

## Home and Overseas March 2018

If you read the list of charities that the MWA is supporting this year you might be wondering why the oddly named Gogo Olive, which is based in Orkney, is on the list.

Back in 2014 I was on holiday in Orkney with my family. One day we decided to visit the smaller island of Westray to see the puffins. Next to the ferry there was an inviting looking craft shop which drew me in! I was taken by the display of beautifully knitted african animals and I bought a zebra for my daughter. There were two tags in its ear, one with its name and one with the name of the lady who had knitted it.



When I returned to the holiday cottage I did some research into the charity that had made the zebra. The name comes from the Zimbabwe word for grandmother, gogo, and olive for hope. Gogo Olive was set up in late 2008 as a response to the huge unemployment problem in Zimbabwe (it currently stands at around 97%), at a time when conditions in the country were particularly difficult. As well as creating employment for local women the aim is to give them hope as they have the opportunity to use their craft skills to build a future for themselves and their families. The vision is to enable Zimbabwean women to journey into the fullness of life for which God created them.

Knitting was chosen as it only requires basic materials and can be done anywhere and at anytime, which suits the lifestyle of a Zimbabwean woman! They began as a small group of 6 women and following the success of this group they have expanded to involve more ladies and work alongside different groups to try and support as many women as possible. There are now around 80 knitters from four different projects in 3 different areas of Zimbabwe.

One of the area that I find particularly interesting is the work done in the Mutare Remand Prison. A prison visitor had seen the women prisoners knitting using bits of wire, so Gogo Olive starting looking at how we could work together. They began by teaching a group of prison officers how to knit and they now teach the females inmates. This has become part of their rehabilitation as it gives them a positive focus and a way which they can continue to support their families while in prison. Each

week they visit the prison for a time of worship and fellowship together. Many of the prisoners have since been released and Gogo Olive have been able to offer them continued employment which has helped them to reintegrate back into society.

I do hope that you agree with me that this is a very worthwhile project for the MWA to support. Please look at their website and perhaps buy one of their wonderful animals.

Sr. Elisabeth Hollindrake (Horton circle)

