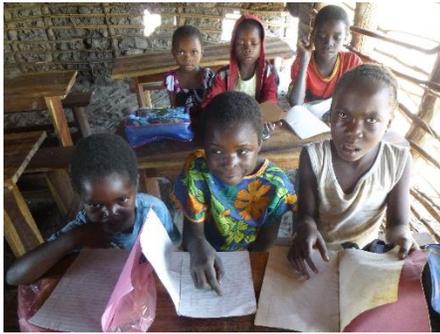


The Loreto sisters have been present in Lukulu, a remote area of western Zambia since 2006 where they have been engaged in ministry in the areas of education, primary healthcare support and income generating activities. Their main focus has been to respond to needs as identified by the local people themselves and to work with, and empower the impoverished community as they face the challenges of lack of education and access to basic health care, within a very undeveloped rural area lacking the basic necessities. All of the ministries endeavour to educate about and work towards achieving the SDGs.

One major contribution which the sisters have made over this time has been in supplying locally made blackboards and desks to about forty community schools in remote rural villages. When the government does not provide a school, local communities start a school. They identify a literate member of their community to become the untrained teacher, who provides his /her services on a voluntary basis. Initially, communities build a rudimentary classroom from materials available in the local rural environment. These schools are registered with the local office of the Ministry of Education. The schools identify their needs and where possible Loreto provides educational support to the schools. Loreto spends much time liaising with the rural communities as well as the local education office.



The community contribution is to transport the furniture by ox/donkey cart and/or dugout canoes. Some schools are up to 100 km away. Over the years Loreto has also built permanent classroom blocks at six of these schools to replace the rudimentary structures that were falling into disrepair. In all such cases the community provided the local materials of sand and stones as well as volunteering unskilled labour as their contribution to the buildings.

Over the years Loreto has also been very involved in supporting science education in the nearby secondary schools, helping teachers to upgrade their qualifications and equipping science laboratories. Currently we have one member teaching biology, general science and religious studies full-time in St Columba's Secondary, a local Catholic Grant-Aided school. The school has a lunch programme which is meant to help keep the pupils at school throughout the day and concentrate especially in afternoon lessons. Most of the pupils would



have this food as their only meal in the day because they have no other sources. Some of these pupils come from very rural villages and camp in shacks in Lukulu township. They try to do some odd jobs after school and over the weekend to pay rent and buy food. When unable to get these odd jobs, they come to school with empty stomachs which makes it very hard to concentrate during lessons. Some opt to stay out of school. Some may miss school for a week in pursuit of odd jobs in order to survive. Loreto is currently supporting this feeding programme thanks to donor funding.

Over the years Loreto has also built a number of health facilities to bring primary health care to a greater number of rural communities made possible through community assistance, donor funding and the willingness of the Ministry of Health to run the facility once constructed. In response to the HIV & AIDS pandemic a Counselling and Testing Centre was established and local volunteers trained to provide the counselling services in the vernacular. While this was initially fully donor dependent for reagents these are now largely provided by the Ministry, thus much more sustainable. The milk programme which provides milk for orphaned and vulnerable babies, when a mother dies or is unable to breastfeed her baby, due to the high cost of formula milk will always be donor dependent in such an impoverished community. However, Home Based Care which developed as a response to the HIV & AIDS pandemic, is a central hub of all the care support programmes and is now self-sustainable as a result of income generated by a tuckshop set up and run by the team of volunteer caregivers. This gives easy access to essential school requisites for the hundreds of pupils in three adjacent schools, while at the same time supporting the needs of the clients in HBC.



Orphans Ruth & Robert Mwila with their guardians receiving milk from the Programme

HEPS, a protein supplement given to malnourished HBC clients is produced by a separate project, and the women involved earn an income from this. Soap provided to HBC clients and sold within the local community is made by some of the volunteer caregivers who earn income from this. The soap is produced from oil that is derived from a local plant and the seeds for extracting oil are purchased from villagers who are encouraged to grow this plant and sell to the project, thus helping the local economy while at the same time caring for the environment. All of the volunteers and beneficiaries are encouraged to partake in SILC groups which are savings and lending schemes operated by and managed within the local community.



Village SILC Group in action

The health care support programme has developed over the years from individual door dependent projects responding to specific needs within the community to a more integrated community response working towards self-sustainability.