

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

New ambulance the most vital delivery yet for Uganda maternity hospital

It wasn't quite the delivery they are used to, but for Sister Mary Goretti and her small staff at St Luke Health Centre in Bujuni, it is one that will save hundreds of lives.

The maternal health centre, located three hours from Kampala, can finally celebrate the arrival of its long-awaited ambulance, which supporters across Australia helped to fund during last year's Catholic Mission Church Appeal.

Sister Mary Goretti, who runs the centre, visited eight Australian dioceses in May and June last year, speaking with schools, parishes and supporters about the state of maternal health in her home in rural Uganda.

Catholic Mission's supporters together raised nearly \$2 million for the appeal, which contributed towards critical staffing, infrastructure, and equipment upgrades for St Luke's, including the much-needed ambulance.

Lawrence Gigliotti, Catholic Mission's Programs Manager, says the arrival of the ambulance is especially pleasing. 'It was clear when Sister Mary visited and shared with us about the situation in her home that this is an extremely worthwhile project for the Bujuni community,' he said.

'Our supporters faithfully responded to the need there and they will be thrilled to hear that with the arrival of the ambulance and other life-saving equipment at St Luke's, mothers and their babies will be much safer.'

Due to the remoteness and economic situation of the small village in the central-west of the country, access to the health centre can be restricted and often dangerous. The Church Appeal last year told the story of local woman Evas, who lost her baby after riding for hours on the back of a motorbike while in labour.

'I think if we get a vehicle it will really help us to save the life of the mother and the baby,' Sister Mary said at the time.

After a short customs delay, that vehicle has now arrived, much to the relief of Sister Mary and her staff. 'Finally, the ambulance has reached St Luke Health Centre,' she said. 'Thank you very much for your effort, and may God bless you abundantly.'

Along with the ambulance, St Luke's received an ultrasound machine and a humidicrib, while key structural improvements are ongoing, including the expansion of the maternity ward.

In 2018, Catholic Mission's Church Appeal focuses on Myanmar, and carries the theme 'Healing a nation through education'. It tells the story of an "education revolution" in the country; part of the Myanmar Catholic Church's push for peace in a land which has been gripped by internal conflict and political struggles for decades.

For more on that appeal and for updates on Catholic Mission's work with communities around the world, visit catholicmission.org.au.

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