



TSSF CAMEROON PROVINCE CELEBRATES 50th ANNIVERSARY

The Rainy Season in Cameroon marks April, May and June with abundant freshness. Amidst the undulating figures of covid-19 and continuous war atrocities in the North West and South West Regions, the clock continues to tick! Thus the launching of the 50th Anniversary of the erection of the Cameroon Province of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis (TSSF) on May 1. The Sisters and staff are learning the hard way—that constraints posed in the macro environment should not completely shut down the efforts to bring healthcare closer to the people! This ability to “find a way out” demands more creativity and greater commitment to our inner vision and vocation. Many of us are really daring to move on! CommuniCare’s second edition of 2021 covers, again a panoply of news from the Health Services of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis.



CAMEROON’S MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH EXPRESSES SENSITIVITY IN FAVOUR OF CARDIAC CENTER’S IDENTITY

Sr. Appolonia Budzee, CEO

April 24, 2021 marked the maiden visit of the Cardiac Center Team to the Minister of Public Health, Excellency Malachi Manaouda, since his appointment to office in 2018. The meeting’s agenda was of course, an evaluation of collab-

oration between the Ministry and the Cardiac Center according to the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2011 for the control and management of cardiovascular diseases in Cameroon. The context of the 5-year Anglophone crisis made the meeting an emergency long due. Some of the main axes of this collaboration are technical support, sponsorship of the surgeries for the underprivileged, training of health personnel, etc. The Minister responded point by point to the Sisters’ concerns. Additionally, he confirmed his knowledge of Shisong, its history and partnerships, and said he was sensitive at defending the “unique identity, integrity and



history of Shisong” as a solid health care base for Cameroonians.

He immediately set up a group that is currently working on the concerns of the St. Elizabeth Catholic General Hospital Cardiac Center in support of its evolution despite the socio-political crisis.

In our collaborative venture, the Minister of Public Health is expected to work more closely with the TSSF to step up technical, material, moral and financial support to the Cardiac Center in 2021.

The Cardiac Center continues to operate in Shisong in low volume due to the socio-political

crisis, but has opened stations in St. Padre Pio Hospital, Douala and the Jordan Medical Services in Yaoundé. It's mobile outreach stations include St. Francis Hospital, Ntasin; Centre Mere Therese, Baham; Notre Dame du Rosaire, Simbock; Mount Mary Hospital, Buea and recently,

John the Baptist Health Center, Ndop.

We denounce the impostors who are using the name of the Cardiac Center in the neighbourhoods of various towns of the Country to exploit the people. The Cardiac Center does not do home visits!

DARING TO EVACUATE CHILDREN TO MILAN IN THE COVID-19 ERA

Sr. Delphine Dzekashu, Nurse, Cardiac Center

The children suffering from cardiovascular diseases in Cameroon are the object of the actions of Cuore Fratello, Bambini Cardiopatici nel Mondo, the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis...! The respective families equally overstep many borders to have their children evacuated to Italy for surgery.

The children, as usual, were selected by the Cameroonian/Italian medical team, based on urgency and complexity of illness that cannot be managed in Cameroon. Originally five in number, two children eventually died while waiting for all the internal and external preparations. When we finally obtained all the travel documents, one of the children was diagnosed with covid-19. He got better and we restarted off with the flight process. Before we could travel, this baby, unfortunately, died. May his soul rest in peace, Amen.

Our flight was rescheduled for May 15 with the remaining two children. A few hours before we left, Sr. Isidora Jaff, my mission

companion, and I went to collect the covid test results, and as we crossed the road in Douala, a bike came from nowhere and pushed her down. She hit her back and neck so seriously. Thanks to Sr/Dr. Cynthia Shang who took very immediate action, as soon as we got to St. Padre Pio Hospital, to stabilize Sr. Isidora. However, after an hour, she said she will not be able to accompany the children to Milan.

I stayed focused and kept encouraging her, and by 11:30 a.m. she was better, and we left for the airport. While there, the same visas that were rejected a few months back by the airline were accepted without any problem. Of course, the recommendation from the Ital-

ian Embassy was very important. We finally took off at 2p.m. and arrived the Cuore Fratello Guest House in Milan at 9 a.m, May 16. There, we were placed on quarantine for the first 14 days after which we did the swab. The children were then admitted on June 7. Othniel was operated on June 8 and Nenolina, on June 14, with-



**Fruitful
20Years**

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

July 21, 2021 marks 20 years of collaboration among the TSSF, Associazione Cuore Fratello and Bambini Cardiopatici nel Mondo

standing a cardiac operation of more than 8 hours.

