



Sisters
Hospitallers

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#Committed

We would like to introduce you to Élisabeth Picquart, a volunteer from the Province of France.

Mozambique: mental health and COVID-19



This project aims to ensure that people of all ages with mental illnesses and/or disabilities can continue to receive health and rehabilitation care during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The project that we have started in Mozambique is being carried out at the Sisters Hospitallers' Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre in Mahotas (CRPS, for its abbreviation in Spanish). It aims to contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and well-being, as part of the 2030 Agenda (United Nations Development Programme).

This project aims to ensure that people of all ages with mental illnesses and/or disabilities can continue to receive health and rehabilitation care during the Covid-19 pandemic.

More need due to the health crisis

Due to the health crisis we are facing, the few mental health care facilities in Mozambique have had to close or reduce their services, leaving vulnerable people without healthcare services.

At the Sisters Hospitallers' Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre (CRPS) in Mahotas, Mozambique, some activities and services are no longer being offered due to a lack of financial resources. These financial resources are needed to provide assistance safely and to adapt to restrictions due to Covid-19.

Mental health issues have increased due to the health, economic, and social crisis caused by the pandemic, and it is key that we can continue to treat people with pre-existing mental illnesses and/or disabilities and to expand services to care for new potential patients.

This is why this project, co-financed by the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID, for its abbreviation in Spanish), includes strengthening and expanding mental health consultation

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services at our centre in safe and clean conditions adapted to health precautions, as well as carrying out actions to provide information and training activities to raise awareness of mental health and the fight against discrimination.

The overall aim is to ensure mental health care continues to be provided during the Covid-19 pandemic to prevent more serious situations and crises, which hinder people's social stability.

Its specific aims are to strengthen care and to increase the number of consultations and areas of intervention at the centre itself to guarantee care and to contribute to improving the health of the population. Furthermore, to raise awareness of mental health-related illnesses by carrying out activities to provide information and psychosocial support.

Over 20 years of history

The Sisters Hospitallers' Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre in Mahotas, Mozambique, also runs programmes geared towards children with physical and mental disabilities: malnutrition, effects of malaria; people with HIV; and young people and adults with psychiatric and mental health issues. The centre is located in the Kamavota district in a neighbourhood outside the city centre, which is on

the outskirts of Maputo (30 kilometres away).

Since 1998, it has been devoted to the treatment, rehabilitation, and social/family reintegration of people with mental illnesses and disabilities, in collaboration with the Infulene Psychiatric Hospital.

Subsequently, a high prevalence of multiple pathologies among the paediatric population led the Centre to begin its activity in paediatrics in 2002.

The government's lack of response to mental health needs and the lack of institutions providing support for the population in this area make the work carried out by the centre irreplaceable. Given the vast experience that the Sisters Hospitallers have in the field of mental health as well as their ability to organise and manage, the centre has a good reputation among the population and local authorities.

In this regard, the centre is supported by Mozambique's Ministry of Health, which collaborates by providing the centre with specialised staff (a paediatrician, a psychiatrist, a physiotherapist, a psychologist and an occupational therapist).

EAs for the services offered by the centre, we would like to highlight the S. João de Deus Unit, which provides psychosocial rehabilitation

services for adolescents and adults. It has space for 40 users and provides psychosocial rehabilitation assistance to clinically stable adolescents and adults between 15 and 60 years of age who can be rehabilitated and socially reintegrated.

The users are from the neighbourhoods of Maputo that surround the centre, are transferred from the Infulene Psychiatric Hospital, or are other people who meet the admission criteria. This unit also provides service to users with a medical diagnosis of intellectual disability and/or neuropsychiatric problems, epilepsy, and psychosis, among others.

