

Bamenda Newsletter

Annual Overview

Tragically, it was another harrowing year for our sisters and brothers in the Archdiocese of Bamenda, compounded by the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic. The violence has continued. A decline in farming led to a significant drop in the production of local crops, which people very much depended on for sustenance. The cost of living has escalated. Four years of armed conflict have taken a great toll on every dimension of the life and ministry of our sister diocese.

The Archdiocese of Bamenda has played a leading role in attending to the basic needs of the thousands of displaced Anglophones living in overcrowded homes in Bamenda city centre or in makeshift huts in the heart of desolate forest areas. The Archdiocesan medical centres have supported victims of the conflict, the majority being unable to pay for the care and medications received. Your generous donations greatly assisted the Archdiocese to rise to the challenges posed by the ongoing crisis, despite the rising number of desperate civilians, who often approach first their local churches for help or go straight to the Archdiocesan Caritas office for aid. Please see our report overleaf on projects supported.

Light on the horizon? Three recent developments give us hope for the coming year!

- 1) The positive response from the UK's Minister for Africa to the lobbying of Bishop Philip and other Church leaders.
- 2) Women from a wide coalition of Churches in Cameroon have called for both sides to sign a written agreement for a six-month

Where are they now?

On Bamenda Sunday, we will give thanks for the generous service of our six Bamendan priests who continue to minister to us around our Diocese and keep them in our prayers: Fr Bernardine Nsom in Charminster; Fr George Ngwa in New Milton; Fr Elijah Fru Nde who has moved from Totland on the Isle of Wight to our Cathedral parish; Fr Emmanuel Rinda who has

'pilot ceasefire' in November to facilitate peace-making negotiations - a link to a report is on our website.

- 3) We know from the UK's recent closure of schools during lockdown how damaging it was for students not to attend school. Imagine how parents and students feel in Bamenda where most schools have been closed for four years! The good news is that a majority of the non-state fighters are now calling for the resumption of schools.

However, school infrastructures have greatly dilapidated. The Archdiocese needs to refurbish schools and support orphaned students or those whose parents are now jobless and unable to pay their school fees, initially focusing on the schools in Bamenda city, where they are also creating two more schools to educate all the displaced students. Efforts will also be made for the eventual reopening of other schools in the remote areas.

Primary school registration and tuition fees for a child cost c £62 pa. Could you afford to set up a standing order for £5 per month to help meet the costs for an orphaned child? Please click on the Donate button on our website and download a standing order form: www.bamendaandportsmouth.com

However, ANY donation of ANY size is greatly welcomed and appreciated this Bamenda Sunday – together, we can make a huge difference! If you are not able to get to church this year, please visit our website to donate securely, and please remember to pray for peace in Bamenda.

Jo Overton and Colm Lennon
Co-Chairs Portsmouth Bamenda Committee

moved from the Cathedral to Corpus Christi & St Joseph's in Portsmouth; Fr Anthony Chiatu who has moved from the Cathedral to Winchester; and Fr Gaston Forbah who will hopefully be moving from Basingstoke to Guernsey, visa permitting. May God pour out his blessings on them and their families and communities back in Bamenda.

Bishop Philip calls for UK government action

In the summer, Bishop Philip signed a joint letter to the Foreign Office requesting their intervention in the deteriorating situation in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and issued a statement with Church of England and Methodist leaders:

We hear the cry of our sisters and brothers in Cameroon's Anglophone region, who are facing daily violations of their human dignity. Recent reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and attacks on civilians demand a response from the international community. We call on the UK government to work with other European countries on robust diplomatic action to halt the violence and help bring about a negotiated settlement that protects the rights all Cameroon's people. We also express our closeness to the churches that are working with local communities to reject violence and pursue the path of dialogue, and we assure them that they have not been forgotten.

The Minister for Africa, James Duddridge MP, has responded, inviting the signatories to a meeting to discuss how they can all work together to help restore peace. Please pray for the success of this meeting and for the restoration of peace and justice in the Anglophone regions.

In Memoriam

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Sylvia Foster, Secretary of the Bamenda Portsmouth Committee. Sylvia was a faithful friend to the people of Bamenda, working hard for many years on behalf of the link.

Finance

In the last financial year, we sent £96,960 to Bamenda to support our projects and provide emergency funding to the Ad Hoc Committees. Our main source of income was the Bamenda Sunday collection, supplemented by a grant, a legacy, one-off donations, standing orders, project fundraising and deductions from our capital reserves. Many thanks!

Updates on the Projects

HEALTH

In 2019/20, there was a great need for support for healthcare projects during the continuing crisis.

A project was funded at St John of God Health Centre, Bati-bo, to improve the quality of life and give hope to Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and affected families living in the parish's villages. Funding was provided for the construction of a fence to improve security at St Blaise Hospital.

Two projects were also supported at the Archdiocesan Health Co-ordinator's Office: one to provide significant levels of healthcare assistance to IDPs; the other to purchase a generator for their drug store, which was also enabled by a generous individual donation.

Clinicare's final donation on the winding up of their organisation funded maternity and immunisation equipment at Our Lady of Lourdes Health Centre, Njindom; we are truly grateful to Clinicare for their support for so many years.

St Colman's & St Paul's, Portsmouth, faithfully continued their support of crisis outreach at Njinikom Hospital - Sr Jethro sent the photo below of mothers and babies who have been assisted by their funding.



FAITH

Funded projects supported the training of twelve postulants of the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis through the Maryvale Institute and two priests in their studies at Southampton University. The training of seminarians for the priesthood

in the Archdiocese has been generously aided as a parish project by St Peter's & Winchester Martyrs, Winchester.

EDUCATION

Sadly, owing to the forced closure of schools, no education projects were funded in the last financial year, but we hope to provide much needed assistance this year, if the schools are able to reopen as now hoped. When schools reopen, there will be new opportunities for more of our Diocesan schools to twin with a school in Bamenda and for existing links to be renewed and developed.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Funds were allocated to provide a constant supply of water for the parish and surrounding villages of St Thomas Aquinas Parish, Enyoh, where the water had previously been running off.

During the conflict, many victims have lost their proof of identification following arrest, detention or the loss of their homes and belongings to arson. Funding was provided for the Archdiocesan Justice & Peace Service to enhance their work providing protection, safety, security and the right to identification for victims of the conflict.

The work of the HIV/AIDS Support Group was once again supported by a private donation.

EXCEPTIONAL FUNDING FOR THE WORK OF AD HOC COMMITTEES

In last year's newsletter, we were able to announce that Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission had awarded a special grant of £20,000 for emergency aid, subject to due diligence. This was satisfactorily completed. We remain very grateful to the Commission as this enabled us to send an additional two tranches of £10,000 for the Archdiocesan Ad Hoc Committees to dispense emergency aid in parishes to those who needed it most, especially the thousands of IDPs, as well as the emergency funds sent from our normal funds.

We also received a legacy, which the donor's family asked us to allocate to provide support to IDPs via the Ad Hoc Committees. Please consider making a charitable donation in your will. It would make a difference to any beneficiary charity, but can make a huge difference to our sisters and brothers in Bamenda, where resources are so limited compared to the UK.

Contact the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee

If you have any queries or ideas for developing our links with the Archdiocese of Bamenda, or if you would like to consider serving on the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee, please contact our Co-Chairs, Jo Overton and Colm Lennon:

joverton@bamendaandportsmouth.com and clennon@bamendaandportsmouth.com

A publication of Portsmouth Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust. Registered Charity No: 246871