

Trocaire – Ethiopian Visit by Mary Dee

One of the first projects that we visited was 'Brothers of Good Works Counselling and Social Services Centre', which was located in Gulele sub city of Addis Ababa, about 30 mins from the centre of the city.



Brothers of Good Works (BGW) is a community devoted to support the poorest of the poor including prisoners, sick people, orphans and poor children without education. It was founded at Renaix, Flanders, in 1830, by Etienne Modeste Glorieux, a Belgian Priest and approved in 1892 by Leo XIII.

Brothers of Good works had taken over the administration of the Counselling and Social Service Centre that has been in existence since September 1992. It was established by MMM (Medical Missionaries of Mary) as a response by the Catholic Church to a request by the government of Ethiopia for the churches and NGOs to cooperate with them in the fight against HIV/AIDS and its effects. The Counselling Centre began as a referral centre, receiving people with HIV/AIDS from hospital and other agencies to provide on-going counselling and social services for adults. It was soon realised that these services were needed by dependents of clients as well. Home-based care was provided on a part time basis by nurse counsellors in addition to their other activities.

The HIV/AIDS Education program was started, initially at the conference of Major Religious superiors (CMRS) but transferred to the counselling centre. This was especially important at the time since drugs were often not available and there still is no cure or vaccine against the virus.

The services of the Centre include the following :

- Referral to HIV testing
- HIV education
- Integrated home based care
- Orphan support
- Community development and support for disabled children

This project supports people infected and affected by HIV and other relevant groups so they can assume responsibility for their own health and create a positive and supportive environment.

I was also very much aware of how spirited the women were. They were encouraged to set up little business for themselves and this allowed them to save some money. They borrow money from a "Credit Union". They buy phone cards, scarves, cloths etc originally in a market, and then sell them on at a profit. They then pay back the money that they originally borrowed, and save the remainder of the profit.



I was privileged to visit the home of one of the participants in the project. This was a very humbling experience. Her dad totally supports her and helps her with the buying and the selling of the materials. He told us that *"This project has helped my daughter come back to life!"*. For me, this was a profound statement.



Again, Trocaire are very much involved with this project. So please do your best this year with your Trocaire Box. They are now available at your local Church.