The Diocese of Shyira in northern Rwanda was established on the 20th January, 1984 as the third Diocese of the Anglican Church in the country after Kigali and Butare. The Anglican presence in the region is historical as the first missionaries arrived here before spreading to other parts of Rwanda.

First established at Shyira hill by Anglican Church missionaries in the 1930s, where the diocese would later acquire its name, the diocese grew and became one of the most dynamic in the 12 dioceses of the Anglican Church of Rwanda covering four districts of Burera, Gakenke, Musanze and part of Nyabihu.

Rt. Rev. Dr Mugisha Mugiraneza Samuel, the Bishop of Shyira Diocese explains that the Anglican Communion in northern Rwanda became unique and dynamic because of its historical impact. The region that can be referred to as the Bible belt was the first to receive the Anglican missionaries.

Rt. Rev. Dr Mugisha Mugiraneza Samuel, the Bishop of Shyira Diocese

This history laid a firm foundation of the Anglican Church in this region that saw thousands convert and remain strong in building faith, constructed churches in the diocese together with developmental activities.

There are now 78 Ordained Pastors, 23 deacons, 13 Evangelists and 341 Catechists working in 66 parishes, 16 Sub-parishes and 341 local churches with a population of 107,302 church members.

With the mission of holistic evangelism in Jesus Christ, the Diocese of Shyira is guided by values of love, truth, integrity, enthusiasm and complementarity. To reach its targets the work of the diocese is based on four fundamental pillars; Evangelism, Education, Health and social transformation.

EVANGELISM

The vision of the Diocese of Shyira is transforming people into Jesus Christ disciples to disciple others. To achieve this vision the diocese executes its evangelical activities organized through structures like Archdeaconries, Mothers' Union, Community Bible Study and Church community Mobilization Program.

The archdeaconry plays an intermediate role between the diocese and parishes

bringing together parishes, sub-parishes and local churches. To promote the wellbeing of families, in 1998 Shyira Diocese introduced the Mothers Union which aims at demonstrating the Christian faith in action by the transformation of communities through the nurture of the family in its many forms. With 4,263 women members in the Church who increase every year this program has registered many achievements like empowering Christians based marriages, educating children Christian life, family development and assist families with various problems.

To empower evangelism and socio-economic development in Christians, the Diocese of Shyira introduced Community Bible Study which is conducted at different levels.

According to Bishop Samuel, the vision of the diocese is to preach the gospel and make everybody a follower of Christ through learning the word and be transformed both spiritually and physically for the glory of God. However, given Rwanda's past the church designed four pillars to which the ministry should be based on to enable preaching the gospel to communities.

EDUCATION

"Our biggest intervention is in education, of course as a church we do evangelism but that's more on a Sunday and then we do the follow-up of evangelism through education and that's why we have so many schools," notes Bishop Samuel. "We provide support through compassion projects providing school fees, food and medical care."

The Diocese considers education as a cornerstone to the development of the nation and opted to a mutual cooperation with the government of Rwanda by strengthening this sector starting from pre-primary, primary, secondary and University Education.

Today, the diocese has 53 schools: 36 Primary Schools, 8 Nine-YBE, (3 Twelve –YBE) 3-Secondary Boarding Schools, two private schools and one college (MIPC).

The Sonrise School, one of the private was opened to help orphans and less

privileged children when the country was reconstructing after 1994 Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi. The School is located in Musanze District includes a primary school created in 2001, a high school in opened 2005 while the nursery started operating in 2016.

The school operates both categories of boarding and day scholars' students and today is among the best schools in the country offering scientific options. The educational mission at Sonrise has set the standard for academic excellence and servant leadership, while at the same time, demonstrating that with love and education, even the country's poorest of the poor children are redeemable and can be developed into future leaders of Rwanda. Sonrise has become "A Light on a Hill" and a demonstration to all of Rwanda as to what is possible.

Muhabura Integrated Polytechnic College (MIPC) was opened to offer technical and professional skills at high school and University levels. MIPC also located in Musanze District, was established by the Diocese of Shyira motivated by an intention to live and breathe the spirit of entrepreneurship by offering services in response to the demand on the labour market. One example is to provide a flexible range of courses, from short courses, refresher courses, to a full-fledged program leading to the academic awards. MIPC is accredited to offer programs grouped into two Categories: Secondary school Level (TSS) and Advanced Diploma Level (A1).

There are 198 pre-school/day care centres engaged with 17,901 with 311 Caregivers in all Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres. 33 of them are under one egg program; plus four at Butandi, Nganzo, Kimonyi and Buhuga health centres.

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Program support children in critical early years providing holistic access to early learning and stimulation, good nutrition, good health, hygiene and protection.

The diocese provides ECD services to Children in the line with government policies of caring them so that they can grow with Rwandan values and enough basic skills and attitude that help them to build the future nation.

ECD services are focused on early learning and brain stimulation, good nutrition, health, sensitization of water, hygiene and sanitation, child protection and positive

parenting. The diocese also ensures that all children from every ECD Centre are learning God’s word and do worship. They know that they are special creation of God who loves them in the same.

The Bishop of Shyira notes that they also started the one egg programme in prisons where they provide eggs to children of prisoners because these children are not able to get such proteins while their parents are still in prison.

HEALTHCARE

The objective of health services in Diocese of Shyira is to focus on health promotion and prevention, improve quality, safety and performance of primary health care system.

The diocese has built health facilities like health posts, health centres, and hospital. Shyira Hospital located in Nyibuhu District was built by Anglican Church missionaries, first as a dispensary in 1930 and was later upgraded to a hospital by the diocese.

Bishop Samuel says that they have worked hand in hand with the Local Government in all the Archdeaconries where they have paid for members of the local community with Health Insurance (Mituelle de Sante).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Rwanda is heading into a sustainable economy which requires sustainable projects that can financially support the diocese to run its various projects and programmes smoothly. For the effectiveness of evangelism, various programmes and opportunities to support the category of Christians who are low economically have been initiated.

Some of these programmes include Compassion international, and saving and credit association. In order to create opportunities, the diocese decided to create some jobs which do not require academic qualification by starting with low economical Christians.

Saving and Credit Association helps invest in the dreams of families in the world’s underserved communities as they proclaim and live the gospel. Hope international

works to empower men and women to break the cycles of physical and spiritual poverty through discipleship, biblically based training, savings services, and small loans.

The diocese also initiates income generating activities that provide services to the diocese as well as generate revenues to fund other activities. For example the Garden Place Hotel which has been in operation since January 2015. It offers different services including accommodation, restaurant, conference service and outside catering.

In the implementation of rapid development of the population, the Diocese of Shyira has built business infrastructures in Musanze District and intends to extend those activities in its surroundings. Nova Complex Market is a business building inaugurated in 2013, it is composed of 36 rooms including shops and offices.

Enthusiastic about development and passionate about changing people’s lives, Bishop Samuel observes that the diocese is instrumental in the development of Musanze and the northern region in general. The diocese is also part of the Joint Action Development Forum of the district which plans, initiate and promote development programs in the district.