



# Bringing about transformational change and hope

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Annual Review 2023



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**'The programme is life changing...  
it gives you a new (lease of) life.  
We have learnt to read and write so it has  
opened our eyes. We can read the Bible  
and give glory to God. We make money and  
can feed and clothe ourselves and our children.  
We have bought land and have built our  
own houses. We (women) have become  
the light of our families.'**

**An MU leader in the Diocese of Matana, Burundi,  
reflects upon our Literacy and Financial Education programme**

Front cover image: MU members with their new mobile phones that they've been able to buy and use due to becoming literate through the MU Literacy Programme, in Bugando, the DRC.



## Who we are

Mothers' Union is a global Christian movement focused on ending poverty, violence and social injustice in communities across the UK and the world.

Active for nearly 150 years, with over 4 million members across 84 countries, we work with people of all faiths and none, transforming lives, strengthening families and advocating for change.

Through kindness, faith and compassionate action, we work to create a better tomorrow, where everyone can thrive.

## How we work

For nearly 150 years, Mothers' Union has worked with communities in the UK and around the world. We believe that faith and compassion have the power to transform lives.

When someone finds themselves unexpectedly in hospital, when a parent goes to prison, when a baby is born prematurely, Mothers' Union members are there to support them. From hygiene kits to warm hats, a safe place to talk and parenting guidance, together we can strengthen our communities worldwide and transform lives.

Our programmatic work and central support includes literacy and savings programmes, as well as parenting and resilience training, alongside the myriad of small acts undertaken by our loyal, committed members in their own communities every day. We are led by people's needs in their own communities. We listen and respond practically, through faith, to the requirements of individual communities, doing all we can to improve people's lives today to instigate lasting change for tomorrow. Additionally, and where appropriate, we partner with other organisations and governments to increase our impact.

### We work under three core pillars to help communities transform:



#### Ending Violence

through peace and safety work

see p8-10



#### Ending Injustice

through gender justice work

see p12-13



#### Ending Poverty

through increasing self-reliance and building resilience

see p14-16

## Worldwide President's welcome

# 2023 was full of challenges and opportunities.



New devastating conflicts erupted, notably in Gaza, and ongoing wars continued to disrupt and destroy families and communities. Our long-running literacy programme in Sudan has been halted due to conflict in the country, where famine is also rife and hundreds of thousands of people are displaced. Around the world, people experienced tragedy and trauma from violence or natural disasters. Many continue to struggle with the stresses of modern-day life, including the cost-of-living crisis putting enormous strain on families. We pray for all those affected. I know that, globally, our members have increased their support to help those who need it. Hardship brings out a spirit of generosity, which our members have in abundance.

In 2023, I had the privilege of visiting eight provinces in East, Central and Southern Africa, and Britain and Ireland. As I travelled extensively, meeting thousands of members in their local communities, my horizons of what Mothers' Union really means to the church and community have expanded.

Everywhere I went, people told me that MU brings lasting change, unity and energy. In Central Africa, the archbishop and bishops were full of praise for MU's work reaching the most marginalised, the vulnerable and families in all forms. They said the ministry of MU is

fundamental to the growth of the church. Bishops in South Africa spoke of the transformational changes made by MU projects and programmes in townships where extreme violence and gangs are prevalent. Wherever MU is found, there is divine intervention and transformation.

Resilience is the heart and soul of MU, because in the face of uncertainty, challenge, suffering or disaster, MU is right there on the front line! A tower of strength, with wisdom gained through lessons learned, equipping the church and community to stand together, along with a track-record that is hard to match!

I am reminded of Psalm 91:4:

**'He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings you will find refuge.'**

Embedded in communities, we are always adapting and improving our programmes. In the face of climate change, we have developed and grown the agricultural elements of our programmes in Burundi, Madagascar, Rwanda and the DRC. People have been working together, finding their own solutions, and creating their own development. The focus is on helping communities prepare and take action before the disasters come.



In Madagascar, I saw how hard it is for those on the front line of climate change. Families watch all they have worked for, and built for future generations, destroyed in an instant. Before they can rebuild, high winds, mudslides and floods strike again. Several agencies supply emergency aid and money to start rebuilding, but it is our vast network of members on the ground who offer pastoral support and are ready with plans to equip and mobilise communities, to work together to be resilient and rebuild stronger, for a sustainable future.

Our movement is committed to ending poverty, injustice and violence. Prayer, fellowship, companionship and support for the vulnerable are at the heart of what we do. Helping communities around the corner and around the world, in whatever form, is needed. Working in partnership with clergy, the church and other organisations is key to broadening our reach.

We remain committed to raising awareness and addressing gender-based violence and domestic abuse. I am delighted that our new RISE UP Against Domestic Abuse campaign has launched so successfully in Britain and Ireland. Our literacy and financial education programmes are going from strength to strength, empowering women to take

control of their lives and transforming the prospects of their families.

Thank you to everyone who is part of our transformational movement. The impact we have achieved is due to hard work by so many passionate members across the globe.

Praise God!

With my love and prayers as always,



**Sheran Harper**



## Chief Executive report

Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

Matthew 25: 40-45



In 2023, Mothers' Union members helped more than 2.8 million people in need across the world. This number is a huge underestimate – so much of what members do daily, for those in their communities, is never recorded. In this review, we share just a small number of stories, such as the work of the AMARE women in Northern Argentina. They provide a weekly soup kitchen for children living in poverty, which also draws in the parents. For example, one young girl-mother, with AIDS and suffering drug addiction, was helped to receive treatment and start to overcome her addiction.