Rehabilitation for children

The San Benito Menni Children's Rehabilitation Unit, with a capacity for 35 children, provides nutritional, pharmacological, physical, paediatric, psychological, and nursing support and speech therapy for children up to the age of 12 (with some exceptions that justify a longer stay) with multiple disabilities, cerebral palsy, autism, myopathy, Down's syndrome, intellectual difficulties, microcephaly, osteogenesis imperfecta, and epilepsy.

Children with other pathologies, such as AIDS and tuberculosis, and with cognitive impairment, are also supported. The temporary care centre (CAT, for its abbreviation in Spanish) has capacity for 5 users who are clinically stable and in the process of integrating into the community and their family.

These users are cared for at the CRPS during the day to boost their personal autonomy and social and community integration. The adults being helped also do gardening activities and there is a farming service to socially reintegrate them and to reintegrate them into the workforce.

Mozambique, the Spanish Cooperative

The Spanish Cooperative has defined priority countries and strategic sectors for cooperation, including the 'Spanish Cooperative's strategy for a joint response to the Covid-19 crisis: facing the crisis for a transformative recovery'.

The Spanish Cooperation's 5th Master Plan for 2018-2021 includes Mozambique in its geographical priorities. It has been added to the association's group of least developed countries.

The legal framework for cooperation with Mozambique is the Basic Cooperation Agreement signed in 1980. The 5th Master Plan considers Sustainable Development Goal 3 'Health and Well-being' and Target 3.8: 'Achieving universal health coverage'.

According to the United Nations' classification, Mozambique is considered one of the least developed countries, ranking 180 out of 189 countries regarding its HDI, which is only 0.446.

Mozambique is a poor, sparsely populated country with high fertility and mortality rates and a rapidly growing youth population: 45 per cent of the population is under the age of 15. Mozambique's high poverty rate is due to natural disasters, disease, high population growth, low agricultural productivity, and unequal distribution of wealth.





María Begoña Pérez

General councillor; she leads the Sisters Hospitallers' restructuring process in Africa.

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When was the Hospitaller Project created in Africa and what is its aim?

This project is part of the restructuring process that the Congregation is carrying out. In 2015, the superior general appointed the Hospitaller Commission in Africa (CHAF) to begin the process of restructuring and revitalising the congregation's presence in Africa. This Commission resumed what was experienced in the First Meeting of Hospitallers in Africa, held in Elmina (Ghana) at the end of 2014, with the slogan 'Africa, keep the light of hospitality burning', and drew up a project for 2016 to 2018. In it, they describe five priorities focused on, above all, raising awareness.

How is this project managed through CHAF? Who are its members?

In March 2019, Sister Anabela Carneiro, superior general, made some changes to the composition of the commission after speaking with the provincial superiors. It currently includes Marie Elisabeth Ngo Mbouck (Province of Portugal), Anastasia Acquaye (Province of England) Emilie Bayekula Phanzu and Marie Reine Aleki (Province of France), and I am the head.

To understand the situation, we surveyed all the sisters in Africa as well as the provincial superiors. This helped us to create a new work plan based on what they themselves had expressed. We plan to implement the plan over four years. COVID-19 has prevented us from having face-to-face meetings, so our online meetings have multiplied.

What are the functions of the commission? And the work dynamic?

At the beginning of 2021, we decided to appoint a delegate of the Superior General, Marie Elisabeth Ngo Mbouck, to speed up the process. Her main role is to drive, coordinate, and supervise the restructuring process.

In addition, she has other functions such as visiting the communities (by herself or delegating this task to other members of the commission); encouraging and accompanying the sisters and collaborators during the process; coordinating communication actions; leading the commission; and evaluating, reviewing and adjusting the plan together with the members of the commission, etc.

The general aim of the commission is to carry out, together with the delegate, the congregation's Restructuring Plan for Africa, promoting the revitalisation of individuals and communities and the reorganisation of apostolic works, as well as encouraging greater responsibility for building its own future.

Among other functions, the commission must collaborate actively on the work entrusted to it through reflection, analysis, and discernment; encourage and promote communities/apostolic works, and carry out actions that are the commission's responsibility.

