



Mhe. Samia Suluhu Hassan  
Rais wa Jamhuri ya Muamama wa Tanzania

## Dear Sisters and Friends

Many greetings to you all, as we prepare for Christmas and the Holy Year of 2025. May it be a year of Hope for everybody. We

bring you again some glimpses of our life

and work and environment today. Our first female President, Samia Suluhu Hassan has done Trojan work, travelling near and far promoting tourism and seeking investment for ongoing development. There were State visits to many African countries - even a visit to the Vatican to meet Pope Francis (Tanzania has more than 23 million Catholics). Mama Samia was present at the UN General Assembly and at several Climate conferences.

At home, increased investment has resulted in almost universal access to primary education, although the quality

is not satisfactory at all. For the vast majority of people health care is worse. Corruption is deep-rooted and life for ordinary families, not even the poorest, is far from easy. Unemployment is rife and poverty is widespread. The system that Mama Samia presides over (the all powerful CCM Party) seems to value more taying in power than advancing the country. Undaunted, this strong woman knows herself and should she be elected in the coming year, could with a good Cabinet, give Tanzanians the leadership and the life they deserve.

## Jubilee

We had a glorious Jubilee Day on 24<sup>th</sup> June as we celebrated 50 years of service to the people of Tanzania. the fruit of months of preparation. Our Jubilee prayer, candles and logo set the scene spiritually, as did our fundraising for a common project – to improve facilities in Matumaini Centre and to include in it a Unit for Autism. Sr. Carol Reagan, formerly Mother General, came from the USA Area to give all groups Seminars on Congregation history. On the day itself, we had many greetings from all over the congregation and Sisters came from far and wide to be with us.

The Holy Mass was presided over by Jude Thaddeus Rawaichi, the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, ably assisted by several confreres especially Fr. Raphael Ofm. Cap.

The ceremony included the first professions of **Srs Agnes Bosco** and **Lucy Makauki** as well as the blessing of our Silver Jubilarians, **Srs Dostea** and **Yvette**.

**Sr. Agatha** in her address recalled how the first missionaries came in 1973 bringing with nothing with them but their clothes! Scattered initially in Dar, Morogoro and Moshi for the first 20 years, eventually



(LtoR) Srs Yvette and Dostea, Silver Jubilarians;

Srs Modesta, Sylvia, Monica and Glory (renewed vows); Srs Lucy & Agnes (first vows)

they were brought together as a formation community when it became apparent that young women (such as Dostea) were attracted to the congregation. Sr. Annette was sent to South Africa to do a Formator's course, Dostea went to Cameroon for initial formation, this opened the door to those who followed: Benedicta, Agatha, Maria, Eugenia, Alice, Jesca, Scola, Emiliana and more. She then talked about the great work done in education by the first Sisters and the challenges in the Mission today especially the erosion of moral life in the society. She stressed the need for our Sisters to direct and help parents to bring up their children properly and to look out for the youth as well.

More than 800 invited guests – Sisters and Clergy, parents and teachers, friends and neighbours, past pupils and present students - representatives from all our ministries and local choirs - sang and prayed with us. After Mass, Mama Mshiligati, our friend and caterer provided a splendid banquet for all

while the Steel Drum Band provided the background music. There was dancing and entertainment until evening in our compound, well decorated with bunting and glorious tropical flowers.

In order to cater for the big attendance, we had to make major improvements to our external infrastructure. Numbers and climate dictate that most assemblies and celebrations must be held outside. Now because of the Jubilee preparations we are well prepared for future events.



Celebrant: Archbishop Rawaichi



St Francis choir from Majimatitu who sang for the day



## Visitation

**Srs Michele and Yvette** attended the Jubilee representing the General Council. Afterwards they stayed on for a week of official Visitation.

They visited every community and praised the Jubilee preparations and celebrations. We were encouraged to keep records and to write up the on-going story.

They praised our community and ministry compounds, beautifully kept, attractive and welcoming. They emphasized quick and clear communication, inclusive of all and greater openness and transparency in Finances and plans for ministry and Area projects.

They insisted on improving the use of English as a good standard of the language is now essential to engage with the congregation internationally.