As well as this day-to-day community support, MU members around the world work together to bring an end to violence,

poverty and injustice, working with people at their point of need, helping them to transform their own lives.

In three countries (Uganda, Kenya and South Africa), MU undertook surveys to understand the issues relating to gender-based violence. It is shocking to discover that, for example, 40% of men did not consider forced sex within marriage to be rape. A small proportion of women also shared those views. MU is now seeking to work with others within communities to bring about cultural and attitudinal change.

Throughout the world, MU takes part in the United Nations' 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. In 2023, we started to move towards 365 days of

activism to build awareness. For example, in Northern Ireland, conferences were held with church leadership and, in the UK, the RISE UP! challenge was launched. Standing for 'Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite and Pray', members are reaching out within their churches and local communities, signposting to support and highlighting issues. Over 10,000 posters have already been distributed with helpline numbers to tear off, keep and use.

Issues of violence, poverty and injustice, are, of course, deeply interrelated. The work ongoing in Burundi, over more than 20 years, highlights how transformative work in this space can be. Supported by partners, MU has delivered literacy and savings programmes in

communities torn apart by civil war, as well as, most recently, parenting training. The impact has been profound. Previously, relationships within these communities were characterised by fear, hatred, suspicion and discrimination. Claudette Kigeme, who has been involved with the programme since the start, reports that 'Today, love, trust, unity and fellowship are the first characteristics of the community members.'

Back in 2019, as a grassroots membership movement, MU collectively took the decision that it wanted to become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, united in fellowship, supporting one another in service. Catalysed by the pandemic, online prayer and fellowship (through midday prayers



and global calls) have become the norm. In 2023, we also started regional in-person retreats to coincide with the Worldwide President visits, bringing together all leaders from a region. I was privileged to help lead the first retreat in East Africa. The deepening of friendships and understanding between countries and the central team was profound. It set a stronger basis for sharing of learning and resources across the world.

We also continue to nurture the membership in the UK, as they 'reimagine' what it means to be MU for the future as traditional membership declines – for example, through evening and online groups, and by offering support to clergy ministry.

We continue to build firm foundations for the long-term health of the movement. In 2023, a workshop was held for provincial leaders around the world, to better understand what it takes to successfully support the ministry of members (including major programmes). In 2024, we aim to start building on this, by creating a structured approach to leadership and capacity development. We are also pleased that we were able to commission a new Customer Relationship Management system in 2023, to help us better support the membership and reach out more widely. This was made possible by a significant grant from St Denys Foundation, with whom we have a long-term relationship.

We would like to thank our members in Britain and Ireland for their fundraising and amazing community work. We are preparing for a significant increase in focus on fundraising from 2024, to reach out more widely to increase resources for building a robust future.

We would also like to thank those organisations with whom we have established and developing partnerships, such as Five Talents, Episcopal Relief & Development, Women's Aid and Restored. We can achieve so much more together.

For me, MU is all about being part of a diverse global movement, collectively making a difference, one person or community at a time. As one member says, 'It is wonderful to know you are part of so many people working to serve their fellow men and women, and so serve God.'



**Bev Jullien**  
CEO of Mothers' Union

**'Issues of violence, poverty and injustice, are, of course, deeply interrelated.'**



# Ending violence: through peace and safety work



## Hope for parents in prison

Throughout the UK, Mothers' Union members offer support for families when a parent is in prison. From knitting warm clothes for children who visit, to running crèches and talking with prisoners, we're proud of the connections we build, helping families stay hopeful for their relationships and their future.



### 'Being Dad' course

Many young male offenders who have children want to be better dads but lack confidence, skills or encouragement. Our members run a 'Being Dad' course in prisons, in which each young man learns not only how to be a better dad in the future, but also in the present while they're serving their sentence.

A young man who attended our 'Being Dad' training courses told us:

**'I have learnt strategies [for] how to talk to my baby's mum without being so harsh.'**

At the end of the course, the groups always want to meet again. The participants are amazed that the Mothers' Union members who run the course are volunteers. They are encouraged to share in a non-judgemental and confidential way with their peers – something which is hard when living in the wings of the prison.

### Safeguarding workshop

In September 2023, Mothers' Union ran a safeguarding workshop in Uganda, in partnership with Five Talents. This brought together 33 participants from across Africa and Myanmar. These included representatives from the Provinces of Burundi, DRC, the Indian Ocean, Kenya, Myanmar, Rwanda, South Sudan, Southern Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. The workshop was informed by conversations that had taken place over the summer of 2023, which gave us valuable insight into where each province was on their safeguarding journey.

The workshop introduced Mothers' Union's Worldwide Safeguarding Policy, into which the participants had input and helped to shape. With each province

sharing their experience and contexts, participants explored how to build on existing safeguarding work, so that safeguarding can be shared from the province level to the local branch level, positively supporting members and vulnerable people.

The workshop looked at how to provide support to other provinces. As a result, Mothers' Union is extending training into different parts of the world so the concept of 'do no harm' is fully embedded across the global movement. We are working to ensure that we are effectively recognising, responding, recording and referring safeguarding concerns across all the areas in which we work.





## Mothers' Union's Literacy, Savings & Agriculture Programme offers hope through insecurity in DRC

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been plagued by conflict for over 30 years. The ongoing political, economic and societal insecurity has resulted in it becoming one of the poorest countries in the world. These conditions are exacerbated by the low levels of literacy and numeracy of rural Congolese women. In response, Mothers' Union DRC developed the Literacy, Savings and Agriculture Programme, which has had a profound impact on the communities where it runs.

Funds raised through the Big Give Appeal in December 2020 enabled the programme to start in the dioceses of Beni, Butembo, Kamango and Kindu.

