

## TANZANIA 2019

This year, the clinical team for OMPACO's 2019 trip to Tanzania was made up of Martha Collins M.D., M.P.H. (Former president of OMPACO), Nilofer Naqvi Ph.D. (Psychologist) and Dani Martino M.A. (Graduate Research Assistant). They were assisted by Ms. Veronika Sarwatt, logistics manager.

The OMPACO team gathered in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on the weekend of July 7 and got right to work preparing for the weeks ahead. This included going through the suitcase of school supplies and toys prepared by Gwen Bertrand, MA, Board member and special needs educator at CASE. This entailed sorting items for three schools and packing them for later delivery. After arriving on Sunday night, the team departed on Monday morning for Mwanza, for the launch of the mobile phone training and multi-day child evaluations and a family consultation workshop.

On Tuesday, July 9, the team arrived at Village of Hope (resident community and school for chronically ill and abandoned children) in Nyegezi Corner, Mwanza, for OMPACO's second mobile phone launch on autism knowledge. Special educators and caregivers from the Mwanza area gathered at the school to take part in the interactive training. After a short demonstration by Nilofer, the participants were able to begin the virtual training using their own mobile devices. Dani, Nilofer and Martha were present to help answer questions and smooth out other difficulties for individual teachers during their trial run. The training was received very well; all were enthusiastic about the chance to obtain important knowledge about autism from the convenience of their phones.

On Wednesday morning the team returned to Village of Hope to begin the psychological testing and physical examinations of children referred by parents, caregivers and teachers. After the first day of consultations were complete, Martha, Nilofer and Dani had met with 15 children and their families- a very productive start to the workshop! Nilofer and Dani departed for Arusha the next day to distribute the prizes from last year's mobile phone training, while Martha stayed in Mwanza to continue with the consultations through Friday. At the end of the workshop, the OMPACO team was able to provide consultations for 40 children. Among the children seen were a variety of problems including chronic epilepsy, intellectual disability (ID), hearing loss, Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorders, results of cerebral malaria in early childhood (intellectual disability, problems resembling autism [(ASD)] and later effect of high levels of bilirubin in newborn babies (I.D.). Many of the children had already been seen and treated for these conditions and remain in the care hospitals or dispensaries in the area.

Nilofer and Dani arrived at Arusha Makumbusho Primary school on the morning of July 14 and met with the ten jackpot winners from OMPACO's first mobile phone launch in 2018. The prizes were computer tablets that Nilofer and Dani preloaded with educational autism material for the teachers to use as a guide in their classrooms. The teachers graciously accepted the tablets and eagerly began familiarizing themselves with the autism resources. After the prize distribution, Nilofer and Dani met with Eunice Elibariki, the Arusha City District special needs director. Eunice said that the teachers spoke very fondly about the previous year's autism training and she expressed interest in future collaborations with OMPACO.

After a short stay in Arusha, Nilofer and Dani traveled east to the mountains of Lushoto, Tanzania, where the 16th Biennial International Association for Special Education (IASE) Conference was held from July 14-17. It was a busy but exciting three days as Nilofer and Dani had the opportunity to share OMPACO's research with delegates from 27 countries!

On Monday, Nilofer presented on the combined 2016-2018 results from OMPACO's face-to-face trainings in Dar, Mwanza, & Arusha. Eunice was also present at the conference and was able to describe her continued support of OMPACO and the project. On Tuesday, Nilofer, Dani, & Eunice gave a presentation on OMPACO's 2018 Mobile Phone project in Arusha. Both presentations were a success and the autism trainings attracted a great deal of interest from attendees around the world. Notably, many teachers from Tanzania who were at the conference approached Nilofer to express their interest in OMPACO's trainings, which was very promising for the expansion of future trainings within the country!

The team was reunited in Arusha on July 18 at the Medical Missionaries of Mary Conference and Retreat Center in Ngarmtoni outside Arusha Town. Nilofer and Dani shared the details of their conference experience with Martha and Vero who in the meantime had been busy in Arusha visiting the Autism Unit at Makumbusho Primary School. They attended a meeting with the teachers, learning about their current activities with their students (now numbering 47), addressing the difficulty of fewer teachers (only 5) this year and sharing with the teachers learning and play materials for the students. The current Headteacher gave them a list of items which they reported are "hard to come-by" with hopes we might be able to help. These items are basically meant to be used in a Center for Evaluation, part of the planning for this Unit. They also mentioned how happy the teachers were who received the computer tablets for doing so well on the mobile phone project.

Because the original plan for Martha and Vero to visit Dareda Hospital fell through, they stayed on in Arusha with the MMM's and met with friends from Dareda there. The package of school supplies for the special needs class at Patrick Winter School in Dareda was delivered by friends.

On July 19, Nilofer and Dani said their goodbyes and departed for the long flight home.

Back in Dar es Salaam, Martha and Vero visited Msimbazi Mseto Primary School's special unit for children on the spectrum on July 23. They also saw five more children who were either new to the School or looking for admission to it. Of the five children seen, 2 were diagnosed with ASD; 2 with ID secondary to seizures not well treated and one child with ASD and seizures (epilepsy).

The acting Headteacher met with them and described the problems arising from fewer teachers at the Unit and cutbacks in funds for various activities.

On July 24, Martha and Vero visited the Autism Unit at Mbuyuni Primary School in Dar es Salaam. They met with the Headteacher of the school and the Headteacher of the unit.

There were four students in the classroom, all on the spectrum and all boys. There was a fine interaction between teachers and students and even between the students, one helping his peer under the supervision of the teacher. The teachers took time to sit with them and discuss their pressing needs, e.g. materials for classroom and unit in general and transport for students. They also asked about on-going seminars for the teachers in all 4 Dar es Salaam Districts , remembering the ones OMPACO did in the past.

On July 27, Martha left Dar es Salaam for home.

It was a busy but very successful trip for OMPACO! The second launch of the mobile phone training, family consultations, child evaluations, visits to three Schools and presentations at the IASE conference were received well by all. Teachers, parents and conference attendees expressed their eagerness for future trainings and offered their continued support of OMPACO.