They hoped the building of the new Formation House would soon rectify overcrowding in Dundani. We were encouraged to keep striving to meet the demands of the new structures as we continue to transition from the support of Anglo-Hibernia to becoming an Area in our own right.

## Cameroonian Ministry in the time of conflict

The Holy Union Sisters have five communities in the North West region of Cameroon where the war is currently ongoing. In these five communities the Sisters are ministering in education at different levels and health care. It has not been an easy situation for those working in these communities. There is a lot of insecurity. Some communities were temporarily closed (Kumbo) and reopened when the crisis abated. The pre novitiate formation house that was in Baba community was moved to Yaoundé and now to Bafoussam. Sisters have been finding themselves at a cross-roads, not knowing exactly what to do in some cases, where the government military and the rebels give instructions that are contrary. Whichever they choose to follow will have consequences. Sisters have found themselves answering convocations from the militaries and on the other hand, spending time in the camps after being abducted by the rebels.



It has not been easy as the sisters had to offer help to the stranded population as they come knocking on their doors for shelter, food or moral support. At one point, our St John Resource Centre in Ndop became a refugee home for the internally displaced population. They found

shelter with the sisters as many lost their own homes.

Twenty five years ago, Cameroon and Tanzanian Areas shared formation together. Sr Dostea was the first and later on Sisters Agatha, Benedicta, Jesca, Alice, Emiliana, Scholastica, and others had their initial formation in Cameroon. It was the time for the young African women who joined Holy Union to get to know each other and to learn together. We no longer share formation, but we do share personnel. Sisters Norah and Collette became part of the Tanzania area a year ago as the first missionaries from Cameroon to Tanzania.

## Sr. Alice's visit



Back in the USA **Sr Alice** at 84 still teaches catechism to children and adults, animating her local parish.

She came to

Tanzania for the

month of July 'to visit the new generation' of the congregation. It was not too hot at that time. She was an inspiration to all who met her and she amazed us with her ability, always smiling, to engage everywhere. She shared a lot with the Novices, who had many questions. She was delighted with the faith she found, the big attendance in Church and the wonderful choirs impressed her too.

She encouraged us by saying we were truly living the vision of our Holy Founder in the Tanzania Mission Area. She also taught us how to play Bingo, a most useful social skill!

## Hello from Kisiju

**Srs Scola and Modesta** are members of the Kisiju community located at Mkuranga coastal region.

Boats go from Kisiju to Mafia island, a beautiful marine conservation area which has a Catholic parish, to which children of the Holy Childhood have an annual pilgrimage, enjoying three days on the island sharing their understanding of God with the island children, learning from them too. This is a diocesan project and a very popular one.

In Kisiju itself and the surrounding area our Sisters serve as catechists in the Parish and schools. They are in high demand from TYCS (Tanzanian Young Catholic Students) as guides. TYCS helps them deepen their

faith, create unity among themselves, organize SCC Small Christian Communities, form choirs, arrange to have Mass in their own school compounds and even find their vocation in life.

The area is predominantly Muslim and some families have mixed parents. The numbers are low but the Sisters provide

the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation to all who ask. Sunday school is popular, even Muslim children come. The Sisters have some difficulty with travel as the schools are some distance from each other. They can arrive and find no children there. One needs perseverance and determination. At times the efforts of the Sisters are supplemented by our young people in formation who come to stay a few months, to learn and to help.





## Formation in Dundani

It was a day of rejoicing when **Srs. Agnes and Lucy** made first profession. Immediately after that they were missioned to their ministries. Lucy remains in the noviciate community as mistress of Holy Union Green Pre-school in Dundani and Agnes was transferred to Maji Matitu, Mother House to teach in Holy Union Pre-school, Maji Matitu.

On June 23<sup>rd</sup> four novices, **Agnes, Ester, Lucia and Theodora** joined the three novices **Asunta, Signifrida and Witness** in the Novitiate where they begin and continue respectively their novitiate formation.



On December 9<sup>th</sup> 2024, **Merina, Yasinta and Zita** will join Pre Noviciate. They will have a two-year program for a catechetical diploma course in Sanya Juu, Moshi. Here they will get a strong and sure foundation in the faith. The college is run by the Capuchin Sisters of Maua.