The Cuore Fratello volunteers have been very busy, helping us in one chore or another. The

85-year-old Clara Manfredi who does our shopping while we stay internalized in hospital, taking care of the children, has been exquisite and joyful in service. Both

children are recovering well and looking forward to returning to Cameroon with a healthy heart, new life. Thanks to all!

TWIN EVENT OF MAY FIRST

Fr. Dufe Joseph, OFMCap



Despite the early morning gunshots and insecurity alerts that have become the norm in Kumbo, and that re-appeared on May 1, a good number of people could still attend the double event at the Sacred Heart Parish Church, Shisong. First, it was a chance to celebrate the lives of Sr. Lukong Gertrude Yefon who died in Bamenda on June 24, 2020 and was buried at St. John Cemetery at Foncha Street Church the following day, and that of Sr. Roberta Feh Ngweningum, who departed this world on February 18, 2021 in Kenya and was buried there on February 24.

Secondly, the celebration marked the launching of the Golden Jubilee of the erection of the Cameroon Province of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis.

The peak of the event was the Holy Mass, led by the indefatigable Chief Shepherd of Kumbo,

Mgrs. George Nkuo. At the beginning of the Mass, the nature of the celebration was introduced, and everyone present was welcome. The Bishop, in his homily, hailed the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis for their untiring missionary work and encouraged them never to give up despite all the hardships—hardships that are found in the lives of everyone who sets out to do the will of God and which are further compounded by the current socio-political crisis plaguing the Country. The prayers of the faithful, symbolically and visually rendered by the Sisters, made use of the Crucifix of San Damiano, the Jubilee Candle, a portrait of the Pioneer Sisters, a pair of sandals, a peace plant, a globe, soil inside a clay pot and a Book of the Dead, all summarizing the missionary experience of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis for the past 50 years and putting

all their efforts into the hands of the Provident Lord. At the end of the Holy Mass, six candles were lit, representing the six Countries where the Sisters of the Cameroon Province are currently working.

Before the Final Blessing, the Provincial Superior, Sr. Gloria Wirba welcomed and greeted all present. She indicated that their tradition of burying their departed Sisters in their Congregational cemetery of Shisong was modified by their last General Chapter, whereby a sister can be “buried in a Country where she dies, in a cemetery provided for missionaries or other religious.” She also emphasized the fact that when it comes to the burial of their sisters, it is the full responsibility of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, and not of the family. On the 50th Anniversary, Sr. Gloria affirmed that a Jubilee “is a time of celebration, a mile stone, a time of thanksgiving for all the Lord has done for us, through us and in us.” She then outlined the various Countries where they minister: Cameroon, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Morocco and Italy.

Sr. Gloria justified the theme of the Jubilee - *Honouring the Past with Gratitude, Living the Present with Passion and Looking at the Future with Hope*. She then projected that this Jubilee was going to be for them “a time of pondering at the challenges and difficulties we have gone through, pondering on

the crown of thorns worn, on the hard road of Calvary that has led us this far, on all the lessons we have learned, and above all, a time of marvel at the faithfulness and blessings of God.” She made recourse to the words of their Mother Foundress: “May the name of the Lord be blessed for both sweet and sour”, and said that these words have given them every reason to

thank God. She then thanked all who had kept them going so far and who had responded positively to their invitation—the Bishop, the priests, the Capuchins, other Religious, the Companions of the TSSF, family members of Sr. Gertrude and Sr. Roberta (absent due to the insecurity), the Christian community of Shisong, the Choir and beloved members of the Con-

gregation especially those of Shisong community.

The entire worshipping assembly was then invited to the cemetery of the Sisters, where the wall tombs of the two Sisters were blessed and the soil brought from their graves and buried. The day ended with a hectic family meal at the Convent, supplied by the Franciscan Sisters. Everyone returned to their various destinations hitch-free.

Good Will Messages for the TSSF on their Golden Jubilee

The upcoming celebration of the Golden Jubilee (50 years) of the Canonical Erection of the Cameroon Province of the Tertiary Sisters of Saint Francis (TSSF) foresees the production of a special edition of the Tree Magazine.

It shall publish amongst other interesting articles, Goodwill Messages to the Sisters from individuals, families and institutions alike. We invite you to grasp this opportunity to express your good wishes to the sisters for their tireless services to the people of God in Cameroon, Nigeria, Republic of Central Africa, DRC, Morocco and Italy for past 50 years as a Province (86 years of presence in Cameroon).

The Magazine also provides you with the opportunity to advertise your business to its over 2000 readership around the globe.

