

Dear Renate together with all Friends of Sanya Juu,

We hope that by the grace of God you are well, continuing with your daily activities. We believe that God has protected you, your family and all the friends of Sanya Juu from this dangerous Corona Pandemic.

The Catholic Diocese of Moshi will never forget the friendship between Visitation and Friends of Sanya Juu, your efforts on school development, helping students coming from disadvantaged families and your untiring readiness to advice the school administration on various matters of importance. May Almighty God bless our friendship to continue.

### **RESPONSES TO YOUR QUESTIONS**

1. How does the educational system in general and Visitation in particular cope with the pandemic?

The education system in Tanzania is guided and regulated by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology but in this particular instance of pandemic the Ministry of Health was also engaged in providing and regulating how to manage the school environments during the pandemic.

The immediate response from the Ministry of Education when it was realized that Corona was spreading was to announce closure of schools and institutions of higher learning. Schools were closed for 71 days (two months and 11 days) from 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020 whereby all the students were sent home. The schools were opened back for normal teaching from 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 and academic activities continued to-date but with guidelines from the Ministry of Health on how to take precautions and remain safe.

During the time when the students were at home some schools including Visitation tried to reach their students by preparing reading materials (notes) and send them by email. The parents were asked to access internet cafes to download the materials and some used their phones where network was reliable to be able to access the materials. It was also possible to get feedback from the students via email and in that way most of the students were able to continue with their subject revisions with the assistance of their teachers. There were a few who were not in a position to get such materials because of lack of internet and their homesteads being far away from any accessible internet café. Such students were given remedial classes to enable them to catch up with their classmates.

Before the opening of schools the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health gave a whole list of preparations to be made by schools as precautions for the students come back. The following are some of the physical preparations made:

- Provision of tanks with running water as well as buckets and soaps in as many places as possible within the school compound. For Visitation several water taps were installed at the gate, dining hall and pathways to allow for quick access to running water. Buckets were put in the corridors and dormitories with soaps for washing.

- Face masks were a must for the first two weeks upon the students' arrival in order to monitor the students' health. Every member of the community was supposed to put on a face mask
- Social distancing was to be observed as much as possible especially where gatherings were required, e.g. during Mass – for Visitation Mass was celebrated outside in the open (at the assembly area)
- Since immunity was the main issue .... The sisters made effort to prepare special herbs known to boost the immune system and give it to every student (three times a week for the first month of their arrival back to school)
- Besides the remedial classes, it was found necessary to design a program of study that will help to compensate on the lost school hours as there was no additional time provided by the government schedule. Hence all subjects had to be given extra hours in order to compensate for the lost time and this was successfully done.
- Visits by guests was limited to the very critical ones otherwise no visitors were allowed to visit

Visitation continues to take precaution as the pandemic is still with us although not as much as it was experienced before. We thank God that up to now nothing bad has happened.

## 2. Computer Room

One has to be aware that the education system in Tanzania does not give much freedom in what to choose to teach. The syllabus is fully packed with the number of subjects to be taught and for the hours in such a way that extra care has to be exercised to avoid overstretching the teaching. Despite the above the following has been done:

- The school has employed a qualified teacher for Computer lessons
- The High School students are getting lessons on basic computer knowledge for the following programs: -
  - Microsoft word
  - Microsoft Excel
  - Internet surfing
- We have grouped the A level students into five groups whereby every group gets a computer lesson once a week.
- Generally, all the A level students frequently go to the computer room with their subject teachers to search for the materials. This is done in normal Subject time table.
- Also, some teachers are using Overhead projector which is in the computer room for the normal lessons when they have prepared the slides.
- The school has started to send all the results and student reports to the parents through internet. We are now working hard to establish our school website.

## 3. Internet connection

After we ended the contract with Italian service provider, we got a Local service provider (Halotel), the service is somehow better than the Italian one. So we are still working with the new provider up to this moment. The provider brought a fiber optic connection to the school.

#### 4. The Library, Conference and Administration Building

The construction of the building has taken long because it was dependent on friends, parents and well-wishers. We knew from the beginning that the construction would take a long time but we also were patient because, as it has always been expressed, the foundations for buildings at Visitation are difficult to construct because of the type of soil we have. Hence it has always become necessary to have multipurpose buildings to avoid use of lots of land as well as the costs of digging the foundations. Having said that, it is encouraging to say that the construction continues though in very humble ways. The School has stopped doing harambees for a long time because they were costly and not bringing any money. There are also tight government regulations that you cannot solicit money from parents and therefore we had to stop. That has made it difficult to move as fast as we would have wished.