**Sr Alice USA**, a catechist herself, was very impressed by the training in catechetics our young sisters get in Sanya Juu. A sound foundation for religious life as well as enabling them to give service in parishes and schools even before they join the Noviciate.



The Noviciate hosted a three day seminar in May with **Sr. Carol Regan** about the History of our Congregation. Then in June pre-novices and Novices had a retreat together with Fr. Gregory, Precious Blood. This was much appreciated and we hope to introduce more inter-novitiate and novitiate activities within the deanery, sharing personnel and resources.

The Novices and Aspirants take Sunday school each week, and many of the local children attend. We are now running a kindergarten as the children are many.



*Paskalina, Doreen, Jesca, Lilian & Gladeness who graduated Catechetical course this year*

## Farming news

The farm continues to develop in Dundani. It yields well depending on the seasonal harvests of tomatoes, cassava, maize, coconut and vegetables. We also grow various fruits such as pawpaw, limes, coconuts, bananas, guava, avocado, oranges and mangoes.



The community is very grateful to the congregation for this land and the chance to cultivate it. Not only does this provide tasty food for the community but we also share with those in need. Our cows also give plenty of milk for which there is a good market and this also helps children suffering from HIV/AIDS and malnutrition.

## New Tanzanian Leadership Team

Meet our new Leadership Team:  
**Srs Dostea Msenga, Agatha Tarimo and Eugenia Mshana.**



Their biggest challenge for now is to supervise the building of the new Formation House, in Saku.



## Missionaries of Today

In today's world, many individuals are confronted with various challenges such as economic instability, social unrest, health crises, and environmental concerns. These issues can lead to feelings of despair and hopelessness when viewed solely through natural eyes.

However, when we apply the eye of faith, we begin to see these challenges not just as obstacles but as opportunities for growth and transformation. We are the Missionaries of today who are working in this broken world; a world which is full of fears, injustice, corruption and many calamities. We, Holy Union Sisters, are carrying on the task initiated by our First Missionaries by providing quality Christian education to the youth in our own schools and in the parishes. We also share the Gospel joy with the women and disabled children at Matumaini

Centre as part of our contribution to the work of the Church of Tanzania.

Although we, too, encounter many challenges in our Mission today we have hope, trust and courage. Faith allows us to trust in a higher power or divine plan that transcends human understanding. This trust provides comfort during turbulent times and motivates us to act with love and compassion towards others. We gain new zeal when we reflect on what our first Missionaries achieved, with great faith and courage in spite of hardships and even persecution. We believe that our contribution to the Church of Tanzania will continue to grow and flourish as we work hard to read the signs of our times and respond to what is needed in our society today.

## Safeguarding Children and Adults

The Catholic Church in Tanzania has taken significant steps to address the issue of child safeguarding amid rising concerns



about child abuse in the country. The Church recognizes that child abuse has become a serious national problem over the past 25 years and is committed to creating a safe environment for children.

The Holy Union Sisters in Tanzania are actively engaged in various initiatives aimed at safeguarding vulnerable populations, particularly women and children who are at risk of human trafficking and exploitation. This is our response to "Call to Action Against Trafficking" by Pope Francis who made a strong appeal for everyone to combat and eradicate human trafficking.

With sponsorship from the Hilton Foundation **Sr Eugenia** has benefitted from training about the evil business of trafficking in human beings. She co-ordinates seminars for teachers and catechists. She has led the international Prayer day for awareness against this epidemic and recently held a seminar for a group of Catholic men in the Arch-diocese.

Meantime with sponsorship from Porticus, **Sr Agatha** has joined MACS (Making the African Church Safe) and organizes seminars for parents, teachers and government authorities.

**Our very successful COBET project for late starters and out of school youth as well as Matumaini Centre for Children with disability are Holy Union's greatest contribution to safe-guarding.**

## Academic Achievements in Mwenge Catholic University

**Sr. Glory** writes: I completed a Bachelor's degree in science subjects (Biology and Geography) at Mwenge Catholic University this year. I am proud to be the first Holy Union Sister to study at the University founded by Sr. Aquinas Botting. I am grateful to our pioneering sisters for the efforts they made to provide the environment for Tanzanian Sisters to pursue their studies.

