Shinyanga to support Care Ministry for three years. The partnership was launched in March 2022. Funds raised through that partnership have contributed to the formation of the Comfort Women's Group in Ndala Parish to support families of the disabled. The young people of ESP have 'adopted' Nikolaus, a young 12 year old boy with physical disabilities, as the focus for their outreach work. Bridget and Leslie were pleased to visit Nikolaus at his home and to take gifts donated by the young people of ESP.



Social Support and Economic Empowerment – Next Steps

Bridget and Leslie were greatly encouraged by seeing how much had been achieved by way of the formation of social support groups since the Disability Awareness Training delivered by the Amani Centre at the end of 2020. (See <https://amanitzuk.org/shinyanga-archive-news> - Disability Awareness Training). The need now is for all family groups to have training on entrepreneurship. This will help them to initiate sustainable projects to support themselves.

Care in the Community – Supporting young people with albinism to receive an education

It is a sad reflection on the prevailing culture in Shinyanga that children and families of people with albinism are still persecuted and often cannot access even basic education. Through social support networks and education at a local level, the church is beginning to break down these cultural norms. Bridget and Leslie are delighted to report on two ‘good news’ stories which have come about thanks to the generosity of individuals in the UK working through FOAT to support Care Ministry in Shinyanga.

1. Shija and Lucia – happily settled with Rev Jacob and his family and receiving education at Mwadui Anglican Primary School



Lucia in the classroom



Shija in the classroom



Shija and Lucia with Rev Jacob and family



Taking tea with the Bishop in Rev Jacob's house

Identified on outreach at Solwa in March 2021, Shija and Lucia come from a family of 12 children, four with albinism. (See archive news <https://amanitzuk.org/shinyanga-archive-news>) Shija had intermittently attended the local government school (where she was in a class of over 100 children) and Lucia had not attended school at all. Fostered by Rev Jacob and his wife since April 2021, they now enjoy the benefits of a nurturing home environment with Jacob's only child, Afracia and a good education at Mwadui Anglican Primary School, thanks to the support of a group of ladies from the UK who are sponsoring their education through FOAT.

2. Samuel – soon to embark on a three month IT course to enable him to work in the local town providing IT support to medics and teachers.

Samuel (21) was identified in March this year during outreach work in the rural district of Mwadui. He lives in poverty in a simple dwelling in a small settlement with his extended family. His parents are pastoralists but despite their poverty, have encouraged their children to seek educational opportunities where they can. Samuel completed primary education at Buhangija School six years ago but the only work he has had since then has been assisting his parents to care for their animals. Thanks to two UK sponsors, Samuel will embark on an IT course at Shinyanga FE College in September where he will be able to live-in. When Bridget and Leslie visited, Samuel was excited about the prospect of furthering his education and extremely grateful to his UK sponsors.



Samuel with his parents and one of his sisters flanked by Leslie and Bridget

If you are interested in giving an educational opportunity to a young person with albinism, please contact Leslie contact.FOAT@gmail.com

Education

1. Mwadui Anglican Primary School

Situated on the compound of Williamson's Diamond Mine, the school was originally built and administered by the mining company for the purposes of educating the children of the mine workers. Today it is a private day school owned and run by the Anglican Church. It has an excellent academic record and demand for places at the school is high. However, without the availability of either a minibuss or hostel accommodation, access to the school is limited to those whose parents either live on the mining compound or who can transport their children there. Since 2019 when Bridget and Leslie first visited the school, there has been a desire to work with the Mining Company to develop the school to provide inclusive education, hostel accommodation, initiate a secondary school and make better use of its land facilities to grow food for school meals with a surplus to sell. It is unfortunate that the Pandemic meant everything was put on hold. However, with the reopening of the mine earlier this year, discussions with company management are beginning again. Bridget and Leslie found a renewed enthusiasm amongst the teaching and administrative staff to make this a flagship school for inclusive education and for more children like Shija and Lucia to access this through development of hostel facilities.

We look forward to hearing what the mining company can offer and then working with the Diocese to develop a fundraising strategy.



Bishop Johnson outside Mwadui Primary School



Reviewing the land at Mwadui for potential agricultural development



Back to school with Rev Stanley and Bishop Johnson

2. Buhangija Primary School, Shinyanga Municipality

This is a government run residential school with average class sizes exceeding 100. Originally built to educate and protect children with albinism and other special needs, it is now open to all children from the local area. There is no priority admission given to children with albinism in the lower classes as the Government no longer believes they need protection. However, circumstantial evidence suggests they do. With no other residential facility available in Shinyanga Region for children with albinism, the Diocese feels more compelled to build dormitory accommodation at Mwadui and provide suitable provision for these children to be educated in a protected environment there.

The buildings at Buhangija are in a poor state of repair and the government budget barely covers the day to day running costs. Traditionally, the school has relied on donations/gifts in kind from local well-wishers. It was early on in the Pandemic in 2020 that Bridget and Leslie were alerted to the potential starvation of the children. An appeal was launched by FOAT and funds raised for the development of a vegetable garden on site to provide much needed supplementary food and an educational resource for the children. See <https://amanitzuk.org/shinyanga-archive-news>

During their visit in June, Bridget and Leslie observed some lessons, reviewed the buildings and vegetable garden and held discussions with the [new] head teacher and senior staff. The challenges facing the school are manifold and have been compounded by the lockdown brought about by the Pandemic and removal of the former head teacher. There is nevertheless a determination to 'make the garden work' for the school, though this is still a project in its infancy with lessons to be learned.

The garden project cannot be handed over entirely for the school to run until some of the management, maintenance and water supply issues are satisfactorily resolved. Bridget and Leslie left feeling confident that this would happen soon and the garden would once again provide a regular supply of fruit and vegetables for the children and be a resource to enhance their education.



Dining room



Kitchen



A classroom

NB: Children with albinism and hearing impairments (maroon uniform) sitting at the front



Vegetable Garden

NB: Irrigation pipes re-laid after the end of the rainy season



Leslie under a pawpaw tree

Safeguarding

Bridget and Leslie’s visit to Shinyanga followed soon after the Safeguarding workshop, run by FOAT Trustee, Cathy Swanson in May and attended by representatives of the Diocese (see <https://amanitzuk.org/shinyanga> - Latest News May 2022). Two representatives from Compassion International (CI) also attended the workshop. The Diocese works closely with CI in a number of areas, including Maswa. The Diocese is now taking the lead, together with CI project staff to draw up a culturally appropriate safeguarding policy. It is encouraging that the local MP for Maswa, Stanslous Nyongo who also chairs the Parliamentary Social Services and Development Committee, is keen to be involved. Bridget and Leslie participated in an initial meeting with one of his representatives along with representatives from the Church and CI while visiting Maswa.

STOP PRESS: At a recent meeting between the Diocese of Shinyanga and Stanslous Nyongo MP, it was agreed to meet in late August i) to begin to develop a safeguarding policy, and ii) draw up a work plan for identifying groups to educate on safeguarding.

FOAT is encouraged by this Church–State working partnership to influence policy and protect some of the most vulnerable people in Tanzania.

Supporting Care Ministry

The Diocese of Shinyanga is among the poorest in Tanzania but is committed to care ministry work among people with disabilities who are some of the most disadvantaged in the community. If you would like to help FOAT to support this work, please contact Leslie on contact.FOAT@gmail.com or make a donation directly to the Charity <https://amanitzuk.org/donate-here> marking your donation SHINYANGA.

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