Despite the severe insecurity and disruptions caused by conflicts, including the displacement of many participants, the programme has continued to offer critical support and hope. The initiative has helped over 48 literacy circles to be formed, significantly improving the literacy and numeracy of rural Congolese women. This educational empowerment has been vital for women who have, traditionally, not had access to such education.

One of the programme's key successes has been the integration of agricultural training. Participants have gained valuable skills in agriculture and nutrition, enabling them to sustain themselves and their families even in times of displacement (for instance, the knowledge of how to cultivate nutrient-rich crops like lenga-lenga, a local spinach). Women have reported that, when forced to flee, they take their seeds with them and start planting as soon as they find a safe place to stay.

The Literacy and Agricultural Programme in the DRC has been a beacon of hope in a region fraught with instability. By improving literacy, agricultural skills and community cohesion, Mothers' Union has made a significant and lasting impact on the lives of many Congolese women and their families.

I was an orphan, so I don't know my age. My parents died when I was little. Before the literacy programme, I was in darkness. Now I'm in [the] light. I didn't know how to write even 0. Now I know how to write numbers. I used to have to get someone to show me my name. Now I can find my own name.

Being literate, I'm feeling better and now I'm able to help push forward.

My vision is to be a leader in church and to join the MU savings group. I want to go far.'

Programme participant from the DRC



# Supporting women to live free from violence



A programme aiming to raise awareness of gender-based violence (GBV), support its reduction, and provide support to survivors, was piloted in three provinces (Kenya, Southern Africa and Uganda) and completed in June 2023. It started in response to increased GBV being witnessed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using funding from the Big Give Christmas Appeal 2021, this 18-month programme challenged attitudes around gender that contribute to GBV, plus associated stigma.

Using the Church and Community Mobilisation approach, it supported survivors, trained clergy and community members to recognise and address issues, and raised awareness to break the stigma and shame which stops people asking for help.

Research undertaken in 2022 in these provinces looked at attitudes linked to GBV, responses to GBV, and the role of Mothers' Union and the church. There was a concerning level of acceptance of violence against women by both women and men. Significant numbers of women supported beliefs and practices which drive violence against women and girls. For example, across the three provinces, 38% of men and 23% of women agreed that a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together. In Uganda, 39% of women agreed that a woman could

dress 'like she wanted sex'; in Kenya more than 50% agreed with this. 40% of men and 22% of women indicated that they do not regard forced sex between husband and wife as rape. Transforming traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality requires addressing these discriminatory social norms.

Whilst there are differences in attitudes across provinces, it's clear that awareness raising and empowerment work need to be a priority. It is essential to help women recognise their right to live free from violence, from both biblical and human rights perspectives. Addressing victim blaming is also vital. MU has been seeking to challenge and strategically disrupt harmful beliefs, which significant numbers of women still support.

## Across the three provinces:



**18,865**

people now understand the measures in place for reporting incidents of exploitation and abuse



**1,423**

GBV survivors received support and were referred to appropriate services



**1,130**

women, men and children were trained in addressing gender stereotypes and norms and trauma healing



**494**

church leaders were trained and equipped to mobilise their communities to stand against GBV

**This important learning is being used to shape our ongoing programmatic work in GBV.**





# Our worldwide impact in 2023

MU dioceses across Britain and Ireland provided **holidays and trips** to families whose lives have been met with adversity, giving them much-needed respite, benefitting over

see p19

**2,000 children**  
and **1,000 adults**

We supported over

**2.8 million people**

of which, MU directly supported over

**569,000 people**

MU indirectly supported over

**2,270,000 people**

Clothing, bedding, care packages, handcrafted blankets and baby items were lovingly distributed by MU members to refugees, the homeless, hospital patients and families. Including more than

**20,000 items**



see p22



MU ran our **No More 1 in 3** campaign, raising awareness of domestic abuse that affects

**1 in 3 women**

see p22

Members took part in the **16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence**, from over

**40 dioceses**

see p12

**Awareness** raising campaigns, vigils, marches and outreach on issues like gender-based violence, parenting and relationships, engaged over

**15,000 people**

see p14

**Literacy programmes, skills training** and **savings groups** in numerous African countries, empowered over

**50,000 women**

# Ending injustice: through gender justice work

## Changing the story of domestic abuse in Ireland

In September 2023, Mothers' Union All-Ireland held Changing The Story conferences in Dublin and Portadown to celebrate new initiatives and highlight the issue of domestic abuse.

The COVID pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of women locked in their homes with their abuser. Along with the Police Service in Northern Ireland being contacted every 16 minutes in relation to domestic abuse, the need to understand, to highlight and to signpost took on new significance. During this period, MU's All-Ireland forged stronger partnerships with domestic abuse services.

They created a gender justice programme in collaboration with the Bishops' Appeal and Tearfund Ireland, called Equipping the Church to Take Action and End Domestic Abuse. They also edited an Irish edition of A Guide For Churches to Address Domestic Abuse with Restored.

During the conference, survivors spoke of the long-term effects of trauma on emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. This led to training with Kintsugi Hope and the creation of Changing The Story wellbeing groups.

**The programme and courses have been an enlightening journey for so many women who have shared, healed and become empowered through what they have learnt.**

At the conferences, keynote speakers Bekah Legg (Restored) and Rev Dr Helen Paynter (author of The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So) explored the biblical context of gender relations. They urged delegates to uphold God's vision for equitable relationships, to seek justice, and defend the oppressed. Their sessions were so impactful that one attendee wished their message could be shared in every church across Ireland.