Prices for Adverts and Messages:

ADVERTS

1. Inside front page = 150,000FCFA
2. Inside back page = 150,000FCFA
3. Back page = 200,000 FCFA
4. Any page inside the magazine = 100,000FCFA

GOODWILL MESSAGES

Full page = 50,000FCFA

Half Page = 35,000CFA

All messages including the accompanying photo(s) will in colour print.

Please send your messages and pictures through the WhatsApp numbers: 662996332 or 674 939 728. Deadline for submission is July 20. You are invited to make your payment (including charges) to 674 939 728.

St Padre Pio Hospital Inaugurates Neonatology Unit

On June 30th 2020, the neonatology unit of St Padre Pio hospital Deido Douala saw the limelight of the day. This unit has come as a relief to our very productive maternity that had for some years referred sick children to other institutions, some who even died on the way.

So far we have nursed 208 neonates.

Therefore, do not hesitate to contact us for sick neonates (0 to 28 days) or children born premature. We are up to the task.



DR. ALEXANDRE NTOUBA BECOMES AMBASSADOR OF THE SHISONG CARDIAC CENTER

Sr. Budzee Appolonia, CEO

“My aspiration to join the Shisong Cardiac Center team has been fulfilled after 10 years”, says Dr. Alexandre Ntoubu, Anesthesiologist from Amiens—France, who came to know of the Cardiac Center through Dr. Lawong Gilbert during their medical studies in Germany.

An increasing number of persons who are born in Cameroon, and who study and naturalize in other Countries desire to make a positive impact in their communities of origin through technical and material support. Dr. Ntoubu was impressed by the persistent positive news from Shisong in the publications researched so far. However, during his brief visits to Yaoundé (Cameroon) in the past, travelling a whole day to Shisong couldn't fit into the short time at his disposal. The “silver lining” was the temporal transfer of the cardiac surgery program from Shisong to Yaoundé due to the ongoing war. Dr. Ntoubu could now visit the team in Yaoundé in November 2020 and promised to return for a mission!

Dr. Ntoubu is gratified by his first mission of April 24 through May 1 where 7 persons were operated, ranging from 4 to 64 years of age. Together with a nurse anesthetist colleague, Mr. Simon, he describes the mission as “rich and impressive”. Why? “The relationships and adaptation to the material on site went quite quickly...due to “very good organization beforehand, the discipline and rigour of the people involved and the good quality of material ...”. According to the visiting team, the difficulties encountered with the respirators were generally resolved. They consider the theater and post-operative teams as “experienced, dynamic, motivated and passionate, working in good conditions”—thanks to the leadership of Dr. Charles Mvondo and Sr. Juliette Burinyuy and the entire Shisong Hospital team lead by Sr. Helen Anshoma.

After experiencing the strengths and shortcomings of the Shisong team at the Jordan Medical Center

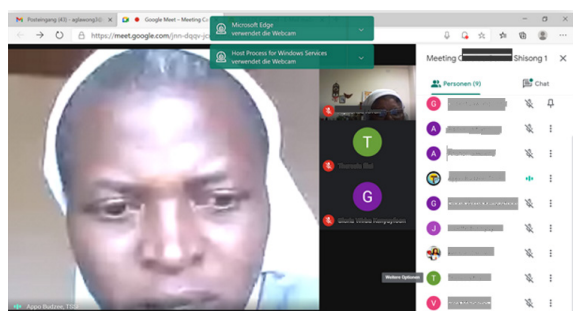


in Yaoundé, Dr. Ntoubu and colleague, volunteers, look forward to making more regular visits in future and finding and encouraging other specialists to increase activity and save the long list of persons on the surgical list of Dr. Mvondo. However, the challenge of finding sponsors for the “underprivileged” patients requires a more global effort. “Many are sick; professionals can be harnessed; but the gap of paying for the material and procedures remains wide”, expresses Sr. Therese Filai who runs the Heart Foundation, responsible for raising funds for this purpose.

In turn, the Shisong team found Dr. Ntoubu and Mr. Simon quite professional, adaptable and encouraging, “nice to work with”. Our gratitude to both and with wishes of more collaboration in future.

TSSF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE ERA OF VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION

Dr. Lawong Gilbert, TSSF Health Consultant



The COVID-19 pandemic has not only been a health challenge but one of communication. Before, many meetings were held daily with people travelling to their various venues. With lock downs and travelling limitations in the wake of the pandemic, the world was forced in the course of 2020 to rethink the modus of meetings.

Adding to the pandemic, the TSSF health services face challenges during the ongoing sociopolitical crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. This aggravates the risk of travelling for meetings.

