

11.01.2023 Tabora, Tanzania

## Familia Moja Itetemia, Tabora, Tanzania Update from 2022

Jesus replied, "Whoever drinks this water will soon be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. This water becomes in him a never-ending spring that gives eternal life. John 4:13-14 NIV



Dear everyone,

In Tabora we had a 'dry spell'. It was in the middle of the rainy season last year, so we got a poor maize harvest and completely failed rice harvest in 2022.

At the beginning of 2022 the cost of living with inflation and rising petrol prices escalated more and more. And a food crisis arrived. Oil, sugar, wheat flour, black tea, petrol, etc. became luxury items in a very short time.

This of course had direct consequences for our Familia Moja clients, for us and for our budget. First, we had to stop distributing rice as part of our food program and only distribute maize as a staple. To cover the increasing costs of medicines, hospital diagnostics and admissions, (price doubled initially, now nearly treble) we were not able to dig a single pond 2022. You could say that we also hit a 'very dry spell'....

The cost of support the 600+ households who get a basic food package from FMI every month, increased threefold. Our medical expenses have also at least doubled for the same type of service due to inflation.

**But what a miracle, what a blessing:** thanks to your generosity, despite the difficult circumstances, none of our clients have yet had to starve. Among other things, we were even able to open a soup kitchen for 50 children to prevent malnutrition. We have also been able to provide basic medical care and medication to everyone we care for because of your generous donations.

We sometimes had the feeling that we were 'up to our necks in water' as our costs were rising rapidly and we had few resources left. Jesus did not allow this challenge to overwhelm us but forged us together as a team. He - the everlasting source of life - became our source of hope and new life, even when we could not be sure of our physical resources. In an act of faith, we decided together not to slim down our client list or our commitment to them.

Here are a few 'highlights' from this year's activities:



December 2021 I wrote about Juma Salehe, the 15-year-old boy with the broken tibia (who also has sickle cell anemia - untreatable). The bone was not properly cared for and had become infected. This child had to go through many treatments over a period of several months. Despite 3 - 4 months of antibiotic treatment (financed with your help), the bone infection could not be treated successfully. Again thanks to your help, the orthopedic surgeon then decided to have the entire tibia surgically removed and 2 months later the second bone from the left leg was implanted in the right leg. After almost a year, Juma can now walk without crutches again. It is a miracle: sickle cell anemia alone

makes wound healing difficult and his mother could not even afford primary care as a widow with 4 children and an income from her market stall.



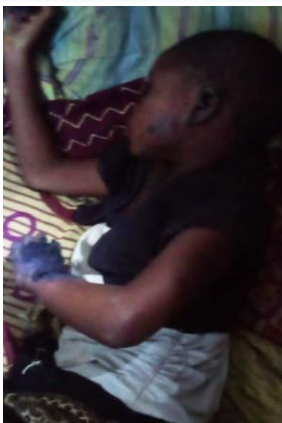


I also told you about Christopher, the little boy whose mother died after giving birth End of November 2021. His grandmother, who also looks after 5 other children under the age of 6, could not even afford cow's milk to feed the child, let alone baby milk.

With your generous help, we bought 8 cans of baby milk a month for a year, which costs over £90 a month. Christopher survived: thanks to the milk and Mama Ndugu's daily commitment for the first 6 months.

He is one year old this month, can already stand and is a very sweet boy.

We continue to support the family with generous monthly food packages and also found a job close to the family for the child's aunt so that she could move back in with her mother to better support Christopher's grandmother. In the meantime, the aunt has opened a small street cafe with Mama Ndugu's help and now contributes independently to the family's income.



One of Familia Moja's new 'clients' in 2022 was 7-year old Neema Julius. Neema (which means 'grace' in Swahili) was the daughter of one of our Familia Moja nurse's neighbours. The child has had severe epilepsy with over 20-30 seizures each day for the past year.

Her mother had tried to find help at a small health centre in the neighbourhood but couldn't afford the paediatrician at the regional hospital. When the therapy at the health centre didn't work, she started seeing various traditional healers. Her daughter was no longer able to speak or take care of herself at this point.