Having undertaken Mothers' Union's new programme, Equipping the Church to Take Action and End Domestic Abuse, vicars shared how their parish teams feel better equipped to speak about domestic abuse and to signpost people in the right direction. Archbishops John McDowell and Michael Jackson pledged their support and encouraged as many people as possible, particularly men, to take part in the programme and bring the issue to the forefront of their communities.

MU's RISE UP Against Domestic Abuse campaign was promoted and branches and parishes were motivated to take on the challenge. Chair of the Church of Ireland's Mind Matters programme, Bishop Pat Storey, agreed that the church should be entirely visible and vocal in supporting MU's campaign. Representatives from Women's Aid NI and Safe Ireland praised the conferences for effectively bringing the message to the wider community.

**'This was an excellent conference. Very encouraging to witness the envisioning and equipping of the church in ending gender based violence.'**

Conference attendee



The Most Revd Richard Clarke, Former Archbishop of Armagh





Kiltiernan conference speakers

Our Christian responses to domestic abuse and gender-based violence need to be joyfully and wonderfully embedded in our ministry, to become an intrinsic part of our culture and in the life and culture of our church,' said Bishop Andrew Forster, in his closing remarks. 'We need to listen, believe the victim and respond appropriately.'

Bishop Andrew thanked Mothers' Union for being the heartbeat in parishes and, also, the stone in the shoe – making people uncomfortable and making them think.

**It calls us back to our Christian calling and our need to do something – to speak up, speak out and respond. This involves men and women working together for the betterment of our society.'**

Bishop Andrew Forster

Rev Graham Hare echoed this sentiment, by praying that all individuals will come to know that they deserve to be safe, valued, empowered – they will know their inherent worth and that they matter in their community and their church.



# Ending poverty: increasing self-reliance



## The power of unity and reconciliation

In June 2023, we released a report about the impact of our Literacy and Financial Education programme running in Burundi for 20 years. The results were phenomenal.

This inclusive programme started in 2000, targeting the most vulnerable people, regardless of faith, ethnic group or political party. It aimed to empower the most vulnerable, especially women.

The programme began when the country was facing conflict and socio-political problems, in part because of the civil war (1993-2005.) Communities were full of fear, hatred, suspicion and discrimination. For some, the idea of working together didn't seem possible.

Claudette Kigeme, Mothers' Union's Provincial Coordinator of Mothers' Union Burundi, has been involved since the beginning, 'Today, love, trust, unity and fellowship are the first characteristics of those community members,' she says.

## What happened and how?

People knew and recognised Mothers' Union as a group who cared for people without prejudice, and they started to be aware of the love of God.

Those taking part in the programme, in over 1,289 communities, were mobilised to analyse their problems and find solutions themselves. They started to value and love each other. They understood the power of unity and reconciliation.

They discovered that God had given them different talents that could be used to transform their communities. They started saving together: deepening trust, compassion and mutual care. Collaboration replaced discrimination.

When people became literate, they started reading the Bible, which deepened their faith and transformed their lives. Women were no longer cheated at the markets and have started their own businesses. As well as personal transformation, many committed to become agents of change and took on leadership positions.

Despite transformational change, there are still more communities to reach, more lives to be changed.

But for now, let us rejoice and give thanks to God for all that has been achieved over the last 20 years through this life-changing programme.

MU works with communities to deliver this life-changing literacy programme in the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and South Sudan. (Our work in Sudan is paused due to the current conflict.)

You can read the full or a summary of the report on our website: [mothersunion.org/burundireport](https://mothersunion.org/burundireport)



Savings group secretary keeping the records of her savings group

**'My wife used to ask for permission to go and participate in the SLA and I would refuse. Whenever she asked for money for food and I did not have it, I would beat her. She decided to join without letting me know. Then I started seeing changes... she became cleaner... she started dressing better. Then she bought a goat and then a bicycle. I also decided to join. Our house was comparable to a chicken coop... we now have built a brick house with a tin roof.'**

Male participant, Mukungu community, Diocese of Makamba





Participants of our Literacy and Financial Education Programme in Burundi

Over the 20-year period:

 **165,416** participants have directly benefitted

 **77%** of them are women

 **144,103** people are now accredited as literate

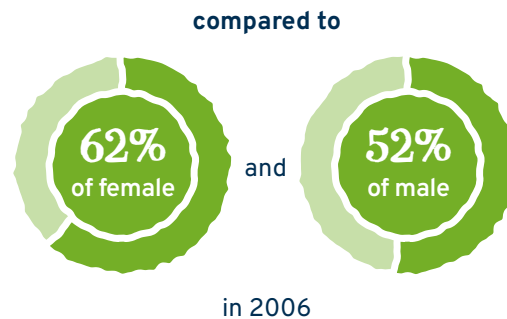
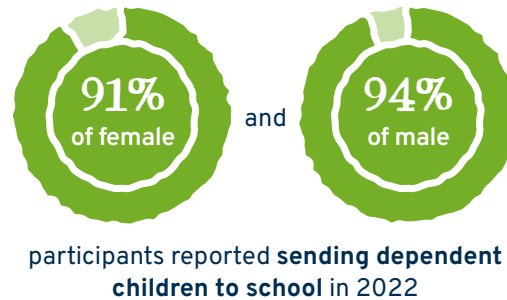
 **6,200** savings and loans associations have been set up

 **78%** of the savings and loans associations are women

 **7,500** participants have accessed the parenting education

 **90%** of the female participants have started their own business

 **1,291** facilitators have been trained



**Agricultural training**

In 2022, Mothers' Union began to incorporate an agricultural focus into the Literacy & Financial Education programme in the Dioceses of Buhiga, Matana and Rutana in Burundi. It helps communities become more self-sufficient, enabling households to grow enough for their daily consumption and enough to sell to increase their family income, which can be put into savings groups. It increases community collaboration and cohesion, as well as individual household emancipation.

