



# THE HEALING HAND



SECOND EDITION  
DECEMBER 2025

BY

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS SISTERS HEALTH  
CARE INITIATIVE UGANDA.



# FEATURED TOPICS

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# MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR

**Sr. Maria Goretti Kabakaali**



**Dear readers,**

Thank you for opening the second edition of the Healing Hand Magazine. This year reminds us why our work matters and why compassion remains the strongest force for restoring dignity. Every activity we carried out in 2025 brought us face to face with women, teenage mothers, youth, and communities who need hope and practical support.

We moved across dioceses to repair birth injuries, screen women for cancer, and speak to thousands of young people about the dangers of early pregnancies. We met mothers who had waited for years to find healing. We walked with teenage girls who feared their lives had ended. We stood with families who had lost confidence after long periods of pain and stigma. Through all these encounters, we witnessed the quiet strength of our people and the power of timely care.

Our three surgical camps in Kasese, Fort Portal, and Jinja changed the lives of 62 women. Many came carrying deep wounds—physical, emotional, and spiritual. They left with restored health and renewed dignity. Our screening programs reached women who had never been checked for cervical or

breast cancer. Early detection saved lives. Health talks in schools helped young people understand the consequences of early marriages and pregnancies. Many shared that our messages gave them courage to stay in school and protect their future.

This work is only possible because many partners believe in our mission. We thank the Hilton Foundation, Global Solidarity Forum, dioceses, health facilities, and all individuals who walked with us. Your support allowed us to reach communities that would not have been reached. Every contribution you made translated into life-changing care for the vulnerable. On behalf of the Initiative, I express my deepest appreciation.

As we move into a new year, we remain committed to reaching more women, strengthening our teams, and expanding services. We plan to finalize our constitution, complete key policy documents, and continue training health workers and community leaders. Our goal is simple: extend compassionate care and restore dignity wherever it has been lost.

I invite you to journey with us. Stand with the teenage mother who needs healing.

Support the girl who wants to stay in school. Strengthen our sisters who carry this work with dedication and faith. Together, we can reach every woman and every family that looks to us with hope.

May God bless you for the difference you make.

**Sr. Maria Goretti Kabakaali, DST**

*National Coordinator  
Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative  
Uganda*

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR

Sam Bernard Gumisiriza



Dear readers,

Welcome to the second edition of the Healing Hand Magazine. Thank you for opening these pages and walking with us through a year shaped by service, compassion, and quiet but steady transformation. This edition reflects the work of many hands and the stories of people whose lives changed because someone cared enough to reach out.

Our theme, **“Restoring Dignity Through Compassionate Care,”** captures the heart of everything you will read here. Each story shows how healing begins when a woman feels seen, when a girl finds someone who believes in her, and when a community chooses to support its most vulnerable members. This year, we listened to mothers who carried pain for years. We met teenage girls who needed confidence, guidance, and a safe place to rebuild their future. We stood alongside health workers who give their best every day with skill and deep commitment.

The articles in this edition highlight the birth injury surgery camps, cancer screening programs, school sensitizations, community trainings, and the many small but important steps taken across dioceses. They also reflect the power of partnerships. Donors, dioceses, health facilities, and sisters

brought this work to life. Their support allowed us to reach places where hope had faded and where care was long overdue.

As you read, you will find data, testimonies, expert insights, and the human stories behind the numbers. Each page is a reminder that healing is more than medical care. It is dignity restored, confidence renewed, and futures reopened. Our role is to document these stories, preserve them, and share them with you so that we can continue building a network of compassion.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your interest, prayers, and support give strength to this mission. Together, we will continue to raise the standard of care for women, teenage mothers, children, and communities across Uganda.

With gratitude,

**Sam Bernard Gumisiriza**  
Chief Editor – Healing Hand Magazine

# THE HEALING HAND

By Sr. Dr. Ritah Binduru

Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda (CRSHCIU)



## OUR CALL TO HEAL

The **Healing Hand** reflects the heart of the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda. Formed in November 2022, the Initiative brings together Catholic Religious Sisters working in the health sector across the country.

**Our mission is simple but powerful:  
To restore dignity, health, and hope among  
vulnerable teenage mothers and school dropout  
girls.**

These girls face early pregnancies, psychological trauma, stigma, and rejection. Some are abandoned by their partners and families. Others suffer birth injuries such as vesicovaginal fistula (VVF) and rectovaginal fistula (RVF), which alter their lives physically, emotionally, and socially. Many hide in silence because they fear humiliation.

**The Healing Hand reaches out to them with compassion rooted in the Gospel.**

## Following the Example of Jesus

Jesus Christ moved among the sick, the wounded, and the forgotten. He touched lives through listening, compassion, and physical healing. The Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative follows this same ministry.

- We accompany girls who feel lost.
- We treat those who suffer from birth trauma.
- We counsel those whose hearts are broken.
- We strengthen those who have been rejected.
- We restore dignity where it has been taken away.

*Jesus went around to all the towns and villages teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and curing every disease and illness. Cure the sick and raise the dead.*

**Mathew 9: 35, 10: 8**



***“Healing is not only a medical act.  
It is an act of love and dignity.”***

This work is based on Gospel values: compassion, humility, integrity, confidentiality, and patience. Every girl we serve is approached with the same gentleness and respect that Jesus demonstrated in His healing ministry.

## How We Carry Out the Healing Ministry

### 1. Birth Injury Repair Camps

These camps give teenage mothers and young women who have lived with fistula and other complications a chance to heal. Surgical teams repair injuries, restore physical function, and help women reintegrate into their families and communities.

### 2. Cancer Screening and Women’s Health Services

We screen for cervical and breast cancer, helping women detect problems early. Education sessions empower them with knowledge to protect their health.