The 14th (!) traditional healer tried to drive the 'evil spirits' out of the child with hot steam. Neema suffered severe burns to her hands and arms. At this point, the mother sought help from our nurse, who started the treatment for the burns and the referral to the paediatrician in the regional hospital. The paediatrician prescribed a new drug that is rarely used in Tanzania (because of its cost) and the result was amazing. After a month, the seizures had reduced to less than once a week. Her hands were healed. After another dose adjustment, Neema has been seizure-free for several months. Even better, she's just returned to be like any other normal seven-year-old again: able to laugh, talk, play...and learn!



She will be able to start school this January, much to the delight of her parents. Her medication will probably have to be lifelong: At the moment a day's treatment costs £1.



Finally, I would like to introduce you to Ashura. She is an old lady who had been with her husband for over 40 years. She unfortunately had no children and she and her husband were both smokers, drinkers, thus always the poorest of the poor despite being devout Muslims.

We met them 4 years ago when both were diagnosed at the same time with heart failure which they could not afford to treat. We began supporting them with monthly basic foods and medical treatment. The couple never had a house or property of their own

and when their 'borrowed' house collapsed in the rain last year, we had to 'emergency evacuate' them to one of our 'two room retirement home' next to our office. We have housed them and supported them daily through their treatment for acute tuberculosis,

Ashura's stroke last year and her husband's death from an acute intestinal obstruction 3 months ago, have left her alone, hardly able to walk and doubly incontinent. She is taken care of by our team every day, which is very unusual in Tabora, with hired extra help for the cleaning, washing clothes and daily cooking that Ashura now needs to survive. Since she moved to us, for the first time in her life she sleeps in a regular bed with a mattress and her room is now cleaned daily. (She's a 'hoarder' - garbage bags, old bottles, rotten clothes). She has since given up alcohol, and surprisingly became a Christian recently through a visiting Christian neighbour. She remains an impressive, strong character, who despite the greatest personal difficulties and challenges, retains an incredibly great will to live and makes us laugh (and groan...) every day.

Although FM was unable to dig any more ponds this year, the ponds dug in previous years have provided income/nutrition for numerous families. Of the 26 ponds dug, 14 ponds had enough water to be used for market gardens, 8 were used for livestock and only 4 ponds did not have enough water. Three of the ponds are community ponds supported by Mama Ndugu and support over 8 HIV infected women who would otherwise have no income.

Tanzania faces a lack of affordable food. Familia Moja must reach the most vulnerable. Mama Ndugu runs a soup kitchen providing breakfast for 50 children every morning,



Alongside this we have a new project to sell slightly subsidized whole grain maize flour. It is cheaper and healthier but slightly bitter. The whole grain maize flour is only bought by those who absolutely cannot afford anything else. This allows us to provide daily staples to those who otherwise could not afford them, and also identify those who struggle to buy flour every day. This helps Familia Moja not to be overwhelmed by the need, and ensures we reserve the help for the people who need it most. We have sold over 1400 kg of this maize flour since November to over 700 households at a very subsidised price. People walk up to one hour to get to this subsidised stall at our office (up to 6 km one way) and we only allow 2 kg per customer.

The current food crisis in Tanzania is worse that I have ever seen. The price of maize is now 3 times higher than in previous years. If the rains continue well this rainy season, people can harvest maize and things should get better. But if the rains fail to continue an even worse crisis looms.

Yet we remain confident: for our confidence does not come from a stash of maize in our storeroom, or a full bank account, but our confidence comes from our God. He is a good, infinitely reliable and loving Lord, - a never ending spring of life. As His children, as sisters and brothers in Christ we experience encouragement and hope.

We thank you for your interest and support for the neediest in Tabora and wish you a blessed 2023 with a spring of never-failing 'water'/life as promised by the Lord.

Sincerely yours

Ruth and family and everyone from Familia Moja in Tabora