Integrating agriculture training has had significant impact. Recipients have begun collaborating, sending their children to school and planting crops collectively. It has increased incomes, resilience, community cohesion, gender equality, and hope across households.

# How MU is transforming lives

## Solar panels in Madagascar

Only 14% of Madagascar's population has access to mains electricity (and this is exclusively in major cities and towns). The remote community of Port Berger is 10 km away from the nearest place with electricity.

Here, Mothers' Union identified people with no light at home, prioritising school students and the elderly. In 2023, 410 households were provided with solar lamps. Residents can now function when it is dark, charge their mobile phones at home, and carry out household tasks safely. Children can do their schoolwork without risk of fires from candles.



A boy benefiting from the light of his new solar panel

## Soup kitchen in Argentina

AMARE, Agrupación de Mujeres Anglicanas Renovadas en el Espíritu (Anglican Women Renewed in the Spirit) is the local expression of Mothers' Union in Latin America. Members of the diocesan team run a soup kitchen on Saturdays, serving 60 children, in the Province of Salta. These children are living in poverty. Their families suffer from gender-based violence, prostitution, drug and alcohol addiction. Families come together with their children and start opening up about their problems. AMARE members provide them with help through prayer, advice and support.

One girl, whose child attends the soup kitchen, has AIDS and is addicted to drugs. She began to seek help with her addiction and receive treatment for AIDS, when listened to by the members and individuals who attend church. She has started attending church and her situation has improved.

## Savings and credit groups in Tanzania



In Tanzania, Mothers' Union provided Church and Community Mobilisation projects to 175 people and trained 50 people to become teachers on Christian education for children. They provided a seminar to 49 widows. They ran savings and credit groups for 8151 members (75% women, 25% men). Throughout the year, 8,000 women and 342 men benefitted from their activities. Before, many families could not afford to buy food or pay for school fees. After taking part, many were able to buy food, send their children to school and pay for health insurance.



**71%** members have invested in income-generating activities



**75%** reported an increased role in household decision making



**75%** reported improved household relationships



Most participants established and expanded their businesses



Most participants improved their houses and churches





Handwritten text on the chalkboard includes:  
- Top left: "yiti c'ingirama 3) uyungame ngenderuwa"  
- Top right: "Nisasa ombro"  
- Middle: "yuburambonyi", "su usambonyi", "u-bu-sa-mbo"  
- Bottom: A grid of letters:  
| a | i | u | o |  
| ba | bi | bu | bo |  
| sa | si | su | so |  
| mba | mbi | mbu | mbo |  
| nya | nyi | nyu | nyo |

A participant of the Literacy and Financial Education programme in Burundi learning to read and write



# Membership in Britain and Ireland

To better support our members in Britain and Ireland, we have created a new staff membership team. Everything the new team does is informed by members, focused on sustaining and growing the movement, in line with the 'Reimagining MU' process (begun in 2022).

## Membership Team Strategy

*To nurture, build and grow the membership of Mothers' Union with support and initiatives informed by members and successful best membership practice. To turn around membership decline to both sustain Mothers' Union, keep it relevant and provide it with the infrastructure and tools to thrive.*

In 2023, the team have:

- Developed Communities of Interest (COIs), member forums covering operational and issue-based topics so that we continue to work together effectively as a movement. These include support networks for faith and MU Enterprise Representatives and functional areas, such as fundraising, safeguarding, communications and membership.
- Through COIs, we are developing a more structured approach of MU National Programmes to support members throughout Britain and Ireland to deliver more effective issue-based local projects.

- We are consolidating our flagship local and issue-based initiatives, including Away From It All breaks, our work in prisons, highlighting the issue of domestic abuse through our RISE UP! campaign and support for vulnerable members of communities through nurturing gifts and crafting.
- Delivered new Gifts of MU, a family and friends' scheme where MU can be shared with new people who will learn about who we are and our impact. We launched a 'Supporter of MU' option for those wanting to support our social justice work.
- We started to pilot the concept of a new church-based membership. This draws together information about national programmes and locally available support to church ministry. This new membership both supports the clergy with their church ministry and introduces MU to new parishes across Britain and Ireland.

The team is also responsible for faith work and outreach. We have:

- Expanded our prayer resources, to include mindful reflections and resources for special Christian events.
- Started engaging more proactively with clergy to develop stronger relationships, promoting MU as a bridge between the church and community, a great source of clergy support, and a vehicle for the delivery of community-led initiatives.

One curate said that, if it hadn't been for MU support for her ministry with children and families, she wouldn't be where she is today.



DPs at the Canterbury Provincial meeting



Re-imagining cocktail winners

**'Where would the Anglican Communion be without the Mothers' Union At home and across the world the Mothers' Union offers the love and hope of Christ, helping to transform communities through teaching, prayer, and pastoral care and by working with others to stop violence, injustice, and hunger.'**

**Stephen Cottrell,**  
Archbishop of York



## Annual Gathering in York

In September 2023, over 750 members and friends of Mothers' Union attended our Annual Gathering in York. We gathered from across Britain and Ireland to showcase the innovative ways Mothers' Union members respond to issues raised in and by their communities. From supporting new parents, running parent and toddler groups, helping the vulnerable, offering respite breaks for families in need, offering assistance and support to abused families and refugees – we do whatever communities need, when they need it.

