

Report on Visit to Irundu 24th April to 9th May 2017

Heartfelt thanks from Fr Stephen and all our friends in Irundu for your very generous response to the appeal for money for seeds. People outside the parish also contributed very generously and the amount I took out was sufficient to help the 3,214 families having none or one meal per day according to the census. The challenge was to buy and distribute 1 kg of Maize seeds and half a sack of Cassava sticks for each of them. It was something of a logistical nightmare but we cracked it and the distribution started before I left; I spoke to Fr Stephen today and the distribution was finished in less than 3 weeks. The rain is still falling, the land prepared and the seeds are sown so hopefully all is set for a good harvest.

We had to hire the two leaders of the census to go to the villages to give out vouchers, a policeman at the entrance to check the vouchers, two people to split the sacks of cassava, an armed policeman to guard the stock at night. In addition one of the priests was always present to sign off vouchers in case they weren't handed in. Cassava was being transported by huge lorries which came up each night carrying about 180 sacks; the maize came in one lorry load.

In 3 months each household will have 1/3rd acre of maize which they can harvest, feed the families and sell what is over as well as keep some seeds ready to plant for the next season in October. The cassava will take a year to grow but can be dried and stored for use in times of a shortage. Gosh, it's a hard life and sadly we were aware that some people were dying of starvation but it was a good decision to give seeds rather than food because whilst the food would be gone in a week a decent harvest will ensure a better future. It was a short but very fruitful trip thanks to all who supported our appeal.

The St Matia Mulumba Health Centre III - this is going well and we are still delivering lots of babies – average of 91 per month. Average attendance per month since 1st July is 1434. Sadly some people who are unwell are unable to attend because they simply have no money and we really cannot start treating for free because the health centre will not survive. David, the in-charge, works well and very hard at the moment as the other clinic officer, Sharon, is on sick leave until 31st May following an emergency operation. Charles, the administrator, is just about coping and his records are mainly bordering on accurate!

Friendship House/Visits – The new Housekeeper, Resty, is slowly getting the hang of her job but regrettably not such a good cook as Christine!

Vocational School – Tailoring remains the most popular course with 14 students. Equipping the car mechanics workshop is nearing completion and as soon as the school is registered the students who have expressed an interest in taking a course will be able to start.

Benches – I took out a further amount of £371 which brings our total tin collection to £11202. Very many thanks to those who give so generously week in week out. We have now provided 370 school benches providing seating and a writing surface for 2220 students. Thanks to Paul and Helle who are still very kindly organising the scheme they started some 10 years ago even though they have moved out of the parish.

Jenny's Jams and Chutneys – Jenny's Christmas sale made a fantastic total of £1217 which will be used to pay the ancillary costs of patients going for surgery i.e. transport, bed charge, etc. This means we can take advantage of visiting surgeons to our referral hospital in Kamuli who operate for free. Many women are in urgent need of VVF surgery and also some children with cleft palate and club foot need ops. One youngster in particular has his eyes literally out on stalks, all his fingers are joined together as are his toes so he will be taken to a specialist hospital in Mbali to see what, if anything, can be done. Very many thanks are due to Jenny for a stupendous effort and to all who supported her sales.

Cynthia Haynes