It was soon noticed that effective work cannot do without relevant meetings as inter personal phone calls, letters and written messages could not replace meetings. Like the entire business world, the TSSF Health Services made first steps in discovering virtual meetings. To ease this process, a fact-finding program was made with all heads of health institutions, capturing the kind of hard and software they use, the capacity of these equipment and the experience of users. The aim was to standardise available technology and knowledge. The first online meetings were initiated in small groups, where short training sessions were implemented and subsequently only contents of the agenda were deliberated on. The first participants served as multipliers, thereby introducing this technology to others in the TSSF Health Family.

With virtual meetings the following advantages were soon recognized:

- Sharing the meeting agenda with all participants and feedback/amendments before the meeting was time-saving.
- Sharing of relevant preparatory documents to participants in digital form beforehand
- Scheduling the meeting or changing the schedule in agreement with all participants
- Minute-typing alongside deliberations, so that at the end of the meeting the minutes are timely and can be reviewed by all participants before finalization
- Extremely low costs as no one has to travel
- Less risk of getting involved in any problems with state and non-state armed forces on the way to and from meetings
- Flexibility of taking part in subsequent meetings of various backgrounds from one standpoint within a short period of time.
- Compliance with the covid-19 measure of social distance.

The major challenges, however, were lack of electricity to run the mobile phones and computers, difficulties in accessing the internet network and attending meetings at times in darkness, making note-taking almost impossible. The concentration and focus on the screen remain challenges that could only be addressed with efficient, precise and short meetings. In like manner, the deficiency in physical presence, inter personal interactions, opening and closing prayers during virtual meetings were easily resolved or forgone. Overall, we appreciate this modern technology that enables meetings despite the aforementioned two major limitations in an era marked by shutdown of physical interactions. The experiences made teach us that for some issues, online formats will remain useful. For others, physical meetings will remain the standard as soon as this is possible. Furthermore, staff of the TSSF Health Services need to be introduced to virtual meetings as part of skills development.

Maiden Mobile Cardiac Consultations in Ngoketunjia Division

Ernest Ndzi, Public Relations Officer

The Cardiac Center organized its first outreach consultations at the St. John the Baptist Health Center Ndop, Ngoketunjia Division in the North West restive Region of Cameroon on the 30th of June and 1st July 2021.

Within the context of the prevailing security challenges in the country and particularly the North West region, many cardiac patients have not been able to travel to the Cardiac Center in Shisong for their routine checkups over the past 4 years



counting. Following the mission statement of the St. Elizabeth Catholic General Hospital Cardiac Center Shisong, “to see and serve Christ in all by spending time to care”, the Administration of the institution has continued to multiply efforts and adopt other strategies to ensure that services are made available to patients in proximity. A total number of 34 patients were consulted during this first mission by Dr. Sr. Anshoma Helen Mbouh, the resident Cardiologist and the mobile cardiac team. Both old and new cardiac pa-

tients attended to in Ndop expressed feelings of satisfaction after consulting and receiving medications. *“I am very happy receiving my treatment in Ndop as I have spent very little as transport from Baba to Ndop compared to my past trips to the Cardiac Center Shisong. I wish that the cardiologist should continue to come and meet us in Ndop”* were the expressions of one of the patients after consultations. At the end of the outreach consultations, some potential for numerical growth in patient turnout were identified



Mobile Cardiac Team Members

and will be exploited by all stakeholders to ensure that more persons benefit from the services offered by the Cardiac Center Shisong subsequently. The next outreach consultation is previewed for the 22nd – 23rd September 2021.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With deep gratitude, we acknowledge our benefactors for their continuous solidarity in the mission for the underprivileged of our society. During the past three months we acknowledge:

- Missionszentrale der Franziskaner for sponsoring solar energy installations for Shisong, Douala and Njinikom and well as procurement of medical equipment.
- Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, La Crosse, USA continued to offer remarkable contribution for the sustainability of the TSSF in Africa
- Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Milwaukee, USA: for their remarkable contribution for the sustainability of the TSSF in Africa
- Medicines for Humanity, initiated the training of our staff in Ntasen and Njinikom Hospitals for electronic data management in the Hospital and Hospital management.
- Dr. Gilbert Lawong, for his human resource contribution for the strategic sustainability of the TSSF Health Services
- Cuore Fratello ONLUS (San Donato Milanese) for continuous advocacy for the Cardiac Center and receiving two children for heart surgery in Milan.