Regarding general government, her main task is to accompany and support the commission to implement the plan, which may involve different actions. She also presents proposals on decisions that must be taken related to carrying out the restructuring plan to the superior general and council.

What steps have you taken so far?

The COVID-19 pandemic situation has forced us to delay our plan and to reorganise it for 2021. Despite these difficulties, several actions have already been carried out. The latest was an online meeting for local superiors to reflect on 'The role of the local superior in the Congregation's documents'. It took place on 26, 27, and 28 April.

A new work plan has recently been presented, which goes until 2025. Of all the aims it includes, which are your priorities?

From the responses I have received, our priorities are:

- Training at all levels and in all stages of Hospitaller life, as well as specific training for trainers and training on leadership, economics, and managing

the works.

- Quality of fraternal life, drawing from charismatic sources.

- Hospitaller works and economy, developing the Hospitaller mission in response to new needs, as well as solidarity.

Ten strategic objectives have emerged from these priorities, which aim to respond to the communities' and centres' different areas of life.

When is this project scheduled to end? And how?

The project, as such, is expected to come to an end in 2024 with two new canonical structures that will be defined by the General Chapter, but we will continue to work in 2025 to help with these structures.

A wish for the future

My wish for the future is that we will be able to revitalise our life as consecrated women and to live the mission of Hospitality passionately.

Celebration of Saint Joseph Province of Italy

In the Sisters Hospitallers' Villa San Giuseppe centre in Ascoli Piceno, Italy, the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Mary's Spouse as the Patron Saint of the Universal Church was celebrated on 19 March, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph. The mayor of the city, Marco Fioravanti, among other local authorities, took part in the celebration officiated by Bishop Domenico Pompili.

At the end of the celebration, Dr. Massimo Badolato, director general of the centre, greeted the authorities who were there and thanked all the collaborators and sisters who work tirelessly and with great Hospitaller spirit during this difficult time due to Covid-19. Sister Rita, the centre's superior, read the message of thanks from the provincial superior, Sister María Asunción Riopedre: 'On this beautiful day, we would like to recognise the collabo-



rators who have been attending and responding with professionalism, dedication, and a sense of belonging to the needs of the people cared for in this House for many years, in the different areas of the Hospitaller project (...). Together with the sisters of the Provincial Council and the management of the centre, I would like to thank you for being an example of perseverance in your work'.

‘Always in Mind’ Project Province of Portugal

The Sisters Hospitallers’ Casa de Saúde do Bom Jesus in Braga, Portugal, has launched a new home care service to improve the quality of life of people with dementia and their caregivers.

The Always in Mind Project won the 8th edition of the BPI and the la Caixa Foundation’s Senior Award, which highlighted its social relevance, as well as its adaptation to today’s world and its innovative character. The award was presented to the Sisters Hospitallers’ Casa de Saúde do Bom Jesus. The people receiving this service are people over 65 years old who live in the municipality of Braga and have been diagnosed with dementia and their caregivers.

The initiative began in October 2020 and has a Home Support team, made up of professionals from the areas of psychology, nursing, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy. In total, 26 patients and



26 caregivers are already being assisted.

The interventions aim to preserve the autonomy of people with dementia. At the same time, caregivers are encouraged and supported during the different stages of the disease.

They are offered cognitive stimulation sessions, physical and motor rehabilitation, home adaptation, technical assistance, therapy management, training, emotional support, and psychoeducation.

Holy Week during COVID-19 Latin America Province

The Sisters Hospitallers’ San Benito Menni Mental Health Network in Chile celebrated Holy Week. However, because of the pandemic and the quarantine affecting the entire metropolitan region and a large part of the country, the celebration had to be different.

Each centre carried out its activities independently without receiving external visitors, following the instructions of the Chilean Ministry of Health, but there was still an atmosphere of recollection.

