

Newsletter from Dr Hans and Mrs Mary Van den Corput in Nigeria

3 June 2011

Dear all,

We are writing to update you with our news.

Furlough in The Netherlands: As usual many preparations have to be made for our coming furlough in The Netherlands from July 28 until August 25. Mary is battling with the requirements for her visa for the Netherlands. Hans is waiting for the return of his passport that has been with the Immigration Office since his return to Nigeria in 2010.

Schooling: There are also problems with the children's schooling. Maurice will sit for his first school leaving certificate in July. We keep on considering the possibility of a change of schools next year because we are not satisfied with the present school. There is very little choice in our area. For Marcel a smaller school with more personal attention would be better.

Projects update - the Royal Cross Methodist Hospital @ Ugwueke, the Beautiful Gate Hospital @ Ozuitem and the Motherless Babies Home @ Colony Uzuakoli continue to perform well. At the Royal Cross Methodist Hospital Ugwueke several doctors have been employed: Three have been posted parttime by the government, three are fully employed. However they are all young doctors at the beginning of their career, so they need coaching in the theatre and when they are called out to see patients. Because of the long theatre days and the emergency calls during the weekend, Hans still has long working days.

Ugwueke can only be reached by an untarred road which is about 12 km off the main road. As the rainy season started in April, the roads are in bad condition again. The new toyata hilux, a donation by WCR last year, is very helpful. However, the condition of the road is hindering the travel of patients and other hospital staff.

There is one big generator for the supply of electricity . Because it is now very old, there are blackouts almost every month. We are eagerly waiting for the completion of the renovation work on the electricity lines to Ugwueke which has suddenly stopped. Water supply remains a problem for both the hospital and the surrounding villages. The hospital has built a water treatment plant. However, a reliable supply of electricity from the generator is needed in order for the pumps to function well, and the water pipes have to be in good order.

Waterborne diseases are very common. There is a constant stream of typhoid patients coming from a neighbouring village (Akaeze). Last week there was a serious outbreak of cholera in another village (Ezeukwu); about 15 patients died - three in the hospital. One patient received as much as 40 litres of i.v. fluid and also a lot of oral rehydration solution.

There is a strong desire to build a chapel at the hospital for staff and patients but a lack of funds to do this (about 20,000 GBP would be needed). Every Sunday there is a service in the reception hall of the hospital.

The Beautiful Gate Hospital Ozuitem has still not grown beyond the level of a health centre. On Mondays and Saturdays there is a busy out-patients clinic. Some patients with conditions such as diabetes and tuberculosis are admitted but most patients needing treatment in hospital are taken to

Ugwueke. The building of a ward/theatre has reached the stage where only flooring and plastering remain to be completed, but a ban by the local government has delayed the work and has to be lifted before it can continue. A visiting team has declared the building to be illegal.

At the Motherless Babies' Home, the primary issue is how to make ends meet. It is extremely difficult to replace staff who resign because of the low salaries. Repairs have to be delayed until money is available. But the work is satisfying, the babies are well taken care of and look well. Many visitors come to the babies' home both from inside and outside Nigeria. Especially at Christian festivals people come and bring food and items for the home.

We hope there will not be any obstacles to our furlough and we thank God for another successful year in Nigeria.

Greetings from

Mary, Hans, Maurice (11) and Marcel (9).