### 3. Psychological Counseling

Emotional wounds often run deeper than physical ones. Counseling offers a safe space for teenage mothers to express their fears, rebuild confidence, and start again. Many regain their self-worth

through these sessions.

### 4. Nutritional Support

Good nutrition protects mothers and babies. Our programs teach young mothers how to feed themselves and their children properly and how to prevent malnutrition.

### 5. Youth Health Education in Schools

We meet young people where they are. Through school talks, we address the dangers of early pregnancy and early marriage, explain reproductive health, and encourage students to stay in school.

### 6. Postnatal Support & Follow-Up

Healing does not end after surgery. We follow up with families to ensure continued recovery, emotional stability, and reintegration into the community.

## Restoring Dignity and Hope

Many girls who join our programs come carrying shame. Some feel that their lives have already ended. Others believe they have failed their families. But when they receive treatment, counseling, and spiritual support, their outlook changes.



They start to believe again.



They return to their communities with dignity.



They regain strength and purpose.



They begin to smile again.

***This transformation is the true meaning of the Healing Hand.***

## A Collective Mission

The Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative is registered as a national NGO. Our work is made possible through strong partnerships with dioceses, health facilities, and donors who share our vision.

Together, we offer a lifeline to girls who might otherwise remain in pain, silence, or hopelessness. Each act of generosity—whether through funding, prayer, or collaboration—helps us restore dignity to God’s children.

## A Word of Gratitude

To all the readers of this magazine, thank you for your contributions and for believing in this mission. Your support, stories, and encouragement help us continue the healing work of Christ across Uganda.

***May our hands always be instruments of healing,***

***and may every act of compassion restore dignity to those we serve.***

# HEALING THE HIDDEN WOUNDS

## The 2025 Birth Injury Surgical Camps

Birth injuries leave more than physical scars. They silence women, isolate teenage mothers, and break families apart. Many suffer for years without treatment, carrying pain, shame, and the belief that life will never return to normal.



In 2025, the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda set out to change that story.

Through three birth injury surgical camps held in Kasese, Fort Portal, and Jinja, dignity was restored and hope returned to homes across the country.

## A Journey Toward Healing

Women arrived at the camps with courage and quiet determination. Some had lived with their injuries for more than a decade. Others had been abandoned, misunderstood, or told there was no solution. Many had given birth as teenagers, without proper care or support.

At each camp, sisters and medical specialists welcomed them with compassion. Every woman received a medical assessment, counseling, and preparation for surgery. For many, it was the first time anyone had listened to their story without judgment.

# 62

By the close of the year, **62 women** had undergone successful repair surgeries. Each one carried her own journey of pain, but also her own moment of breakthrough.

## Stories of Courage

One young mother softly shared that she had stopped attending family gatherings because of constant leakage and shame. When she walked out of the ward after surgery, her first words were, "I feel like myself again."

Another woman, who had isolated herself for years, said she never imagined she would smile freely. After recovering, she returned home and was embraced by her children who had only known her in pain.

These stories were repeated in every camp. Healing did not stop at the operating table. It continued through counseling, prayer, and the gentle reassurance from sisters who walked closely with each mother.

### A Team Driven by Compassion

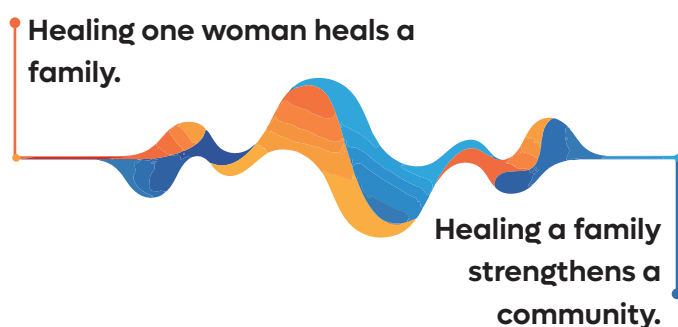
Behind every operation was a team of sisters, doctors, nurses, and volunteers who carried this mission with commitment. Surgeons worked long hours. Nurses offered round-the-clock care. Sisters listened, encouraged, prayed, and stood beside the mothers throughout their recovery.

Their unity made each camp feel like a safe space. Women often said they felt respected, valued, and treated with dignity. For many, this was the first environment where they felt seen as human beings and not defined by their injury.

Women who had planned to withdraw from society returned to their families with confidence and restored health. Husbands, children, and relatives expressed relief and gratitude. Communities saw that birth injuries can be treated and that help exists.

The follow-up visits were emotional. Women travelled back to share their progress, celebrate their recovery, and publicly express their thanks. Their joy strengthened the belief that compassionate care truly transforms lives.

### The Ripple Effect



## Where Dignity Meets Hope

The 2025 surgical camps are a reminder that no woman should suffer in silence. Birth injuries are preventable and treatable when compassionate care is available. Through these camps, women regained their health, their identity, and

the chance to live without shame.

This work continues because of supporters who believe every woman deserves dignity. With continued partnership, more camps will be held, more mothers will be healed, and more families will be restored.

**Restoring dignity through compassionate care is not a slogan. It is the lived experience of every woman who walked into these camps with tears and walked out with hope.**

## Walking with Teenage Mothers

### A Journey of Healing and Empowerment

Teenage mothers carry some of the heaviest burdens in our communities. Many become pregnant without support, guidance, or even basic knowledge of their bodies.

Others face rejection, stigma, and emotional wounds that stay long after childbirth. For some, birth injuries add another layer of pain, limiting their movement, confidence, and ability to care for their children.

The Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda meets these girls at the most vulnerable point in their lives. We walk with them from fear to healing, from shame to dignity, and from uncertainty to renewed hope.

### A Safe Place to Begin Again

When a teenage mother arrives at our camps or outreach activities, the first thing she meets is understanding. Sisters welcome her warmly, listen to her story, and offer support without judgement. For many girls, this is the first time someone believes in them.