Union y fraternity

The prayers were focused on giving thanks for being able to make it through these difficult times and praying for the families and for all those who are suffering because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



In some homes, such as the Juan Pablo II Residence, users followed the liturgy on the television and radio.

In the San Benito Residence, they prepared an altar, celebrated the last supper and fraternal forgiveness with the help of Sister Albertina and the participation of all the users, turning the residence into a place of union and fraternity.

Covid-19 Vaccine **Province of France**

During this lengthy health crisis, the Sisters Hospitallers' Maison Sainte Germaine in Paris, France, is doing all it can to preserve its residents' physical and mental health. This is why all contact with the outside world continues to be regulated (family visits, etc.), and communication via social networks is encouraged.

The vaccine will allow some of the current lockdown rules to be relaxed, specifically for the day centre's more independent residents. The centre's doctor has already contacted health authorities.



As the vaccines arrive, Maison Sainte Germaine carries out daily activities to strengthen and promote socialisation, as well as to boost the residents' self-esteem.

'Double Stigma' Project **Province of Spain**

The Sisters Hospitallers' Sra. Del Carmen Neuropsychiatric Centre in Zaragoza, Spain, has launched the 'Double Stigma' project to promote the social participation and empowerment of women with mental illness residing at the centre, as well as to break down existing prejudices among male users.

This project will provide non-sexist education and will promote the defence of the fundamental rights and autonomy of women who are subjected to stigmatisation, which can sometimes be made worse when living in a centre.

'The fact that these women live in a psychiatric institution means that they want to be accepted by the rest of the users, so they adopt the roles that they believe will contribute to this acceptance', says Irene Barrera, the leader and visionary of the project.

Irene Barrera explains that the need for this type of initiative was prompted by the observation that in certain activities at the centre, such as sports, there was a markedly lower level of participation by women compared to men.



'In these activities, 75% of participants are men, whereas 25% are women.'

On the other hand, these percentages are reversed if we focus on activities that are more focused on caring for others and their well-being, such as cooking workshops, handicrafts, etc. 'Female users of the centre also spend less time resting or on their own interests', she adds.

The 'Double Stigma' project will provide all users with specialised training and will raise their awareness. *'In the practical session, the men will be in charge of preparing the food during a cooking workshop, but they will pretend to be at home taking care of the children while their wives work.'*



Élisabeth Picquart

‘My greatest wish is that many more volunteers will join us so that each and every resident can experience the joy of this relationship’

My name is Élisabeth Picquart, and I work as a volunteer at the Masion Sainte Germaine, a health centre run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Paris, France.

I started this work after I met Christiane, who had been a volunteer for several years at this health centre, during a service at the Vaugirard Hospital in the 15th arrondissement of Paris. One day, I told her that I wanted to volunteer at the Sisters Hospitallers’ centre, as I had worked there as a physiotherapist years before. She suggested that I speak to Sister Loly, who is in charge of the Sisters Hospitallers’ volunteer service in the Province of France.

After talking to this sister, we built a friendship, which has lasted over the years and will hopefully continue in the future. In other words, together we have a long journey ahead of us.

Currently, my volunteer work with the Sisters Hospitallers is centred on three residents who

are already my friends, with whom I have formed an indestructible bond that has undoubtedly evolved over time.

Our daily activities are very diverse. I go shopping with Magalie, with a long list of products to fill a large bag with multiple items, ranging from beauty products to small gifts.

I go to the shop regularly with Lucie—who won’t give up her fashion magazine for anything in the world—even at the risk of being disappointed because the publication is not weekly. When that happens, we go for a walk and chat to distract her.

I usually share a hot chocolate with Cécile—who likes to paint colours on large papers—in the establishment’s sitting room. It is a treat that cannot be missed that she slowly savours as she tells me about the adventures of her nephews and nieces in detail.

My greatest wish is that many more volunteers will get involved and will join us so that each and every resident can experience the joy of this relationship’.