News
Q&As



Holy Spirit Sr. Joyce Miyanda interacts with an expectant mother. Miyanda has been acting senior hospital administrator at Monze Mission Hospital in Zambia for about a year. (Derrick Silimina)



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For Helen Zulu, maternal health care is not just a service at Monze Mission Hospital — it is an effort to save lives.

Zulu, 39, spoke to Global Sisters Report about a stressful ordeal she went through in 2018 at Monze Mission Hospital, 185 km (115 miles) south of Zambia's capital of Lusaka. A few days after giving birth, Zulu's child developed a life-threatening medical condition known as hydronephrosis, where the flow of urine is blocked within the urinary tract, causing urine to back up and potentially damage one or both kidneys.

"Whenever I think about my child's healing in the face of adversity, I become emotional," said Zulu, a mother of three. "This hospital's quality health care reflects its profound importance to the lives of patients and their families. My baby girl recovered and is now seven."

Long before the mission hospital was established in Monze, mothers in the surrounding rural communities would give birth at home via traditional birth attendants, contributing to high maternal death rates in the southern African country.

In 1971, the late Bishop James Corboy of Monze Diocese, founded the health facility in a bid to address maternal health care in the district. The Irish Congregation of the Holy Rosary Sisters managed the hospital until 1995, until the local congregation, the Sisters of the Holy Spirit, took over.

"This medical facility was started as a small rural health center with one building and only 24 beds, then increased to two buildings with about 30- to 40-bed capacity in a bid to attend to the community's health needs in Monze. Then, the district had no hospital or rural health center," Sr. Joyce Miyanda told GSR.

Miyanda, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit, said that the health facility now covers a wider area beyond Monze and has grown to more than 270 beds as patients seek specialized treatment.

Barely a year in her new position as acting senior hospital administrator, Miyanda told GSR that the hospital's motto of "Compassionate Care" is in line with the facility, renowned for its compassionate maternal health care in southern Zambia.



Holy Spirit Sr. Joyce Miyanda (center), flanked by health care workers, inspects the neonatal ward at Monze Mission Hospital in Zambia. (Derrick Silimina)

***GSR*: Kindly tell us about your work and ministry.**

Miyanda: I initially started my work here as an assistant human resource management officer for 10 years, focusing on recruitment, motivation and career development. I realized the importance of human resources in the hospital's operations, as they are key to providing quality services.

In 2024, I was assigned as acting hospital administrator, to oversee the overall supervision of hospital activities. My key duties include ensuring sufficient resources, planning and budgeting for availability of medical equipment and drugs, transport management, capacity building, overseeing nonclinical departments and managing the hospital's entire operations.

How has your professional journey been, and who inspired you to become a religious sister?

Straight from high school, I had a passion for human resource management and in 2004, I did a certificate at Greenwood Institute before I joined the sisterhood. In 2005, I fulfilled my childhood dream to become a nun after I was inspired in grade four by Sr. Anne Marie, who used to be at our local parish.

Then at Mazabuka Girls High School, I again got inspired by Sr. Mariana Barlow, one of our teachers — a Holy Spirit sister who introduced me to sisterhood after I expressed interest. My greater calling was fueled by my passion to serve the poor and vulnerable people in society. I find joy in religious life and the mission of helping the poor, which has fulfilled my work at the hospital.

After I professed in January 2010, the religious sisters of the Holy Spirit took me back to school and I obtained a diploma in HR from the National Institute of Public Administration in 2012. I then went on to study (for) my bachelor's degree in HR at the Copperbelt University in 2019.

My career journey began when I started working as a principal at James Corboy Primary School for two years and later as an assistant human resource management officer at Monze Mission Hospital. For the past 10 years working as HR, I realized the importance of handling human resources with care, as they are the heart of the hospital's operations.



Sr. Joyce Miyanda, left, poses with Sr. Purity Siloka, an accountant at Monze Mission Hospital in Zambia. (Derrick Silimina)

What is your charism and how does it align with your work?

Our charism as Holy Spirit Sisters is rooted in openness and dedication to the personal action of the Holy Spirit by following Christ's mission. It emphasizes the importance of being open to the guidance and insights of the Holy Spirit, and responding accordingly to the signs of the times. Our mission is to follow Christ's mission, serving the community and the poor with compassion and love. So as a Holy Spirit sister, one thing that I have always practiced and lived out is to give great witness to the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

How is the facility managing overall maternal health care in Monze district and the surrounding area?

So from the onset, we've had an obstetrician and gynecologist, who was Sr. Dr. Lucy O'Brien, just at the inception of the hospital. She belonged to the Holy Rosary Sisters, the first managing agents before we came in 1995 and they worked very hard to make sure that expectant mothers delivered safely.

Over the years, we have maintained a high standard of health care, including a well-equipped department with specialists, midwives and trainee doctors. In 2024, the hospital handled 4,485 deliveries, with an average of 385-420 monthly.

How many staff manage various medical departments at your health facility?

The hospital has around 35 departments, which plays a critical role in providing essential health care services to the Monze community and surrounding areas, which previously had limited access to health care facilities.

Our key health departments include major curative services like pediatrics, maternity wing, obstetrics, gynecology and surgery. Other support health services include laboratory, pharmacy, eye clinic, X-ray, catering, laundry, transport and stores among others. The hospital has 200 full time staff members, including doctors, nurses, but has over 500 staff including support staff.

We're grateful to the Ministry of Health, a significant funder. We also receive support from the religious Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the bishop's office among other donors.

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How is Monze Mission Hospital contributing to a lower maternal death rate in Zambia?

The primary goal of the institution is to ensure safe maternal deliveries, a mission that has been ongoing since its inception. The hospital has always had key health specialists, with all departments well-staffed including nurses, midwives, trainee doctors, senior resident medical officers and consultants. The hospital handles all complications, including those requiring cesarean sections, with babies kept in the neonatal intensive care unit.

A mother's shelter was introduced with a capacity of 30 to accommodate women from far-off places who need daily monitoring.

What major challenges do you face in delivering health services to your clients and how do you manage to address them?

As the only referral hospital in Monze district, we're always overwhelmed by both primary and secondary health care which are supposed to be handled by rural health centres but are over 40 km (25 miles) away.

The hospital faces financial challenges, including running out of stock and maintaining outdated equipment and lacks an ambulance for urgent evacuation to teaching hospitals in Livingstone or Lusaka. Our future plans include expanding the facility to a university teaching hospital.