

Chairperson's Report-Charlotte Woellwarth

Although Arcaid was established 36 years ago, our aim remains unchanged; to support individuals and communities in developing countries around the world, whose needs do not fall within the scope and remit of the larger aid organisations. As a small parish charity, we remain committed to ensuring that every donation we receive goes directly to the cause, supporting those less fortunate than ourselves, standing alongside those working to build a better future. Relying entirely on your generosity, Arcaid can provide vital assistance where it is needed and uphold the founding values that have guided us since 1989.

Over the past year Arcaid has provided funding to 18 projects in 8 countries, thereby allowing communities to develop in ways that are simple, sustainable, and unique to their needs. Your support has enabled the purchase of 10 wheelchairs for disabled children in Zambia, the provision of equipment for a new school run by the Infant Jesus Sisters in Cameroon, the running of mobile health clinics for cancer screening, eye and dental camps in Tamil Nadu, India and the replacement of a water pump for a solar well at an orphanage in Malawi. In short, your donations once again this year, have enabled people to access the most basic services – services that many of us would otherwise take for granted.

In developing countries, education takes many forms- from formal schooling to vocational training and community-based learning-all helping to build stronger futures and offering vital opportunities for growth. This year Arcaid supported women in Uganda as they launched their own small businesses following a skills training in their parish. Due to the initiative's success, the training has now been expanded across 7 deaneries with funding from Arcaid. The project aims to promote self-reliance, strengthen family stability and help break the cycle of poverty. Also in Uganda, we funded a student with very limited means to complete her nursing course. The Sisters of Our Lady in Providence in India received support for school fees, books, clothing, medicine and stationery for both a school and children's home. We also continued to sponsor several students with their schooling in Tanzania. Continuing in the theme of education, Arcaid funded a physiotherapist to conduct assessments and training sessions in rural Zambia. These sessions equipped volunteers and parents of children with disabilities to carry out exercises that improve their children's independence. For context purposes, in Zambia there are only 160 qualified physios for a population of over 21 million, highlighting the critical need for such assistance. Arcaid also funded the salaries of staff who run an inclusion play project in Western Kenya, providing education and social support to disabled children.

During the year, we have been reminded of the challenging conditions in which many of our projects operate, particularly regarding food security due to climate change, conflict, political instability and poverty. Arcaid supported a feeding programme in Uganda for the St. Philomena Babies home run by Franciscan sisters, as well as the establishment of a chicken and rabbit raising initiative to provide additional food for the children cared for by the Immaculate Convent, also in Uganda.

During 2025 we have continued to look at ways in which we can increase Arcaid's visibility, with a cake sale in November and the leveraging of our Facebook and Instagram pages with updates and project photographs. It is brilliant to be able to share with both parishioners and non-parishioners the work that we do and how donations are and can be used. We have also recently opened our account on the Easy fundraising platform for both online and in-store purchases and will soon be launching our CAF donate button on the Arcaid website page, greatly improving the ease of access and hopefully donations!

As always, I would like to take this opportunity to give a heartfelt thanks to our Trustees for their commitment and dedication. They make the decisions, correspond with the priests, nuns and volunteers working on the ground and follow up on every project funded.

I would also like to say a special thank you to Fiona Dick, our wonderful Secretary who is stepping down after 10 years with Arcaid. Fiona's hard work, guidance and support have been invaluable, she will be greatly missed. I hope Fiona won't mind me sharing but at our recent meeting I asked her if there has been a project that Arcaid has supported that has always remained in her mind, she said the Serenity Home in India where terminally ill and elderly patients with cancer and other chronic diseases are cared for. I went away from that meeting thinking about all the projects Fiona has been a part of during her time as a Trustee and what a real difference Fiona, Arcaid and St. Joan of Arc as a parish really do make.

Hopefully I have given you a summary of some of our activities over the past year, none of these would have been possible without you. No matter the size of your donation, and whether you give regularly or occasionally, thank you on behalf of Arcaid and the beneficiaries, for your continued support and generosity.