

Holy Entrepreneurship: The Entrepreneurial Skills of the Missionary

Testimony by Sr. Anne Falola, OLA



Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles OLA

Founded in Lyon, France in
1876 by P. Augustine
Planque, SMA

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**Almost 150 years of
continuous missionary
service to Africa.**

The vision that guided our
founder, **P. Augustine
Planque (SMA)**, was the zeal
to see God's Kingdom
expand in Africa.



Primary Evangelization, Education, Health, Pastoral Work, Social Development, Promotion of Justice and Peace, Inter-religious Dialogue.... Always with special attention for the most vulnerable, particularly women and children.... All these commitments are rooted in our desire to proclaim the Good News, so Pastoral Commitment is an integral part of all activities –

‘To know and love God, in order to make God known and loved’

Why do we do what we do?

- The major motivating factors for Business entrepreneur are profit, fame and domination
- So, what motivates us as missionaries?

**For us Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, our
motivation is:**

**‘To know and love God, in order
to make God known and loved’**

**I invite each listener to ask himself or herself this crucial question:
Why do I do what I am doing? Why am I a missionary?**

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Share Concretely some Insights which I have found personally helpful and the experience of my Congregation on a specific mission project:

- **Bugisi in Tanzania** - A small rural mission which was handed over to the OLA Sisters in 1994 with a small Clinic, having one basic small ward with no structures on ground. Today it is a very large mission providing many valuable services. These include:
 1. **A fully fledged Health Centre** with many outreach programmes to the surrounding villages and rendering many high quality and affordable health services including HIV test and treat for thousands of patients, maternity services, in-patient, out-patient, eye treatment camps...
 2. **A Women Development Centre** which has directly benefited over 5, 000 young women with life skills / cookery, hospitality business skills, knitting, sewing, soap-making, batik designing, etc. Also with outreach to surrounding villages. The Centre has been upgraded and registered to a Vocational Training level with official certificate, today serving mainly young women but also young men.
 3. **An English-medium Nursery & Primary School** providing quality education in a rural area, serving many of the surrounding villages. Founded in 2013, now it has almost 400 pupils.
 4. **Oil Pressing Mill** to help the farmers in the locality to process their harvest by processing the Sunflower oils for them.

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In 25 years a little village mission is transformed into a hive of activities transforming the lives of many - What factors have contributed to this success?

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The Church is called to break away from the comfortable mentality and embrace the missionary spirituality of going to the ends of the earth like the early missionaries. To what extent is an **'entrepreneurial mindset'** helpful for evangelization? (Pont. Univ. of Holy Cross)

Missionaries, especially women **religious**, over the years have displayed great entrepreneurial skills working not only as evangelizers but also leading the way in the transforming mission of the Church in the world....



The Management Team of
Our Lady of Apostles
Bugisi Health Centre
Tanzania

Here are some insights coming from our own missionary experience on how we can manage our Institutions:

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1. Strategic Planning and Regular Evaluation

- ✓ The Bugisi mission like all our missionary projects especially in Tanzania has benefitted immensely from a good strategic planning, on-going evaluation and reflection.
- ✓ Time and resources invested in meetings for good planning and reflection is important.
- ✓ Such programmes can benefit from outside facilitator and expertise of others who can help us enhance our organizational skill and team spirit.



This is an element that is often lacking among missionaries, especially in Africa.

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2. The Courage to start small

- With focus on Primary evangelization, our mission usually take us to poor communities, where the people have no access to basic needs.
- In Bugisi, everything started small. The Women Centre started in 1994 in a borrowed classroom.
- The important thing is to discern the needs of the people and start on a small scale to respond with whatever little resources we can gather.
- This picture is a small project started outside the camp of the Internally Displaced Persons to teach them some skills to survive in the Abuja 'Maria centre' where they came to seek refuge.



Starting small keeps the missionary flexible, passionate and enthusiastic
– entrepreneurial attitude.

It is a dangerous trend when missionaries lose their pioneering spirit and want everything prime and proper with established structures to carry out their mission – our entrepreneurial spirit is tested when we build from scratch.

Never be afraid to start small...but keep the vision alive

3. Risk Taking / Apostolic Audacity

- ‘With the audacity of the Apostles, we commit our lives to the service of the Gospel, ready to risk all for the sake of the Gospel’. (OLA Const.)



- Business entrepreneur are experts at taking risks...
- We as followers of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit must have the courage to venture into the unknown with trust and enthusiasm.



With courage venturing into the camp of the victims of violence conflicts – Displaced Persons by Boko Haram....

4. Be Ready to Respond to new Challenges

- It is important to be open and courageous to respond to new challenges. In Bugusi, in the past 26 years, the Sisters keep reflecting on the new challenges and respond accordingly....
 - The Women Centre Needed to be upgraded to become a Polytechnic, so that the women would get good jobs after graduation.
 - The Health Centre needed expansion, HIV services, eye camp, etc.
 - Oil Press Machine was set up for the villagers....
 - There was a need for an English medium Primary school

- The reality challenges us never to be static, but to respond to emerging needs with faith and courage.

**Missionaries, like good entrepreneurs,
must be attentive to the signs of the times.**

5. Updating with new Skills

- ✓ On-going training is an important aspect of today's mission. Many of us are not able to respond to new challenges, because we have not renewed ourselves both spiritually and professionally.
- ✓ Updating can be informal by taking time to read, by sharing with peers, taking short courses and acquiring new skills.
- ✓ The important thing is to be open to learning always.



6. Keep the Eyes on the Ball - Stay Focused

- What is the focus of your mission? It is easy to get distracted by the trending issues and follow the crowd.



For us, we give priority to **women and girls in vulnerable situations** and we seek to empower them to live a more dignified life. What is the focus of your own mission?