➤ Nevertheless there is a lot of progress made but the following are not yet done:

- i. Paintings
- ii. Doors
- iii. Ceiling
- iv. Toilets
- v. Chairs
- vi. Tables
- vii. Emergence stairs
- viii. Water system (clean water and waste water drainage)
- ix. Curtains
- x. Ceiling fans

- Although the building is not yet completed we have been forced to use it in some areas because of a need for more space. The areas in use are:

- One of the underground rooms is used by the teachers as a staffroom, because the classroom which was used by the teachers as a staffroom (because the School was in short of a classroom) - is now used by the students as a classroom.
- First floor is used as a library though there are no chairs, tables and shelves. We shifted the few old shelves from the small library room.
- Second floor is used for Holy Mass celebrations and examinations room, although the washrooms are not completed, no ceiling, some doors are missing, no chairs (We are using temporary plastic chairs)

Therefore, because most of the rooms and infrastructures are not completed, I am still in my old office together with the secretaries.

In general, when the building will be completed it will be of great help because the number of students has increased, so there is a great demand for a bigger library and bigger Hall for Holy Mass, Examinations and Conferences.

#### 5. Supporting socially disadvantaged students

This is a very difficult area to find ready answers to because there are many disadvantaged students and one would surely wish to assist as best as possible. Since the government is advocating a “free education” system it is becoming ever difficult to even think of adding an extra one shilling to the tuition fees which would help the needy students. Moreover, one has to tread with care because if the Ward School get better (in terms of offering good education) many would opt to join those and therefore the private school will find themselves struggling. Hence possibilities of imagining that some funds will be forthcoming targeting those needy students do not seem to be realistic. Besides the school has been very dependent on school fees and this is dangerous in terms of sustainability. Therefore there are many factors that come into play if the school is to remain sustainable. The situation is such that:

- Currently the school has no means of supporting the students because we have no projects which generate income
- We have opened our eyes to find people who can support this endeavour but we have not been successful. Efforts are continuing to find donors to support those marginalized students
- In Tanzania there are no institutions which support the students coming from marginalized families except the few institutions that have the donors like Friends of Sanya Juu.

#### 6. Connection with the former students

The formation of Alumni is not an easy activity because it is not embedded in the systems as a result trying to reach them meets with lots of challenges. The School has been struggling for years to build that culture of paying back to the school but it is not catching up as fast as we were expecting. It is only recently that formal contact were established although not all the alumni are interested in connecting with the school but we believe in humble beginnings. We have started organizing them through WhatsApp social media. We expect to hold a meeting in early next year (2022) which will act as a forum to discuss how the group can form an association and what matters to deal with. It is not envisaged that during the first meeting we will discuss on contributions which has a potential to throw many of them off – the idea is to build that community of purpose and gradually make them volunteer to do the needful.

#### 7. About Silver Jubilee

The idea of Silver Jubilee Celebrations is good but it has many challenges. One would wish to presume that the pandemic will no longer be an issue but also the main concern will be how to plan it in order to make impact both to the education stakeholders and the school itself. This needs a serious reflection in these trying times. Hence the Idea will be brought

before the School Board for discussion and proposition before it is forwarded to the Bishop of Moshi. You will be informed of the outcomes of the deliberations.

#### 8. About corporal punishment

In our School we don't have corporal punishment at all, instead we have extracurricular activities which makes students to acquire some skills and knowledge to solve day to day problems at home. For example, weeding the gardens for flowers and vegetables, watering gardens, husking corns, sweeping and mopping. No sticks at all.

Corporal punishment has been overtaken by events because even though the government regulations does provide for minimal canning yet our world today has changed and calls for better ways to make children grow in more responsible environments.

#### 9. Pregnant students

Fortunately, we have never come a cross such a problem in our school but according to government policy a pregnant student has to stop schooling, she has to be expelled out from the school, after delivery she may continue with her studies as a private candidate not a school candidate. Private candidate means a student is studying out of normal school system, she is not treated as a normal student, and she will be studying like an online student. One has to distinguish between politics and what is on the ground. What is typical of village schools (especially ward schools in the rural villages) is not always the case with the more prominent schools where students are attended to and guided. A politician will say this and will be broadcasted but the Ministry regulations are the ones which direct and guide how schools are run irrespective of being private or public.

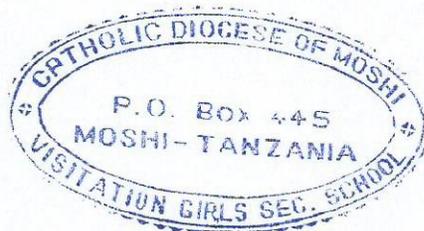
Dear Renate, the above are answers to your questions and if you feel that there is an area that you need more clarification feel free to communicate. Thank you very much for your continued commitment and concern about Visitation and Students in Tanzania – in an effort to build a one happy world.

I, together with the whole Visitation community are praying that God will continue blessing our friendship and give us new members to strengthen our group of Friends of Sanya Juu.

Thank you



Sr. Digna Kitira



Headmistress / Visitation Girls' Secondary School