My studies not only equipped me with theoretical knowledge but also emphasized practical skills and research capabilities. At University, I developed a range of skills that are essential for my apostolate. Critical thinking was honed through rigorous coursework that challenged me to analyse complex problems. Communication skills were enhanced through presentations



and group work. Technical skills were acquired in the laboratory. In geography courses, proficiency in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was developed. During my time at University, I was an active member of the Environmental Club and helped to organize events on conservation practices and awareness campaigns about environmental issues. Furthermore, engaging with community outreach programs allowed making a positive impact on society by educating local communities about sustainable practices.

Now that I have finished my studies I am ready for work in whatever Mission is set for me in Tanzania.





## New Autism Unit for Matumaini Centre

### Why Autism Unit at Matumaini ?



**Sr Fides** writes:

At Matumaini, children from three months to twelve years attend four days per week for physiotherapy.

We had also children presenting with autism

but we couldn't keep them because their needs were very different from the others. We realized we had much to learn before we could take on such a weighty challenge. The parents were disappointed and heartbroken.

The idea of opening an Autism Unit was encouraged by two Volunteers from Ireland, Helen O'Connell and Agnes Hurley. They helped us to understand these children more and encouraged us to try to respond to their parents' cry. As a result we started to put our ideas into practice.

We thought we should try to help since there is no alternative help available



*May Sr Adriana the founder and all who wish us well and who have gone before us celebrate with us as we open this building officially in Dec 2024.*

to parents in this highly populated area. So, with no small difficulty we took the first step. We acquired a plot adjacent to the Centre, on which there was already a half-built good house which we could adapt and finish, providing a special unit for the children presenting with autism. The Leadership Team decided this would be our Golden Jubilee Project.

We shared this idea with our sisters and different Donors here in Tanzania and abroad. Not only that but also as sisters we made an effort to fundraise through our small projects like designing T-shirts to sell with the Jubilee Logo for

the same purpose. Almighty God blessed our efforts and we managed to raise more than 130,000,000 Tanzanian Shillings equivalent to €50,500. We started the construction early in April this year. By the end of October 2024, 90% of the work was done. With the amount of money remaining we have placed an order for some furniture.

## Our Project with University College Dublin 2024

We were privileged again this year to have 5 volunteers from UCDVO plus one Tutor, Miss Anna Hogan in Matumaini Centre for the whole month of June. We are extremely grateful to all those who made it happen. It was a wonderful time and a great opportunity to have these five University students from Dublin, Eadoin Murray, Fintan Ryan, Hannah Johnston, Orla Mollay and Sophie Murray.

The aim was to strengthen our partnership and to share our skills and knowledge. We wanted to learn more from our volunteers and to know the best ways to help our children.

We learned how to do the physiotherapy in a more gentle and successful way. Before this, the physio was painful and the children dreaded the exercises and cried.

Each volunteer was given 4 or 5 children per week to work with. They were able to chat with the Mamas and PTAs (physio assistants) with the help of translators to get the information needed regarding the children.

Our Physiotherapist said he was happy with their visit and has gained a lot of confidence on how to continue working

with the children. The parents and PTAs learned a great deal from the volunteers and gained from their expert advice.

We learnt the best way to position our children and how to use music therapy which the children enjoy so very much.

**Attendance certificates** During a short ceremony at the end of each week the volunteers gave a Certificate of Attendance to each child and the Mamas were

given lovely booklets, with photos of the child doing different positioning. The volunteers wrote down instructions in Swahili for the Mamas to use at home. These booklets will help a lot and the volunteers put a lot of care into preparing them, sometimes late at night.

Another great impact that they made was the provision of some vital equipment to the families: supports like corner seats, wheelchairs and foam mattress material for positioning the children and teaching how to use the equipment given. The volunteers worked hard during this time especially in cutting the foam material. They were also able to do home visiting and they came to know the community we are working with.

Before they left, the team prepared a detailed letter from the Centre to be taken on hospital visits in case the Mamas should be unable to explain themselves.