Staying true to your goal *charism* affirms your identity.

7. Build Simple Relationships with the People



Mission is not simply about the big projects.... but more importantly how we touch people's lives, - **Missionaries are people oriented**
What memories of us do the people we serve carry in their hearts?

8. Equip People - Leave Legacy

- One of my main sources of joy and satisfaction is when I look at the number of people, especially women, which OLA Sisters have educated, cared for and trained in Africa in our over 140 year engagement.
- People of all faiths and cultures can identify with a legacy which improves the quality of their lives. In some cases, it touches on many generations who identify with these values.
- *It is good we each ask ourselves, what legacy does our mission leave with the people?*
- *What transformation takes place in the society as a result of our mission?*



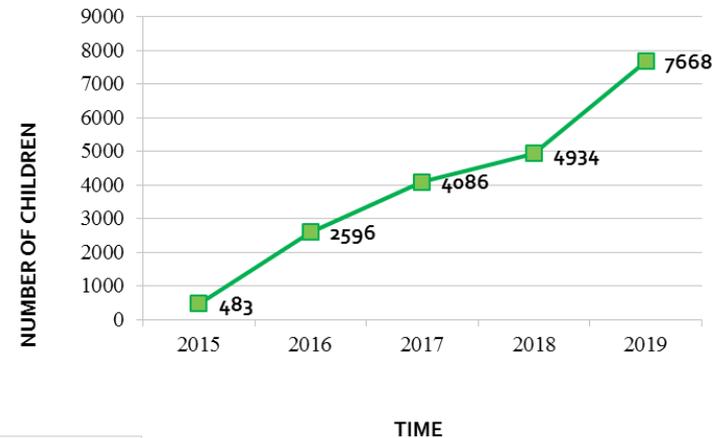
9. Patience Perseverance – Continuity

- In an era of quick results, how many of us are willing to patiently and painstakingly work for decades to develop a project.
- To build a legacy, even in business, entrepreneurship is a work of diligent perseverance over the years.
- As Religious we have the privilege of being part of a chain, there have been people before us, we contribute our part and we move on, another comes and continues.
- We have to ensure this continuity through adequate planning:
- In the case of Bugisi, the 3 Sisters (Anne, Regina and Lucy) who started the mission might have left, but there is continuity--- Those managing the project today add their gifts

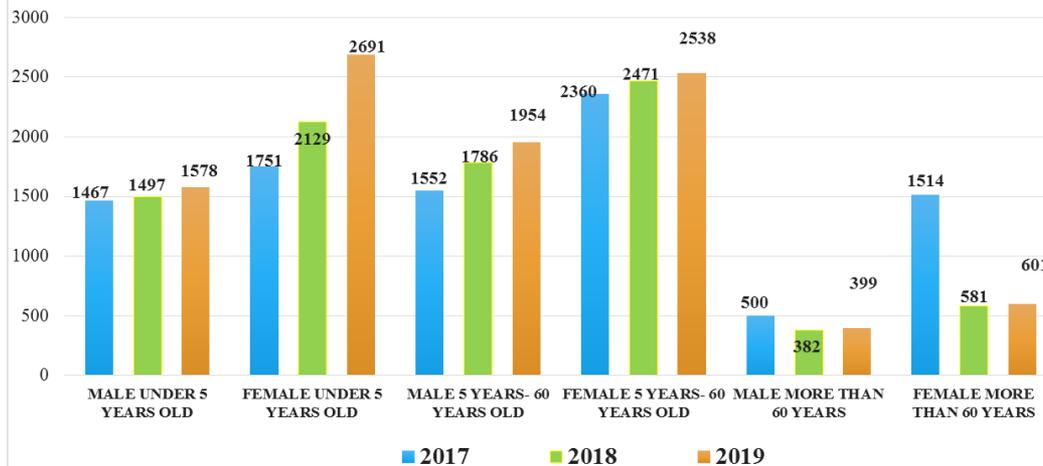
10. Good Record Keeping.....

- ✓ As missionaries and entrepreneurs, we have to be accountable and transparent. Our records are very useful reflection of the effectiveness of our work.
- ✓ This also serves as encouragement to those who donate funds for the projects.

ANNUAL IMMUNIZATION REPORT FROM 2015-2019



New Out Patients Attendees from 2017-2019



Records from OLA Health Centre Bugisi

11. Be **Connected** to the concrete needs of the people

- As missionaries, we connect to the real needs of the people and not simply implement our ready-made agenda.
- The success of our projects is determined by the ability to connect to the people, e.g. If they need water to drink, starting a school might not be well received.
- In Bugisi, an Oil Press was a more urgent necessity, because it provided income and livelihood for the people.
- In the IDP camp, setting up a tent for new arrivals and giving food was more important than building a school.



Holy Entrepreneurs are people oriented and realists.

12. Team Building & Networking

No one has all the answers.... We need others; we work together and reach out to other groups.



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13. Promote Volunteering

- ❑ The OLA Mission in Bugisi has greatly benefited from the expert services of volunteers, especially from Ireland.
- ❑ Today, volunteering is one of the many ways of living out the missionary vocation.
- ❑ People donate money and their time for a worthwhile project. We owe it to them to organize and appreciate their generosity .

**Eye Camp -
Medicine given
For 246 persons
with Eye
complaints
In June 2019**



**German Volunteers with the Families with the
OLA Sisters at the IDP Camp in Abuja,
Nigeria.**

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Mission is not an event,
It is not attained as a once and for all
achievement.
It is a **continuous engagement**
with reality;
It is **journeying**
not simply arriving;
It is **questioning**,
not providing a simple answer;
It is **searching**,
not finding a once and for all solution.

Anne Falola, OLA
New Springtime of Mission
Mission Today from an African Perspective

