

# ASANTE

## Newsletter

Vol. 4



## Our Message

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### 'I need You!'...our Gospel of the year



How can we say: “I need you” without exposing our weakness and feeling like beggars? How can we accept that we need others even when we feel strong and healthy?

This is the challenge we received from Luke 18: 1-8; the Gospel that we will share with our volunteers in October and love to briefly share with you.

In it we find a widow who insistently knocks at the door of a judge, seeking justice. She cries out in desperation, stubbornly saying: “Do me justice! I lost everything, my husband, my social status, even my property and children are taken away from me! I need your help”. She’s one of the poor people who in their suffering cry out and say: “I need you” even to such a “deaf” judge.

But surprisingly the judge, who stands on a position of power and success, and respects neither God nor men, is also desperately in need of help. He needs that widow to break through a barrier of pride and arrogance that has deprived him of his soul, of his humanity. His cry is silent and invisible but extremely deep.

One cry is very loud and visible, the second one very hidden and silent, but in reality both need one another. The widow needs the support of the judge to regain hope in life, to restore her dignity and rights. The Judge needs the widow to unlock his heart of stone that has developed over the years, to regain the capacity to love and to revive his will to do good.

And God? Where is He in all this? God is in need of both of them to create a new community of brothers and sisters, where people are not discriminated because of their status or history; a community where everyone has something to give and to receive, where the able have a chance to encounter Jesus in the weak. God needs both to bridge the gap that leaves everyone distant, wounded and alone.

God needs me and you, whether in St Martin or afar to become promoters of such change and work for a new world where the rich and the poor, the strong and the vulnerable cease to look at one another with suspicion, but build together one family.

Would you wish to be part of this? Karibu – Welcome!

# An open reflection

## People with mental illness: a new calling for St Martin?

Over the recent years we have observed and reflected about the increasing number of people referred to St Martin because of mental illness. This drove us to set up a team to conduct a survey in parts of our working area to establish the extent to which mental illness has affected people in the community around Nyahururu.

What became obvious from the activity is that severe mental health disorders are more prevalent in men than in women, many of whom are in their youthful stage. The reported cases were highly needy persons who did not access medical or social support and continue to suffer both from neglect and lack of proper follow-up.

The number seems on the rise while the level of stigma still makes them vulnerable and easily labeled as “mad”. This comes from the fear and lack of understanding that many people still experience. The realization is challenging us and inviting us to a deeper reflection and discernment: “Is St Martin called to enter into this field with a deliberate commitment”? “Where is Jesus calling us to go nowadays”?

As a community, we realize that we are in danger of living superficially, closing our eyes to the reality of our brothers and sisters who are suffering. We need to open our hearts to the mysterious link between suffering and the gift of life, to let the suffering of others touch and open our hearts. This is an invitation to walk together with this group of people and help the community appreciate that people suffering from mental illness should not be stigmatized. Mental illness is not a taboo and thus it is not a reason for exclusion from community life.



# Our Activities

## Annual report presentation



25<sup>th</sup> June 2016, gave St. Martin Community an opportunity to come together and celebrate the results of the year April 2015-March 2016. Staff and management volunteers came together to look back at what the organization as a whole had achieved during the year, and look at recommendations made to address the challenges encountered.

In a nutshell, more than 9,000 people were reached by the organization through the interventions of the four programmes. This was made possible through the selfless service of more than 1,100 volunteers both at the management and the community level. The work of the volunteers was complimented by a team of 69 staff, 7 trainees and 4 expatriates.

Through the year, we were able to share our life and experiences with more than 1,000 visitors both local and international and we hope that this relationship will build bridges of solidarity and friendship.

We embrace the achievement with a lot of gratitude and humility. We are glad that the Lord has continued to positively use this community to touch multiple lives of people.

On behalf of all our beneficiaries and the community within and without our 11 zones of work, we say a big Thank you.

## World Drugs Day

Allow me to introduce myself; ***I am the disease of addiction***. I am cunning, baffling, and powerful. That's Me. They take strokes seriously, heart attacks, even diabetes they take seriously but the community ignores me.

On Sunday of 26th June we joined the world in the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Together with other stakeholders and supporters we promoted, and encouraged the theme of the day which was ***“Message of hope: Drug Use Disorders are Preventable and Treatable”***. We shared this message of hope in churches and during the procession in Nyahururu streets.

“I didn't know how to get out of it,  
and I didn't even know if I wanted to get out of it.”

“Inside me I felt I'm dying.  
But after going to a rehab  
I finally saw the light.  
I knew I'll be alright.”

***(Voices of recovering addicts during the sharing)***

## The Day of the African Child

In St Martin we strive to safe guard, protect, promote and fulfill children rights.

For this reason in partnership with Kindernothilfe- Germany and IPSIA MAE- Italy together with local stakeholders and concerned government departments we marked this year's day of the African Child on 16<sup>th</sup> June. The day provided us with an opportunity to reach out to the community with

the message on importance of protecting children rights when conflicts and war arise. This year's celebrations were under the theme; **"Conflict and crisis in Africa; respecting all children's Rights"**

"Children can do wonders  
and be the ones promoting and championing  
issues of child rights.  
Think of an idea that can enhance children rights  
and put it into action."

*(Dennis, 11 years during his Key note speech on the day)*

## Our Partners and Friends

### Footsteps of friendship



The partnership between St Martin and Fondazione Fontana has over the years grown into a friendship. As the African saying goes: *"ndugu ni makinya"* meaning *'friendship is in footsteps'*, staff of both organizations have taken time to visit each other every year.

Joint activities in schools under the projects 'Darasa Maisha' in St. Martin and 'Participation and Territory' in Fontana Foundation have put purpose into the exchange visits and created a platform for shared responsibility in building the communities around Padova (Italy) and Nyahururu (Kenya).

In February this year, 2 of our staff visited Italy and took part in empowering 200 Secondary School students on conflict and the right to peace, the first of the SDGs.

In June, Francesca and Sara, staff of Fontana, visited St. Martin and likewise participated in empowering 120 students of Secondary schools around Nyahururu on the same topic of conflict and the right to peace.

In the same spirit of collaboration and partnership Pierino Martinelli, the director of Fontana Foundation visited St. Martin at the beginning of August for the annual visit. It has been a time to renew the joy of our friendship and find ways of deepening it further.

## Upcoming Events

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- Staff outing 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2016
- Volunteers' day celebrations 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016
- St Martin day Celebration 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2016