**In short, the programme of this year was very successful and it helped us a lot. The timetable we put together for the whole month was perfect and well followed.**





## Adventures of Emiliana

**Sr Emiliana writes:** I was privileged to go for home visiting to two of our Candidates, Melina and Zita. It was an epic journey as I went to two regions, namely Tunduma and Iringa where I had never been.

I began from Shekilango bus stop in Dar es Salaam at 3:45pm and arrived at 10:30 next morning. Merina met me and we went to her home Parish in Tunduma town. There we met Fr Nolascus OFM Cap who drove us to Merina's village, a journey of four hours, on bad and dusty roads as it was the dry season. Her home is truly in the interior. I got a wonderful welcome from her parents and had to stay there for three days, waiting for a lift



back to Tunduma, with the priest who offers Mass there, once a month.

I continued with my second visit to Iringa region, to a village called Ilula, to visit Zita's family. This journey was not easy at all. I left Tunduma at 7am. Our bus broke down several times on the bad roads and I reached

Makambako at 10:45pm. It was much later than expected and the person who was to meet me had given up and gone home. So I got into a motorized rickshaw to continue the journey. After more than two hours a tyre burst and we were in the middle of the bush with no help available. It was a main road and we tried to stop those big cars and lorries but in vain. There was moonlight as we began to trek to the next town. The owner of the vehicle, a very

kind man, left it there and helped me carry my bags. It was very cold. Then a big petrol lorry stopped and the driver took us to Ilula town. Zita's family on the phone advised me to spend the night with one of her relatives there. It was 1am when the lady met me at the station. We climbed together onto a motorbike and arrived at her home in 15 minutes. After washing and eating I went to bed at 3am. At 8am I took a motorbike to the distant village as that was the only means of transport. He was a good careful driver but it was a long, long journey of 9 hours on bad and dusty roads.

Before reaching the village we got an accident, I hurt my leg and my shoes were destroyed. I left them there. The bike man hurt his knee as well. We stood there for a while numb and in pain but glad to have survived. Then we continued carefully and arrived safely at Zita's place. We had a wonderful reception there from Zita's family and the food was welcome as we were starving.

I spent one day with them before starting back to Dar es salaam. At 3am I got a lift from a Noah car going to Ilula town. But on our way there a tyre burst and we were delayed for ages. The bus I had bought the ticket for had left without me. What to do, my voice was gone, no money on my phone. I sent a text appeal to Sr Eugenia, who very efficiently arranged and paid for my journey home on another bus. So I was saved by modern technology (and God's grace!)

All in all the journey was a tough one but I learned a lot and was happy to have had this chance because I was able to do some vocation promotion and hopefully one or more of the girls will be able to come and join us. I was glad to visit other regions and to meet good-hearted, kind and helpful people along the way.



*Zita, Hyasinta and Melina  
who soon will join pre Noviciate*

Our Charity is named for Sr Adriana van den Berg, who was much loved by all whose lives she touched during a long life of service. As a religious Sister she spent 45 years with the Holy Union Community in Tanzania, working in education and welfare among the people she loved.



In 2010 Sr Adriana was approached by two local mothers struggling to care for their disabled children. Moved by their plight, she put a call out to the neighborhood and discovered many other families in similar situations. This led to 40 women coming together to find a solution. Their wish was for a day care centre - somewhere they could come to connect with each other and access basics for their children, such as a meal, and medical care. And so Matumaini, or "Hope is Here" was born.

*"And he took the children in his arms,  
placed his hands on them and blessed them"*  
(Mark 10:16)



Fourteen years later, Matumaini has developed into a comprehensive welfare hub, providing medical and physiotherapy services, a workshop making splints and exercise equipment; basic education for the children and vocational training for their mothers. With over a thousand families having been helped, Matumaini is recognized far beyond its immediate neighborhood as a Centre of Hope and Enlightenment.

Sr. Adriana is no longer with us, but our charity was founded to perpetuate her legacy of love and care for vulnerable children.

