

Special Report

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I'm exhausted but will struggle on: Nun

● From page 10

On the 170 children in the eight kindergartens, Sister Dorothy said a quarter of them are over-aged and have never been to school. What is rewarding to her is that children from the kindergartens are able to continue their education in government primary schools in Paitan and Kota Marudu.

"This is my greatest joy. Without these tadikas, many of them will never step into a school. However, most of them could only attend classes up to Primary Five due to age factor. In other words, over aged children have been given special permission by the Ministry of Education to attend classes up to Primary Five only.

"It works like this. Those who join the kindergarten at the age of seven will on completion be admitted to Primary Two and then continue until Primary Five.

"Similarly, those who come at the age of eight will be in Primary Three the following year. Some even jump to Primary Five immediately after kindergarten because they are already eleven years old by then," she explained.

While describing the work in Paitan as great, Sister Dorothy lamented that there are too few people performing the work.

"I am exhausted but I will struggle on," she said, adding her weekends are dedicated to Sunday school classes for the kindergarten children.

Asked on the perils of river trips, she related a particular incident two months ago.

"Occasionally, we may spot a crocodile with its mouth wide open and lying by the river bank. But on that day, from a distance, the boatman saw something floating in the middle of the Paitan River and thought it was a piece of timber.

"Suddenly, the head of a crocodile emerged as we proceeded and the boat almost hit it. Quickly the boatman diverted the boat. Praise the Lord!" she said, adding she had a rosary with her.

The fifth of 10 siblings, Sister Dorothy received her early education at St Theresa's Primary School and later attended St Martin's Secondary School. Subsequently, she joined RIMA College in the Federal capital to pursue a two-year diploma course in Childhood Education. In the early 2000s, she was awarded a full scholarship from the Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia for a three-year degree course in Early Childhood Education.

She also helped set up the San Damiano Hostel in Kiulu in 1991 for needy boys and girls attending Form One to Form Five classes at SMK Tun Fuad. She was a part-time lecturer in early childhood education at the AMC from 2008 to 2009 under the auspices of the Association of Childcare Centre Services, Sabah (PPTS). — MC



Sister Dorothy's humble house at Kg Sufit, Paitan, where she operates her mission. Teacher's quarters is next door.



Sister Dorothy (right in background) with her pupils outside the Tadika Ceria Sonsogon Magandai in Kota Marudu.

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— Sr Dorothy



Sister Dorothy receiving her award from Dr Maximus. At right is the new President of the Rotary Club of Likas Bay, L.A.