

## Uganda - Sr Liz McCarthy

I worked as a missionary in Uganda from 1972 to 1998. Work on the missions is always varied. I taught in a girls' senior school for many years. The school in which I worked acted as a pilot school for an integrated religious education programme - ecumenical in character and based on life themes. It replaced gradually the old syllabus of Scripture used for the Cambridge examinations. So we had to get ours examinable and approved by the Ministry of education. This took an enormous effort and we had to run many training courses in marking for teachers, of the then East African Community, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

This was all very challenging and rewarding. However gradually the education system fell apart during the Amin regime. Teachers and students had to concentrate more on surviving than on any theoretic training for Christian Living! I remember one incident when I brought to the classroom of a minor seminary a "Time" magazine devoted only to the topic of Aids. The boys nearly devoured it! We began to realise that Aids for them was indeed a real problem. As time went on I also got into the ministry to persons with aids and accompanied many young Ugandans on their last days on earth. As my community was receiving many African vocations I was asked to help in formation programmes for young religious. We organised many courses in an inter-congregational way, with young men and women. That too was great.

I also did some work with teachers on non-violence. Then in '98 I was invited to go to Cameroon. I worked with English speaking students of the University at a Jesuit chaplaincy until I returned to Ireland in 2000.

I am grateful for my time in Africa. One receives a lot more than one gives. I realised that I was standing on holy ground. It also helps if one is aware that the smallest African child, belonging to the culture, is a lot more knowledgeable than an outsider, and a guest in a foreign country.

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