- Bambini Cardiopatici nel Mondo (San Donato Milanese) for continuous advocacy in favour of the Cardiac Center
- Dr. Andrea Zeller of Bozen (South Tyrol) with Mi-Do (Micro Donation): sponsored 3 persons in the April mission. **Through her mediation the Region Trentino /Alta Adige (Italy) donated equipment and material to the Cardiac Centre Yaoundé worth € 70.000 .**
- St. Laurentius Catholic Parish Grosskrotzenburg (Germany) sponsored treatment of the underprivileged patients
- LUMOS organized deliberation with the TSSF for strategic actions in 2021
- Orthopaedics ONLUS, Pisa-Italy, opened discussion of possible orthopaedic mission in October
- Nso Family Union, Canada, for supporting in the control of covid-19 infections.

We remain grateful to all our Benefactors

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- Sudtirol Aerzte fuer die Welt, South Tyrol
- Fofeni Bonito, USA
- Missio Brixen/Bozen
- Fr. Leonhard Weidemayr, MHM Absam-Austria
- Mission Doctors
- The Capuchins' Mission Office, Milan, through

- Bishop Angelo Pagano,
- ASHIA Cameroon, Switzerland
- Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, General Administration (Rome) & the Provinces of Brixen and Hall
- Fr. George Hanser, MHM (Austria)
- Jo Overton and friends in the Diocese of Portsmouth
- Dr. Daniel Gwanula

- Call to Mercy
 - Italian Doctors (Ziernhold Guinther and team)
 - Surgforall, Spain
 - Mr. Clement Fondufe
 - Cameroon's Ministry of Public Health
- ...all of you for your solicitude, solidarity and every form of support.

ORBITUARY

Sr. Dorothy Yefon



Ndzerem Henrietta Yefon (Sr. Mary Dorothy Yefon) was born in Kumbo on November 9, 1965 into the family of Ndzerem Daniel and Helena Ngo, both alive. She went to St. Theresia Primary School, Kumbo, Government Bilingual High School Kumbo, St. Mark evening School and was admitted into the Convent of the TSSF in 1985.

After her formation at *Institut de Theologie et Pastoral pour les Religieux* (ITPR) in Yaoundé, she was serving fervently in pastoral/social ministry with the youth and women in the Dioceses of Yagoua, Garoua, prison ministry in Bamenda, St. Francis Center for Skills Building in Njavnyuy and women animation in Edea. Along the line, she attended several seminars and capacity building workshops in Cameroon and South Africa. She used to describe her positive experience as being able to intervene in situations of torture and inhuman practices in prisons. She coordinated advocacy for the inmates, animated HIV/AIDS support groups and the Justice and Peace Commission. She endeavoured to build peaceful co-existence between the civil society and the Forces of Law and Order. Her health had not been good for the past few years and she underwent back surgery twice. She became unwell in Edea and was eventually referred to some clinics in Douala where she died within 12 days on May 18, aged 56 and 34th year of religious Profession. She was calm, joyful, lively, soft spoken, peace maker, mentor.

Sr. Bernardette Yengeh of the Incarnate Love of Christ



Yengeh Mariana (Sr. Bernadette Yengeh) was born in Shisong Hospital on the 30th of October, 1947 into the family of Sylvester Njodzeka and Juliana Lambiv RIP. Sister Bernadette joined the TSSF in 1963. She completed her nursing studies at the Catholic School of Health Sciences on August 2, 1985. Intermittently, she did Public Health Nursing, Nursing Continuing Education, Nurse – Midwifery Course, Introduction to Effective Management and Counseling. Sr. Bernadette thus served as a Nurse Midwife in the various health services operated by the TSSF: Tatum, Bali, Shisong, Ako, Djottin, Akwaya, Njinikom, MayoDarle and Bafut.

Before her death, she was serving as a Nurse/Midwife at St. Theresia's Health Centre in Bafut. Sister Bernadette has had health complications for long and lived on medication. She felt sick while in Bafut on the 21st of May, 2021 and was quickly conveyed to Shisong Hospital, but her condition kept deteriorating and she finally gave up on Thursday, 27th May, 2021 at 10:15a.m. aged 74 and on the 54th Year of her Religious Profession. She was a calm, frank, soft spoken and joyful person.

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PUBLISHER: TSSF Health Direction Office. P.O. Box 579, Bamenda
tssfhealthdirector@gmail.com Tel: 237 668 744 714

SPONSOR: Sr. Wirba Gloria Kenyuyfoon, Provincial Superior,
Sr. Eileen Javnyuy, Councillor in charge of Health Care

EDITORS: Sr. Budzee Appolonia (in Chief), Dr. Tantchou Tchoumi Jacques Cabral,
Mr. Jato Richard, Fr. Joseph Dufe, Sr. Alphonsa Kiven, Dr. Gilbert Lawong,
Mr. Benard Kong, Sr. Alphonsa Suliy, Sr. Priscilla Yein,
Sr. Priscilla Assamba