**» They come looking for TREATMENT, but they also find ACCEPTANCE.**

**They come seeking RELIEF, but they also discover PURPOSE. «**

## Healing the Body and the Heart

Teenage mothers who undergo birth injury repair receive more than surgery. They receive psychosocial counseling to rebuild confidence and emotional strength. Many open up

about trauma, loneliness, and fears about their future.

Through counseling sessions, group discussions, and one-on-one support, they learn that they are not alone. They learn that what happened to them is not the end of their story. They learn that healing begins when someone walks beside you.

### Knowledge

#### That protects and empowers

Many teenage mothers are willing to rebuild their lives but lack information. Our programs give them clear, practical guidance on:

- Caring for their children
- Maintaining good hygiene
- Understanding reproductive health
- Recognizing risks during pregnancy
- Seeking antenatal care early
- Building confidence and self-worth
- Planning for their future

This knowledge reduces risks, strengthens families, and prepares young mothers to face life with courage.

### Voices Reborn

*"I thought my life had stopped. Now I see I have a second chance."*

One young mother said after her surgery,

Another shared that she had avoided people for years but now felt ready to return to school and continue her education.

These testimonies show what healing can do. When a girl regains control of her health, her entire world changes.

### A Circle of Support

The transformation of teenage mothers is not the work of one person. It is a shared mission:



Each girl touched by this initiative is a reminder that compassion can rebuild lives.

## Restored Dignity, Renewed Purpose

Every teenage mother who walks through our doors deserves love, dignity, and hope. What they receive is more than treatment. They receive the strength to rise, the courage to dream again, and the confidence to rebuild their future.

Their healing continues long after they leave the hospital. Many return home ready to take care of their children, return to school, or pursue skills training. Others become advocates in their communities, telling girls to stay in school and avoid early marriages.

Their lives show us that healing is not only medical—it is emotional, spiritual, and social. And when a teenage mother heals, an entire community heals with her.

***This is the heart of our mission:  
Walking with the vulnerable until they can  
walk on their own with dignity.***

## Women's Health Spotlight

### Cancer Screening and Awareness: A Lifeline for Mothers and Communities

Cervical and breast cancer remain silent threats for many women in Uganda. Most women do not receive regular screening. Others do not know the symptoms or fear going to health facilities. By the time they seek help, the disease has often advanced, leaving

families overwhelmed and communities shaken.

This is why cancer screening remains one of the most important services carried out by the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda. In 2025, our teams travelled to communities where access to health care is limited. They screened women, shared lifesaving information, and offered referrals for those who needed further care.

## Screening That Saves Lives

Health workers and sisters welcomed every woman with compassion. No one was rushed. No one was judged. Many had never been screened before. Others came with fear but left with clarity and reassurance.

During these sessions, women learned the importance of early detection and how simple tests can protect their health. Screenings helped identify early signs of cervical cancer, breast abnormalities, and other health concerns that often go unnoticed.

For women found with positive results, referrals were arranged immediately. Transport support was provided for those who could not afford to travel for treatment. Every woman was followed closely, ensuring she was not left alone to deal with fear or confusion.

### Knowledge



#### Knowledge That Protects

Alongside screening, sisters offered clear information on:

- **Warning signs of cervical and breast cancer**
- **How often women should be screened**
- **Where to go for help**
- **The importance of not ignoring symptoms**
- **Myths that prevent women from seeking care**

*Many women expressed that no one had ever explained these issues to them before. They left feeling informed, confident, and better prepared to protect their health.*

## A Safe Space for Women

Every screening camp created a space where women could speak freely about their health. Some opened up about symptoms they had hidden for years. Others shared fears they had never voiced. Sisters listened, encouraged, and supported them with patience.

This approach helped reduce stigma and anxiety around women's health. Women felt respected and valued, which encouraged them to continue prioritizing their health in the future.

## Community Impact

When one woman receives screening, an entire family benefits. Mothers become advocates for early detection. Families learn the importance of regular checkups. Communities begin to shift from silence to awareness.

Women who attended the screening camps went home ready to share what they had learned with others. Many returned with neighbours, daughters, and friends for subsequent sessions.

## Working Together for Safer Futures

This work was made possible by strong partnerships with medical teams, health facilities, and donors who supported

transport, equipment, and supplies. Their contributions protected women who might never have accessed these services on their own.

## A Call to Continue

Cancer does not wait. Screening cannot stop.

The women who attended this year's camps remind us that early detection saves lives, protects families, and gives communities hope.

Screening is not only a medical service. It is an act of love, dignity, and compassion. It is a promise to women that they are valued. It is a commitment to a healthier future for their children and communities.

*Every woman deserves to know her health status. Every woman deserves a chance to live without fear. And every woman deserves compassionate care.*

## Strengthening health workers

### Training for Better Community Care

Strong health systems are built by strong health workers. In 2025, the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda invested in training sisters in additional skills, midwives, nurses, and lay health practitioners so they could deliver better care, guide communities

with confidence, and respond to the needs of mothers and children.

This training focused on nutrition, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV Elimination of mother to child transmission (EMTCT), and cancer screening. These are areas where knowledge saves lives, prevents avoidable complications, and improves the quality of care families receive at health facilities.

### Learning That Transforms

During the sessions, participants received practical guidance grounded in national health standards. They learned how to identify nutrition risks early, support teenage mothers with proper feeding practices, and counsel families on preventive care. They also gained skills to identify signs of cervical and breast cancer, conduct basic screening, and refer women safely for advanced treatment.

The training was interactive and hands-on. Health workers shared real cases, discussed challenges from their facilities, and practiced new techniques. By the end, many said they felt more confident and better prepared to support their communities.