Our Worldwide President, Sheran Harper, urged us to continue to focus on combating all forms of gender-based violence. The Bishop of Kensington, the Right Reverend Emma Ineson, our Central Chaplain, spoke of Mothers' Union's role as the largest volunteer network in the Anglican Communion. We are a bridge between the church and all communities, supporting families and local communities and supporting the church in the delivery of its mission.



Annual Gathering, York

## Away From It All breaks (AFIA)

Many MU dioceses across Britain and Ireland provide holidays, trips and outings to families who have experienced adversity, giving them much-needed respite and an opportunity to make happy memories. In 2023, Mothers' Union provided Away From It All breaks to over 2,000 children and 1,000 families. Members work with health visitors, social workers, teachers, clergy and anyone who has contact with families who would benefit from getting away from their difficult environments and enjoy time together.

Parents Polly and Simon lost their eight-year-old son Max, and their eldest boy was in and out of hospital for operations and appointments. An AFIA week by the sea gave them the break they desperately needed to stop, relax together and have fun as a family. The cupboards were filled with everything they needed and they were left activity books in case of bad weather.



Having fun on an AFIA holiday

Polly wrote afterwards in her thank you letter: 'I couldn't get over the kindness and generosity of all of the little special touches. I know Max would be smiling down at the kindness you have shown us. Many many thanks, prayers and best wishes.'

Mothers' Union's Diocese of Blackburn gave money to enable 75 teenagers to go on a Christian holiday. They had fun, fellowship and games, as well as Bible teaching and other faith-building exercises. For some it was the only holiday they had that year. Spending time with other Christians was important for many of them.

The Bishop of Blackburn said, 'It is at events like these that young people find faith, make lasting friendships and discover there are plenty of other young Christians. Without the financial help from MU this holiday couldn't have happened.'

### Our Mothers' Union holiday

A week by the sea  
A holiday for me  
For me and 5 offspring  
To go off exploring  
Many firsts to be had  
Many reasons to be glad  
Making memories we  
would treasure  
Enjoying kindness without measure  
We splashed in the pool  
On the dancefloor looking cool  
Winning toys in the arcade  
On the beach with  
bucket and spade  
A holiday like no other  
One not ruined by another  
A week for which I'm thankful  
A week for me, which was tranquil

A poem written by an AFIA parent recipient

**'Thank you so much for giving us this unforgettable holiday to cherish and remember for the rest of our lives! We can't even start to tell you how much it meant to us!'**

A parent who has benefited from an AFIA break

# Fundraising

## Thank you to our members and supporters

As we celebrate the life-changing, global impact Mothers' Union has made during 2023, we make time to appreciate the hard work so many people put into raising essential funds, which makes it all possible. This support comes in many different forms: from charitable trusts to members' events, from legacy gifts to online donations. Each one of these generous acts matter and, combined together, made our 2023 impact possible.

A huge thank you to everyone who has donated, run or attended an event, been part of our fundraising appeals or helped market the organisation in their local communities or on a bigger scale (such as those members who do radio interviews, send out press releases or speak at events).

During the year, the central charity continued to run a series of fundraising appeals, pushing forward its trust-funding programme and maintained its legacy marketing. It secured a significant investment grant, which has helped underpin the long-term transformation of Mothers' Union.

By far, the greatest fundraising efforts were from our membership. From supporting immediate needs locally to longer term transformational projects overseas, Mothers' Union members stepped up and delivered in some of the most creative, fun and engaging ways!

Passion and compassion are evident in every project, every conversation, and every smile we see among those we serve. It's not just the funding our members, supporters, partners and funders provide, but the spirit of unity and fellowship that makes our work so meaningful. Thank you.

**Mothers' Union members stepped up and delivered in some of the most creative, fun and engaging ways!**



## The Diocese of Birmingham's Prisons Project

Members of Knowle MU in the Diocese of Birmingham have been hard at work collecting gifts for the children of prisoners.

This annual campaign is part of Birmingham MU's Prisons Project, meaning that children who are visiting parents in prison over Christmas receive a gift from their parent. This helps to strengthen and normalise their relationships during the difficult period of separation.





# Summer of Hope

Our Summer of Hope appeal raised almost £100,000. Our members and supporters held fundraising events including tea and garden parties, sponsored silences and celebration events linked to the coronation of King Charles III.

Deb Lee, DP of Carlisle, pictured below, responded to the appeal – to turn hope into action – by taking on an epic fundraising challenge. She cycled 200 miles from St Bees Priory to the Annual Gathering in York. She raised over £2,370 and did over 4,500m of uphill cycling! Huge congratulations, Deb!



Rev Sheila Auld, aged 85, pictured right, completed a 400-mile journey to Sussex by local buses, to raise funds for AFIA. A priest and MU branch leader at St Gabriel's Heaton (Diocese of Newcastle), she used her pensioners' bus pass for the journey. She travelled up to eight hours a day for six days, staying overnight with MU members en route. In total she used 26 buses and finished at Chichester Cathedral where she met her sister. Her son John planned her itinerary, which included a day in Coventry to see the Cathedral and enjoy evensong.

She raised almost £3,000 for Away From It All breaks for families struggling with the cost of living. Sheila really enjoyed the challenge and saw many wonderful sights across the English countryside including Cathedrals, thatched roofs and lots of markets. 'I met wonderful characters as I travelled on, and though I was on my own, not once did I feel lonely. I was struck by how much kindness and care I was met with wherever I went.'



Our Summer of Hope appeal raised

**almost  
£100,000**

Bishop Kevin's Lent Appeal focused on raising money for Mothers' Union's Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway's AFIA programme.

