



Heather Johnstone

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Location: Tanzania



What I do: Helping to empower the most disadvantaged women and children in Mara through the Rehema Project.

Dear friends,

I looked at the girl's motionless body on the floor. Is she alive?, my friend whispered, daring to utter what I was thinking. I'm not sure, I said as I quickly bent down to take her pulse; it was weak, barely there.

My friend (a visitor from the UK) and I had spent a fun morning in the company of the children at the nursery school. They were put through their paces by their teacher, demonstrating their numeracy and literacy abilities. After the visit we were invited to lunch with a local lady.

On the way to lunch we stopped at Cesi's house to greet her and the family, which was where we found Eliza, Cesi's 12-year-old daughter, lying inert on the floor.

Cesi had taken Eliza to hospital the previous day and she'd been diagnosed with malaria. She'd been given meds but had been vomiting all night. I told Cesi that Eliza needed urgent medical attention and she said she would take her back to the hospital on the back of her bicycle. Clearly that was not an option.

I don't have a car, the village of Nyambeshi is at least 30 minutes away from town by car, and time was of the essence. I was frantically sorting through my mind, who could I call to come to the rescue?

The first two calls drew blanks, then I called my taxi driver, but he was 100 miles away. He connected me with another driver and implored him to come as quickly as he could.

The admittance and triage process to hospital can be long and onerous and everyone must wait their turn, so I called a German nurse friend of mine who works at the private AICT church hospital in Bweri, explained the urgency of the situation and asked her to expedite admittance and treatment. I also asked that they not request payment from Cesi and I would settle the bill when I went to the hospital later. She was happy to oblige.

When we arrived at the hospital, Eliza was on a drip and looking slightly perkier. She had no recollection of leaving home, travelling by car or being admitted to hospital.

Praise/prayer point: Praise the Lord that he put us in Eliza's presence when her need was great, and that he gave us the necessary resources to act quickly in response to her plight. We thank God that Eliza has recovered, and we pray for his protection over her and other children for whom malaria is a regular but unfortunate reality. Pray too that we can find a sponsor to cover the cost of medical insurance for Cesi and her girls.



Heather with Father Robert (left) and Father Pendo.

Support Heather Johnstone:
churchmissionsociety.org/johnstone

**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



Many of you loved my April '22 link letter with the story of Father Pendo and his ministry serving the socially, psychologically or economically disadvantaged, such as the sick, the poor, the mentally and physically disabled, and have asked for an update.

I visited him again recently with a gift of 80kg maize flour and 40kg of beans for his community. This was gratefully received as the price of basic foodstuffs is rising constantly, consequently, feeding his people becomes more and more challenging.

In March '22 when I visited, Father Pendo told me he did not wish to retire, and wanted to continue serving forever. However, sadly, he has Parkinson's disease, and his health is declining. Although he puts on a brave face and soldiers on, he is more accepting of the prospect of retirement now. When there was no one obvious to take over the running of his project, he told his bishop he had absolute faith that God would provide the solution before he steps

down in March 2023. He chuckles when he tells me that of course God has provided, he was never in any doubt about that. A group of three servant-hearted lay missionaries from the US have come to serve in Tanzania for five years. Unaware of Father Pendo's project, they told the bishop they wanted to start and invest in a project for the mentally and physically disabled, among Tanzania's poorest. The bishop introduced them to Father Pendo, and the good news is they will take over the running of the project next year after a good handover period. They bring with them funding from America and will be able to renovate and significantly improve the current facilities.

Praise/prayer point: Praise the Lord that this important project will not end when Father Pendo retires next year. Pray for him, his retirement and his health. Pray also for the lay missionaries as they face their new challenges, and for the residents and community as they adapt to the new leadership.

Great news, thanks to our friends at UK Christian charity Go Make a Difference in Tanzania, Rehema products will be available in your neighbourhood this season. They will be selling our fabulous goodies online with Etsy (<https://www.etsy.com/shop/GoMADinTanzania>). Please have a look at what is on offer – who knows, you might find some lovely handmade Christmas gifts at an affordable price. All monies raised go directly to the Rehema Project and support the most marginalised women in the Mara region, so tell your family and friends too.

A big thank you to my friends and supporters, for your encouragement, financial and prayerful support, and love throughout the year 2022.

Praise point: Thank God for the many individuals and link churches who support the Rehema Project and the work I do in so many ways.

I wish you peace, goodwill, and happiness at Christmas, and always.

Mungu akuwabariki.

Heather



Photos from top to bottom: Meet new kid on the block William (named after my grandfather); Handmade Rehema Christmas cards; Sunset over Lake Victoria.



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