*I now see nutrition and screening as essential parts of every consultation. This knowledge will help me protect more mothers.*

*One midwife noted*

## Building a Network of Skilled Sisters

Sisters who attended the training became resource persons for their dioceses. They went back to their health centres ready to train colleagues, support teenage mothers, and guide local leaders on health promotion. Their commitment strengthened the Initiative's presence in rural communities where access to specialised care remains limited.

These sisters now serve as bridges between the Initiative and the people we serve. Their work ensures that accurate information and compassionate care reach families where they live, pray, and seek support.

## The Ripple Effect in Communities

- Training a single health worker impacts entire villages.
- Families receive better guidance.
- Teenage mothers get accurate information early.
- Women are referred quickly for screening and treatment.
- Children grow healthier because nutrition problems are detected sooner.

These improvements create trust within the community. People feel safe returning to facilities where they know the care is informed, respectful, and reliable.

## Powered by Partnership

This capacity-building effort was made possible through collaboration with

dioceses, health facilities, and donors who believe in long-term solutions. Their support ensured that training materials, trainers, and logistics were available to all participants.

This approach does not only heal individuals. It strengthens the entire health system from within.

## A Foundation for the Future

The knowledge shared in these sessions will continue guiding health workers long after the training ends.

As sisters and healthcare teams put their skills into practice, more women will be screened, more youth will receive accurate information, and more mothers will experience safe care.



**Strengthening health workers means strengthening Uganda's future.**  
**With every skill learned, a life is protected.**  
**With every sister trained, a community is served with dignity.**

## Birth trauma (injury)

By Sr. Dr. Vincentina Achora (LSMIG)

### Understanding Birth Trauma

Birth trauma refers to any physical injury a mother, baby, or both experience during pregnancy, labour, or delivery. These injuries range from mild to severe and may affect physical health, emotions, or long-term well-being.

While birth trauma occurs globally, the burden remains higher in low- and middle-income countries. Babies experience more birth injuries than mothers, with scalp injuries being the most common. In mothers, the most common injuries include tears, lacerations, and fistula.

## MATERNAL BIRTH INJURIES

### During Pregnancy

Mothers are vulnerable to accidents or trauma such as:

1. Falls or abdominal injury leading to uterine rupture
2. Pre-eclampsia or eclampsia causing stroke or paralysis
3. Placental abruption leading to internal bleeding, infection, or loss of the baby



These complications require urgent medical attention to prevent severe outcomes.

### During Labour and Delivery

Mothers may experience:

1. Tears of the perineum, vagina, cervix, or uterus
2. Injury to the bladder or rectum during emergency Caesarean section
3. Uterine rupture
4. Nerve damage causing foot drop, pelvic pain, or leg weakness



These injuries may affect a woman's physical health and emotional stability.

### Obstetric Fistula

One of the most challenging birth injuries is **fistula**—a hole between organs caused

by prolonged, obstructed labour.

## Types of Fistula

- **Vesicovaginal fistula (VVF)** – hole between bladder and vagina, causing constant leaking of urine
- **Rectovaginal fistula (RVF)** – hole between rectum and vagina, leading to uncontrolled passage of stool

Fistula may also occur during difficult Caesarean sections or pelvic surgeries.

under scalp)

- Facial nerve injury
- Skull fractures
- Spinal cord injury
- Brachial plexus injury (Erb's palsy)
- Brain bleeding
- Breathing problems or seizures

***“Fistula steals dignity, but timely surgery restores hope.”***

## Pelvic Floor Injuries

Damage to pelvic muscles can lead to:

- Pelvic organ prolapse
- Uterine inversion
- Chronic pelvic pain
- Long-term bowel or bladder problems



Infections or delayed treatment during labour may also lead to infertility.

## Warning Signs in a Newborn

- Not moving a limb
- Irritability or poor feeding
- Noisy or hoarse cry
- Seizures
- Visible bruising or swelling



Prompt medical assessment is essential.

## NEWBORN BIRTH INJURIES

Babies may experience trauma during difficult or assisted deliveries.

### Common newborn injuries include:

- Broken clavicle or arm bones
- Joint dislocation
- Scalp swelling (caput succedaneum)
- Cephalohematoma (blood collection

## CAUSES OF BIRTH TRAUMA

Birth trauma may result from:

- Prolonged or obstructed labour
- Shoulder dystocia
- Breech or abnormal baby position
- Very large or very small baby
- Maternal pelvic abnormalities
- Teenage pregnancy

- Strong contractions
- Use of forceps or vacuum during emergencies
- Maternal diabetes or hypertension
- Delays in referral or reaching a facility

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

### For Mothers

- Incontinence
- Chronic pelvic pain
- Emotional trauma
- Infertility
- Fistula
- Uterine rupture or prolapse

### For Babies

- Cerebral palsy
- Jaundice
- Breathing difficulties
- Sepsis
- Seizures
- Developmental delay

## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

Diagnosis May Include:

- Physical examination | Ultrasound | X-ray | CT scan or MRI | Blood tests

### Treatment Options

The good news is that **most birth injuries can be treated**, and many heal completely.

### For Mothers

- Surgical repair of tears and fistula
- Treatment for infections
- Blood pressure management
- Counseling and emotional support
- Physiotherapy for pelvic injuries

### For Babies

- Splinting or immobilisation of fractures
- Surgery if needed
- Respiratory support
- Treatment for bleeding or seizures



Early treatment leads to better outcomes.

## PREVENTION

Birth trauma can be prevented through shared responsibility between mothers and health workers.

### Mothers Should:

- Attend all antenatal visits
- Deliver in health facilities with skilled attendants
- Manage chronic conditions like diabetes or hypertension
- Follow a clear birth plan
- Seek help early when labour becomes difficult

### Health Workers Should:

- Monitor labour closely
- Identify complications early
- Refer mothers promptly
- Provide respectful and timely care

**“A safe delivery starts with preparation, skilled care, and early referral.”**

## Conclusion

Birth trauma is preventable and treatable. With early antenatal care, skilled delivery, and quick response to complications, mothers and babies can avoid long-term harm. Every family, community, and health worker plays a role in ensuring childbirth remains a moment of joy, not suffering.