The appeal was a huge success raising over

**£8,850**

## Campaigning

# 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

As part of the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence*, we ran our *No More 1 in 3* campaign to raise awareness of the fact that 1 in 3 women will suffer from some form of violence throughout their lifetime. Saturday 26th November was Mothers' Union's Global day of Action, where thousands of members across the world held special services in churches and cathedrals, prayer vigils, and marches.



Here are some of our members' activities:

### Diocese of Brisbane, Australia

Members held a protest on the steps of Brisbane Cathedral. Members joined protests and rallies and the work of the Bundaberg Branch was filmed and featured on the local television news.

### South Africa

Encouraged each diocese to create a video for TikTok to support the campaign.

### Diocese of Exeter

A Souls of Our Shoes Exhibition was held in Exeter Cathedral throughout the whole of the 16 Days of Activism. Branches did the Red Chair initiative and put up No More 1 in 3 displays with purple and white hearts in parishes across the diocese.



Members in South Africa protesting during the 16 Days



Demonstration, Bagnor Cathedral



# #NoMore1in3

Mothers UNION

End abuse and violence now

**Britain and Ireland:**

|                |           |            |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| All-Ireland    | Exeter    | Scotland   |
| Bath and Wells | Leeds     | Southwark  |
| Blackburn      | London    | Wales      |
| Chichester     | Rochester | Winchester |
| Durham         | Salisbury | Worcester  |

## Diocese of Blackburn

Members held a service in Blackburn Cathedral. They handed out information about domestic abuse to around 200 passers-by. They had a Souls of our Shoes exhibition at Lancaster Priory for three weeks, meaning thousands of people saw our work. They secured media coverage on Radio Lancashire.

Canada

Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

## Wales

Members held vigils in town centres, services were held in all cathedrals, with the lights turned purple.

North Eastern Caribbean

West Indies, Jamaica and Cayman Islands

Trinidad and Tobago

Aruba

## Trinidad and Tobago

Members organised drama presentations in schools about how to tackle and deal with GBV.

Buenos Aires

## Democratic Republic of Congo

Members gathered in one of their dioceses and held up RISE UP Against Domestic Abuse placards.

Ghana

Democratic Republic of the Congo

South Sudan

Rwanda

Burundi

Tanzania

South Africa

Islands of the Indian Ocean incl. Madagascar

Uganda

Kenya

## Myanmar

Held an event for the 16 Days of Activism in the Dioceses of Patheingyi and Pyaw Oo using the theme of RISE UP! The other dioceses held online services.

Myanmar

South Korea

## Papa New Guinea

Members took part in services and made small purple hearts.

Papua New Guinea

Brisbane, Australia

Auckland, New Zealand

## Diocese of Auckland, New Zealand

At St Andrew's Anglican Church in Kohimarama, a talented artist created an exhibit of nine pairs of shoes in front of the altar, representing the nine women who are killed every year in domestic violence incidents in New Zealand.

# Campaigning



## RISE UP Against Domestic Abuse campaign

At our Annual Gathering in September we launched our new campaign, RISE UP Against Domestic Abuse.

Our members fight tirelessly against domestic abuse and gender-based violence every single day, both in Britain and All Ireland and around the world.

The campaign was developed to raise awareness around domestic abuse and to give people the knowledge and skills to help support victims of domestic abuse with care and empathy.

It doesn't make us domestic abuse professionals, but it does teach us how to respond appropriately to a disclosure and ensure we know where to signpost a victim. Mothers' Union are working to ensure that as many churches as possible have information about their local domestic abuse helpline.

We have been overjoyed and humbled by how Mothers' Union members have embraced our RISE UP! campaign. Our members have distributed over 10,000 RISE UP! posters across Britain and Ireland with helpline numbers people can rip off and use.

The challenge is divided into three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. There are certain activities that branches or churches need to do to achieve each level, after which they will receive a certificate. To achieve a Bronze award, which is the foundation of the campaign, we are asking branches and churches to put up a RISE UP! poster in a public place, pray for those affected by domestic abuse and to make a link with their local refuge organisation to see what help they can offer. The Silver award includes reaching out to churches without a MU branch and talking about RISE UP!

to them. The Gold award includes organising events providing local people with an opportunity to engage with local leaders and MPs on domestic abuse issues.

We are thrilled that Mothers' Union groups around the world are also keen to take part in RISE UP! to encourage churches to tackle stigma and to create safe spaces to inform, unite and respond well to domestic violence.

**'On Sunday I received yet more donations from members of the congregation for the local women's refuge so that we could send another six moving-in bags... Something in this campaign has touched people's hearts and generated this caring response.'**

**A member from East Bergholt and Brantham branch, from the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.**

The letters of RISE UP! stand for:

**Respond**  
**Inform**  
**Support**  
**Empower**  
  
**Unite**  
**Pray**



Members, MSH staff, Bev Jullien CEO and Sheran Harper, WWP, campaigning in York





## International Women's Day

The theme for International Women's Day 2023 was **#EmbraceEquity**. The campaign highlighted that equal opportunities are no longer enough and the world needs to start talking about, and embracing, equity. For meaningful progress, gender equality needs to become gender equity.

Equity is at the heart of Mothers' Union. As a grassroots organisation, our members work in their communities, addressing concerns and problems at a local level. Each branch, diocese and province has to face different concerns, depending on a number of factors. A blanket approach to help would not work for everyone. As a global movement, we fully #EmbraceEquity and during the campaign we shared stories of how we do this through our work.