*Matumaini can only continue to function with help from its friends around the world. You can help to bring hope to Adriana's children by a gift to:*  
[www.adrianaschildren.com](http://www.adrianaschildren.com)

Adriana's Children. Charity No: 1200783



## Holy Union Education Programme



Holy Union Sisters have just celebrated the Golden Jubilee of their presence and ministry in Tanzania. Since 1973, when two sisters arrived in Maua

Seminary in Kilimanjaro we have been very active in providing education to children and youth. Our pioneers, Srs Aquinas and Adriana, hugely improved the seminary programme and Maua became known as one of the first schools in the country. Its graduates today are doing sterling work in many areas for the Church and society.

Today, our sisters are living mostly in Dar es Salaam where we continue to work for children and youth in various ways. At the behest of the local people we helped to start several primary schools (eg. in Maji Matitu, in Saku and Churwi). The UN Millennium goals emphasized access to education for all and the government called on congregations to help to provide classrooms etc. We were enabled to do this by funding from schools in Ireland, missionary societies and friends abroad. We also got help from the Irish Embassy in Dar es Salaam.

Due to the population explosion (8.5 million in 1961 at Independence and 69 million in 2024, 63 years later) the schools we started now have huge numbers of students and there are big problems with maintenance and overcrowding. Not nearly enough teachers are employed. One teacher can be doing the work of four, with 200 pupils to teach. A lot of lip-service is paid to improving pedagogy but there is still a long, long way to go. With the help of Habitat for Humanity, we helped to build 36 Teachers' houses for the staff of Maji Matitu primary. It was a gesture of respect for the tough work they do and for those who benefitted it helped them significantly.

We are also committed to COBET/Compensatory Basic Education for late

starters and drop-outs. This special programme enables many to get back into education and realize their potential. Some graduates of COBET have now completed University degrees. There are 220 children in the programme this year. A large proportion of the funding comes from Misean Cara, the Irish Government's help to missionaries.

Holy Union Sisters have their own pre and primary schools as well as Debrabant Secondary High School. These are models of best practice, high academic achievement, significant inclusion and support for marginalized students. The work of the Holy Union Sisters reflects their strong belief in the role played by education in tackling poverty and reducing inequality.

This year, with the help of our great friend, Eilish Treacy, and funding from the INTO/Irish National Teachers' Organisation, we built another classroom up at Churwi. The school now has 3000 pupils enrolled. It needs a lot more infrastructure, especially classrooms and toilets. We also helped Charambe government secondary school, with notice boards and a much appreciated Steel Drum Band and Sr Fides, taught there as a volunteer for 9 months to help improve the teacher to student ratio. We took 65 children from four schools, Debrabant, Maji Matitu, Cobet and Churwi to play in the Steel Drum Band Festival in Bagamoyo, where they surpassed themselves. It was a memorable outing and well worth the investment.

We hope you have enjoyed reading these few glimpses of Tanzanian Holy Union Mission. We thank you for your support and wish you a blessed Christmas and a happy Year of Hope in 2025.



## Fieke van den Berg RIP

Sad news was the death of Fieke van den Berg (our late Sr Adriana's sister) on the 26<sup>th</sup> October. She was a heroine for us in many ways.



Fieke was a great support to Holy Union Mission. She visited Tanzania many times over the years and regarded herself as part of the Community. She was very good at needlework and every person who knew her has spoken about it. In our Community we have some curtains designed by her over 25 years ago.

She was very firm in her Catholic faith. We were able to join in her Requiem Mass online. To us the young generation she left a question on how to live well our Christian faith today and to respond to the challenges of our troubled world.

Dear Fieke your legacy will guide us. Our Sisters are so grateful for your wonderful ideas and generosity. Rest in peace our loved one until we will meet in Heaven.



**Merry Christmas  
and a happy  
New Year 2025.**

Learn more about us /Contact us:

- ♦ In Tanzania: farrell.annette @gmail.com
- ♦ In Ireland: lsu@eircom (Mrs. Mary Kenny/Tanzania Mission Fund)
- ♦ In UK : LSU Tanzania Project, 29 Pulteney Rd, Bath, BA2 4EZ
- ♦ UK Tel: +44(0)1225461115 email: louisvdb@me.com