**May every mother experience safe delivery.**

**May every child arrive in good health.**

**May God bless all who work to heal and restore the dignity of women and babies.**



**Sr. Dr. Vincentina Achora (LSMIG)**  
Lecturer, Gulu University · PhD Fellow · M.Med  
Obstetrics & Gynaecology · MBChB · ESACOG  
Member · AOGU Member



## CHILDREN IN UGANDA TODAY

By **Sr. Flora N. Kabashekye, OLCG**  
Western Province Coordinator – CRSHCIU

### Understanding Childhood in Uganda

In Uganda, a child is anyone below 18 years of age. This group makes up nearly half of the country's population and represents the future of our communities. Yet many children face challenges that affect their growth, education, health, and overall well-being. One of the most significant challenges is poverty, which fuels many of the difficulties children encounter today.

### The Reality of Poverty

Uganda's population continues to grow rapidly, and many families struggle to meet basic needs. Poverty limits children's access to food, clothing, shelter, health care, and education. Although national poverty levels have reduced over the years, millions of households still cannot provide stable care for their children.

In hard-to-reach areas, parents often fail to afford school fees or transport to health centres. Many children walk long distances for services, while others miss out entirely. Despite Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE), many families still cannot support school-related costs.

This lack of resources leads to:

- Poor nutrition
- Irregular school attendance
- Delayed or no treatment for illness
- High dropout rates

## This burden is heavier for the girl child



### EDUCATION CHALLENGES

Large class sizes, limited learning materials, and overstretched teachers affect the quality of education in many schools. Slow learners fall behind easily and often drop out.

Children who leave school early face increased risks such as:

- Child labour
- Early marriages
- Teenage pregnancies
- Long-term poverty

Education remains one of the strongest tools for breaking this cycle, yet many children do not complete even primary school.



### HEALTH CHALLENGES

Eighty percent of Uganda's population lives in rural areas, where health services are limited. Many families cannot afford transport to health units. As a result, children often suffer from:

- Preventable diseases
- Malnutrition
- Delayed treatment
- High mortality rates in extreme cases

The lack of access to health care places children at a constant disadvantage.



### EARLY MARRIAGE AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Child marriage remains a painful reality in Uganda. Many girls are forced to marry early due to cultural expectations, poverty, or lack of guidance. Early pregnancy exposes girls to severe health risks such as:

- Prolonged labour
- Fistula
- Premature birth
- High blood pressure
- Emotional trauma

These girls rarely return to school, trapping them in a cycle of poverty.

## Youth Unemployment

Uganda has one of the highest youth unemployment rates. Young people between 15 and 30 years face limited job opportunities, poor-quality work, and low wages. This limits their ability to support themselves and their communities. Many become discouraged and vulnerable to negative influences.

### Light Amid



### The Challenges

The sisters continue to offer hope, healing, and encouragement—one child, one family, and one community at a time.

Since its launch in June 2023, the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda has reached thousands of children and youth through:

- School talks on early pregnancy and family values
- Health sensitisation
- Guidance on responsible behaviour
- Birth injury repair camps
- Community empowerment activities
- Nutrition education



“Let us not grow tired of empowering God’s children. One step at a time makes a lasting impact.”

## Conclusion

Ugandan children carry dreams, talents, and potential. Despite the challenges they face, they remain resilient. When communities, families, schools, and faith-based organisations work together, children can thrive.

We must continue supporting them through education, health care, protection from early marriage, and spiritual guidance. Their future is our nation’s future.



Sr. Flora N. Kabashekye  
OLGC Western Province Coordinator –  
CRSHCIU



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### PREGNANCY

A guide for girls, young mothers, families, and communities

By Sr. Charity Musimiire, OLCG

Pregnancy brings many changes—physical, emotional, and social. When girls understand their bodies and know where to seek help, they make better decisions that protect their lives and their future. This section offers simple information every teenage girl, young mother, parent, and caregiver should know.

#### What Is Pregnancy?

Pregnancy begins when a fertilized egg grows inside the mother's womb (uterus). It lasts about 40 weeks from the first day of the last menstrual period until childbirth.

#### Early Signs of Pregnancy

A girl or young woman may experience:

- Missed periods
- Nausea or vomiting
- Breast tenderness or darkening of nipples
- Tiredness
- Frequent urination
- Food cravings



These signs vary from person to person.

## UNWANTED PREGNANCY

### What Is an Unwanted Pregnancy?

It is a pregnancy that happens when a person is not ready to become a parent or did not plan to conceive at that time.

### Common Causes

- Lack of access to contraception
- Contraceptive failure
- Sexual violence or coercion
- Limited knowledge about reproductive health

## EARLY (TEENAGE) PREGNANCY

### Who is affected?

Teenage pregnancy occurs when a girl aged 10–18 years becomes pregnant. This remains one of the biggest challenges facing girls in Uganda.

### Common Causes

- Limited sex education
- Peer pressure
- Sexual abuse
- Early marriages
- Low parental guidance
- Cultural

### Consequences for girls

Teenage pregnancy exposes girls to serious risks:

- High chance of complications such as obstructed labour, pre-eclampsia, fistula, and premature birth
- Dropping out of school, which limits future opportunities
- Financial pressure due to lack of independence
- Emotional distress, stress, and stigma
- Reduced support from family or partners

***Girls need guidance, support, and safe spaces—not judgment.***

## ANTENATAL CARE (ANC)

### What Is Antenatal Care?

Antenatal care is the health care given to a pregnant woman and her developing baby before birth. It includes medical checkups, screening, health education, and emotional support.