# #EmbraceEquity



## The Commission on the Status of Women 2023

Mothers' Union was in (virtual) attendance at the Commission on the Status of Women 2023 (CSW67), in March. The CSW is often described as the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and is a body of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). MU has 'consultative status' at ECOSOC, entitling us to attend the main sessions of the annual CSW as well as the parallel sessions run by NGOs.

We scaled down our presence this year because the priority theme, around technology and the digital age, was not as relevant as themes in previous years.

**We use our membership of international bodies like these to engage, inform and communicate with governments and decision makers on issues that matter to communities across the world.**

# Finances

We are pleased to report that 2023 saw the group generate an underlying operational surplus of £245,167. Investment gains built further on this operational surplus, resulting in a total reported surplus for the year of £314,563.

This was a better-than-anticipated outcome, given the ongoing general economic climate and a range of MU-specific challenges (arising from ongoing reductions in the number of members within Britain and Ireland and changing giving patterns).

It was also a necessary outcome, given our often-stated need to spend on systems, projects and initiatives that will help put the movement on a genuinely sustainable financial footing in the longer term.

The small growth in the free reserves of the group, arising from activity in the period, has left us better placed to adjust to economic fluctuations and better resourced to invest strategically.

The replacement of our existing CRM, which is now underway, is a key example of an essential systems investment that has been made possible thanks to the financial outcomes in recent years.

**An important feature of the year was strong growth in grant income, one driven in particular by a generous multi-year grant from the closing of St Denys Foundation.**

Growth in this income area and ongoing control of the cost base saw the group overcome significant challenges arising, including substantial general inflation, suppressed legacy giving and other income pressures arising from reductions in the number of active members within Britain & Ireland.

Income generated by Mary Sumner House also remains an area of significant challenge. 2023 saw continued recovery in income totals, but they remain well below pre-pandemic norms. The short, mid and long-term future of the building remains an area of active consideration by the Board of Trustees. Commercial property market conditions are currently depressed, so additional analysis is being undertaken to ensure the right decisions are made for the long term.

It is also pleasing to report that the balance sheet position of the group remains robust. The upfront receipt of a multi-year grant has seen both cash and deferred income balances swell significantly, but otherwise key balances are broadly comparable with previous year ends. Our financial foundations are therefore in good shape as we prepare to face the fresh challenges expected in 2024 and 2025.

The group generated an underlying operational surplus of

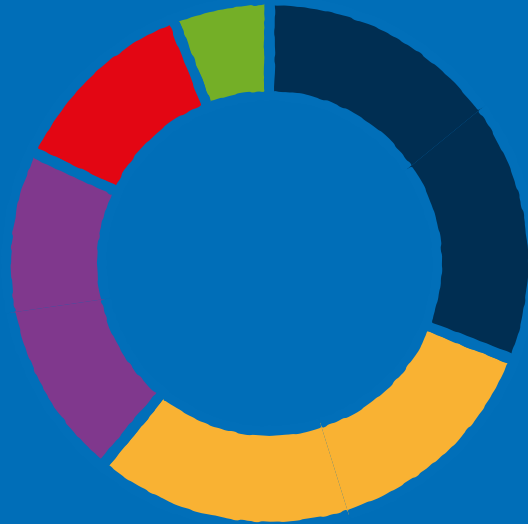
**£245,167**

The groups total reported surplus for the year. incl. investment gains, was

**£314,563**

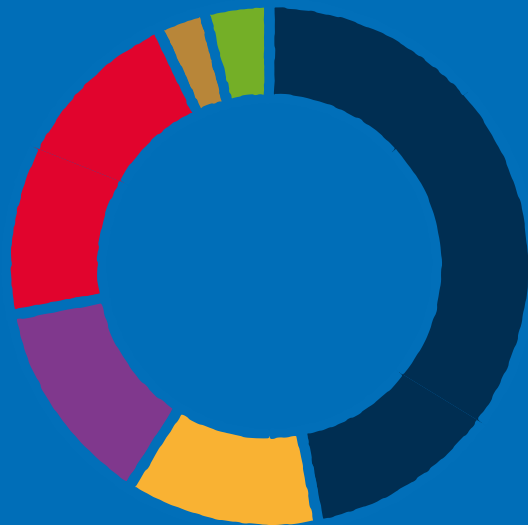






## Income

|                              |                  |       |
|------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Subscriptions & Affiliations | 819,275          | 31%   |
| Donations & Events           | 779,322          | 30%   |
| Grants                       | 551,473          | 21%   |
| Investments and Rental       | 315,914          | 12%   |
| Other income                 | 453              | 0.01% |
| Net Trading Outcome          | 157,319          | 6%    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>2,623,756</b> |       |



## Expenditure

|                   |                  |     |
|-------------------|------------------|-----|
| Program work      | 1,111,563        | 47% |
| Faith and Worship | 279,563          | 12% |
| Campaigning       | 311,928          | 13% |
| Membership        | 491,819          | 21% |
| Governance        | 68,541           | 3%  |
| Fundraising       | 115,175          | 5%  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>2,378,589</b> |     |

## We asked...

**What does being a Mothers' Union member mean to you?**

*'It is an amazing feeling of being a member of a truly strong community of Christians.'*

*'It makes my life have more meaning and purpose.'*

*'It's a beautiful way to share the love of Jesus in my community and beyond!'*

*'It is wonderful to know you are part of so many people working to serve their fellow men and women and so serve God.'*

Thank you to everyone who helped support the transformational work of Mothers' Union during 2023.

Please get in touch and get involved:

**020 7222 5533**

**mothersunion.org**

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Mothers' Union members in Ghana

'Let us not  
become weary in  
doing good, for at  
the proper time  
we will reap  
a harvest if we  
do not give up.'

Galatians 6:9