### When Should a Woman Start ANC?

- As soon as she knows she is pregnant
- Ideally within the first 12 weeks
- WHO recommends at least 8 visits during pregnancy

### Why ANC Matters

- Prevent complications
- Offer counseling on nutrition, hygiene, and birth preparedness
- Reduce the risk of birth injuries
- Early and regular ANC helps:
- Detect danger signs
- Monitor the baby's growth

**YOUR  
HEALTH**

**YOUR  
FUTURE**

#### As a girl or young mother

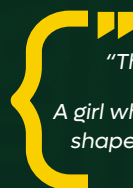
- Seek help early
- Attend all ANC visits
- Talk to a trusted adult, sister, health worker, or counselor
- Avoid hiding pregnancy out of fear
- Learn about your rights and available services

#### As a community

- Discourage early marriages
- Protect girls from violence
- Support girls to complete their education
- Promote access to accurate reproductive health information

#### As a guardian or parent

- Support your daughter without judgment
- Encourage open communication
- Accompany her for ANC visits
- Help her return to school or skills training after childbirth



*"The power is in your hands.*

*A girl who understands her health can shape her future with confidence."*



**Sr. Charity Musimiire**

OLGC – Assistant Nursing officer (Midwifery)

Bachelor in Medical Education - Makerere university (Ongoing)

# 2025 IN NUMBERS

## A year of restoring dignity through compassionate care

Our work in 2025 reached thousands of women, teenage mothers, children, and communities across Uganda. These numbers reflect real faces, real families, and real stories of healing. Every activity below was made possible through strong teamwork, committed sisters, skilled health workers, and generous partners.

### BIRTH INJURY SURGERY CAMPS

Healing the bodies and hearts of women

**62**

Women received life-changing birth injury repair



Camps held in Kasese, Fort Portal, and Jinja

Women returned home confident, healthy, and restored



Follow-up visits confirmed successful recoveries

Many reintegrated fully into family and community life



“Every repaired fistula is a restored life.”

### CANCER SCREENING & WOMEN'S HEALTH

Protecting mothers through early detection

**102**

Women received cervical and breast cancer screening

Women with positive findings were referred and supported for treatment

Awareness sessions increased knowledge on warning signs and prevention

Screenings offered in safe, respectful, supportive environments

### SCHOOL OUTREACH & YOUTH SENSITIZATION

Building a generation that understands health and dignity

**52912**

Students reached through school talks

- Sessions covered early pregnancy, early marriage, reproductive health, and self-respect
- Schools reported stronger engagement and better understanding among learners
- Many students requested continued sessions

### STRENGTHENING HEALTH WORKERS

Improving the quality of care across dioceses

**Dozens**

Sisters, nurses, and midwives received additional training

- Key topics included Nutrition, EMTCT, and Cancer Screening
- Teams returned to their facilities ready to share knowledge
- Improved capacity strengthened long-term service delivery

## COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION

### Reaching families where they live

- 📌 Catechists, Catholic Women Associations, and VHTs mobilized
- 📌 Families received guidance on positive parenting and support for teenage mothers
- 📌 Messages helped reduce stigma and encouraged early referral for treatment

- 📌 Follow-up visits made to women treated during the year
- 📌 Reviews highlighted high recovery rates and strong reintegration
- 📌 Lessons informed planning and strengthened programs for 2026

## MONITORING & FOLLOW-UP

### Ensuring quality, accountability, and learning

## INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH

### Building a strong foundation for impact

- 📌 Initiative fully registered as a national NGO
- 📌 Operational bank accounts created for smooth financial management
- 📌 MoUs signed with health facilities
- 📌 Branded Noah vehicle and signpost strengthened visibility
- 📌 Coordination at national, provincial, and diocesan levels strengthened

- 📌 Support from donors enabled surgical camps, screenings, and training
- 📌 Collaborations with dioceses and health units ensured safe delivery of services
- 📌 Volunteers, community leaders, and sisters strengthened every activity
- 📌 Every contribution touched a life and restored dignity

## THE POWER OF PARTNERS

### You made this possible

## THE HEART OF THESE NUMBERS

Behind each number is;


**1** A woman who can walk without shame

**3** A child who understands their value

**2** A teenage mother who can dream again,

**4** A community that is more informed and empowered.

These numbers are a testament to compassion in action.



# HOW YOUR SUPPORT CHANGED LIVES IN 2025

*A message to our donors, partners, and friends*

Every act of generosity makes a real difference. Your support in 2025 turned pain into healing, shame into dignity, and fear into hope. The stories in this magazine are possible because you believed in the mission of compassionate, community-based care for vulnerable women, teenage mothers, and youth.

This page celebrates you—the donor, partner, and friend who stood with us throughout the year.

## YOU HELPED WOMEN HEAL FROM BIRTH INJURIES

Dozens of women arrived at our camps feeling broken and isolated. Many had lived with birth injuries for years, believing nothing could change.

- Your support funded:**
- Surgical supplies
  - Medical teams
  - Transport to hospitals
  - Post-operative care
  - Follow-up visits

# 62

Because of you, **62 women** received repair surgery and returned home restored. They now live with dignity, confidence, and hope.



**"Your support gave these women  
a second chance at life."**

## YOU MADE CANCER SCREENING ACCESSIBLE

In many communities, cancer screening is out of reach. With your help:



Dozens of women arrived at our camps feeling broken and isolated. Many had lived with birth injuries for years, believing nothing could change.

- Women learned the signs of cervical and breast cancer
- Screening was offered free and in safe environments
- Women with positive findings received referral and transport support

**102**

You helped 102 women receive services that could save their lives.



## YOU REACHED YOUNG PEOPLE WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

**52,912 STUDENTS**

Your support opened doors for meaningful school sensitizations across Uganda. Because of you, **52,912** students received life-changing health information on:

- Early pregnancy
- Personal safety
- Reproductive health
- Early marriage
- Self-respect

*These skills now strengthen facilities and improve care for thousands of families.*



## YOU SUPPORTED COMMUNITIES

With your help, community leaders, parents, and caregivers received clear information about:

- Supporting teenage mothers
- Breaking myths around reproductive health
- Identifying danger signs during pregnancy
- Seeking early medical care

*Your support helped families make safer choices.*



## YOU BUILT A STRONGER ORGANIZATION





Your generosity helped establish critical structures that will support long-term impact:

- 1** Registration of the Initiative as a national NGO
- 2** A branded Noah vehicle that supports field work
- 3** Improved financial management through dedicated accounts
- 4** Clear visibility through a new signpost
- 5** Better coordination across dioceses


*These investments secure stability and growth.*

## THE IMPACT OF YOUR SUPPORT

Your giving did not stop at funding activities. You restored:

-  Dignity to women who had suffered silently
-  Confidence in teenage mothers who believed they had no future
-  Strength in sisters who carry this mission across Uganda
-  Hope in communities that felt forgotten

Your support touched every level of this initiative—medical, emotional, spiritual, and social.

  
“Where there was pain, you brought healing. Where there was fear, you restored courage. Where there was silence, you inspired hope.”

## A CALL TO WALK WITH US INTO 2026

There is still much to be done. More women need surgery. More girls need protection. More communities need awareness. More young people need guidance. We invite you to continue walking with us.

Your generosity has shaped lives.

Your partnership has strengthened families.

Your compassion continues to build a healthier Uganda.

*Thank you for transforming lives with us.*

## VOICES OF TRANSFORMATION

### Stories of courage, healing, and renewed hope

Behind every activity of the Initiative is a life forever changed. These voices remind us why compassionate care matters.

”

#### **A Mother Restored After Years of Pain**

*“I lived with leaking for seven years. I stopped going to church and family gatherings because I felt ashamed. When I heard about the camp, I traveled quietly, afraid the surgery would fail. Today, I am healed. I walk freely, I pray freely, and I laugh again. My children say, ‘Mummy, you are back.’ I thank the sisters for giving me my life again.”*

”

#### **A Teenage Mother Finds Confidence Again**

*“I became pregnant at 16 and my family rejected me. After giving birth, I was always sad. The counseling I received helped me talk about what happened and forgive myself. The sisters told me I still have a future. Today, I have gone back to school and I believe in myself.”*

”

#### **A Student Inspired to Stay in School**

*“When the sisters came to speak to us, I learned things I never knew. I used to think early marriage was normal. Now I know it can affect my health and my future. I want to finish my studies. The talk changed my mind.”*

”

#### **Healing Beyond the Operating Table**

*“The surgery repaired my body, but the care repaired my heart. I felt loved. The sisters stayed with us, prayed with us, and listened. For the first time, I felt seen as a person, not a problem. I returned home strong.”*

”

#### **A Father’s Gratitude**

*“My wife suffered for many years. We lost hope. When she came back healed, our whole house changed. She smiles, she works, she is happy. I thank the people who made this possible. You healed my family.”*

”

#### **A Health Worker Empowered to Serve**

*“After the training on nutrition and screening, I changed how I handle patients. I now counsel mothers better and detect problems earlier. I feel more confident and the community trusts me more. This training has improved our whole facility.”*

”

#### **A Sister Reflects on the Mission**

*“Every camp reminds me why this work is sacred. When a woman smiles after surgery or a girl gains confidence after counseling, we see God’s healing hand at work. This mission is not just medical. It is spiritual, emotional, and deeply human.”*

“  
**A Caregiver Learns How to Support Young Mothers**

*“I used to judge teenage mothers. The training taught me to support them instead. Now I guide girls in my village and encourage them to attend antenatal care. I am grateful for this knowledge.”*

“  
**A Woman Screened for the First Time**

*“I feared cancer screening for many years. I thought it was painful. But the health workers were gentle and explained everything. When my results came back normal, I felt relieved. I told my sisters and neighbours to get screened too.”*

”  
**A Community Leader Speaks Out**

*“Our community has changed. People now understand the dangers of early pregnancy and the importance of screening. The sisters have opened our eyes. We want them to keep coming.”*

**These voices are the heartbeat of our mission.**

They remind us that healing is more than treatment.  
It is *dignity restored, hope renewed, and lives transformed.*

## LOOKING AHEAD: OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2026

### Building on progress, strengthening dignity, and expanding compassionate care

As we close the chapter of 2025, our commitment to restoring dignity remains strong. The lessons, achievements, and challenges of this year guide our focus for the year ahead. In 2026, the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda aims to deepen its impact, reach more communities, and strengthen systems for sustainable care.

#### 1. Expanding Birth Injury Repair Services

Many women still live with untreated birth injuries.

**Our goal is to:**

- Conduct more surgical camps across additional dioceses
- Increase screening and identification of fistula cases
- Strengthen follow-up systems for long-term recovery
- Train more facility-based staff on early

detection and referral

Healing birth injuries restores dignity to mothers and transforms families.

## 2. Strengthening Cancer Screening and Awareness

**Early detection saves lives. In 2026, we will:**

- Scale up cervical and breast cancer screening
- Improve community awareness on warning signs
- Strengthen referral pathways for women who need advanced treatment
- Equip more sisters with screening skills

We aim to make cancer screening accessible in more hard-to-reach communities.

## 3. Deepening Support for Teenage Mothers

Teenage mothers remain at the heart of our mission.

**We plan to:**

- Expand psychosocial counseling
- Improve postnatal support and reintegration
- Promote skills training and education pathways
- Strengthen community acceptance and support systems

Every teenage mother deserves the chance to rebuild her life with dignity.

## 4. Enhancing School Outreach

We will continue speaking to thousands of young people across Uganda.

**Our 2026 focus includes:**

- Extending school talks to new districts
- Improving content on reproductive health and self-worth
- Training peer leaders to support younger students
- Providing learning materials that reinforce messages

We want every child to grow with knowledge, confidence, and protection.

## 5. Training More Health Workers

A skilled health workforce builds stronger communities.

**In 2026, we plan to:**

- Train more nurses, midwives, and sisters in nutrition, EMTCT, cancer screening, and counseling
- Equip diocesan coordinators to support facility-level mentorship
- Strengthen collaboration with health facilities to ensure better care

Capacity building remains one of our strongest investments.

## 6. Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

**To improve quality and accountability, we aim to:**

- Increase follow-up visits for women operated on

- Strengthen data systems and reporting tools
- Conduct internal reviews of program performance
- Use findings to guide program improvements

Strong M&E ensures that every activity contributes to real change.

## 7. Growing Institutional Stability

We will keep building a solid foundation for long-term work by:

- Finalizing internal policies and operational guidelines
- Strengthening financial management systems
- Improving coordination at provincial and diocesan levels
- Enhancing communication and visibility of the Initiative

A strong organization ensures lasting impact and better service delivery.

## 8. Deepening Partnerships and

## Donor Relations

**Partnerships drive our mission forward. In 2026, we plan to:**

- Strengthen collaboration with dioceses, health facilities, and national stakeholders
- Engage more donors in supporting surgical camps, training, and outreach
- Share impact stories and transparent reports
- Build long-term, trust-based relationships

Together, we can reach mothers and children who remain unseen.

# 2026

A YEAR  
FILLED WITH  
POSSIBILITY

2026 will be a year of **action, compassion, and renewed commitment.**

With the support of donors, partners, and communities, we believe:

- More women will heal
- More girls will stay in school
- More families will be informed
- More communities will be empowered

## Closing message

### A note of gratitude and hope

As you come to the end of this second edition of the Healing Hand Magazine, we thank you for walking with us through every story, every testimony, and every moment of transformation. The lives you have read about reflect the strength of women, the resilience of teenage mothers, the dedication of sisters, and the compassion of partners who believe in a healthier and more hopeful Uganda.

This year reminded us that healing is not a single event. It is a journey. It begins with listening. It grows through care. It flourishes through follow-up, encouragement, and the warm presence of people who refuse to give up on one another. Every healed woman, every empowered girl, every trained health worker, and every informed child is a sign that restoring dignity is possible.

We are deeply grateful to our donors, dioceses, health facilities, religious congregations, and community leaders who stood with us. Your trust and support helped us reach women who had suffered in silence, girls who feared their future, and families who had lost hope. You enabled us to take compassionate care into communities where it is needed most.

As we look to the coming year, we remain committed to serving with humility, integrity, and faith. We will continue reaching mothers, equipping health workers, supporting teenage girls, and building stronger communities. We invite you to stay with us, pray with us, and work with us as we bring healing where it has been delayed and dignity where it has been lost.

Thank you for believing in this mission.

Thank you for standing with the Catholic Religious Sisters Health Care Initiative Uganda.

Thank you for being part of this healing journey.

**May God bless you for every life you touch.**

**May His healing hand guide us all.**

## Board Members



**Mr. Severino Twinobusingye**  
Board Member



**Rev. Fr. Anthony Kibira, MCCJ**  
Board Member



**Sr. Dr. Ritha Binduru, LSMIG**  
Boad member & Chairperson



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Kamweri, AJ, Board member



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**Sr. Dr. Priscilla Busingye, DST**  
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Board Member and  
Chairperson, Finance committee



**Sr. Resty Namisango, LSOSF**  
Board Member

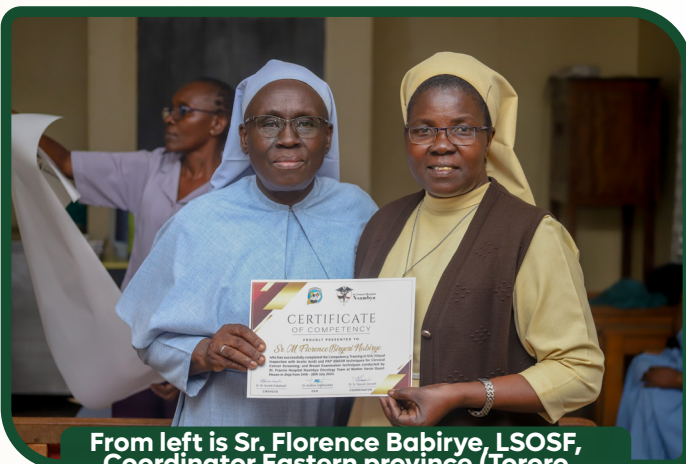


**Mr. Stephen Nnawuba**  
Board member

## Gallery



Facilitators and participants share a group photo with the diocesan health coordinator of Jinja, Mrs Dorcus Musubaho, Madam Dorcus Atie



From left is Sr. Florence Babiye, LSOSF, Coordinator Eastern province (Tororo Archdiocese)



From right is Sr. Dr. Gorretti Nassali - Surgeon, headed the facilitators' team for cervical and breast cancer



Nurses who are working in St. Francis, Nsambya oncology department



The team of facilitators of the cervical and breast cancer together with the diocesan coordinator share a moment



**Sr Pricilla - gynaecologist surgeon (2nd from the left) and a team of surgeons who operated 34 teenage mothers in Kasese diocese**



**Sisters who attended the workshop of cervical and breast cancer screening in St. Frances BULUBA received**



**Mt. St. Mary's hospital Kasese diocese surgery camp**



**The National Coordinator and the research assistant were in the one of the wards collecting data of the patient**



**The National coordinator interviewing the patients in Kasese Diocese when it started and whether she had ever visited any hospital**

*Hilton Foundation has changed the lives of the vulnerable women, teenage mothers and the youth through their financial support.*

*Long live Hilton Foundation*

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