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Mothers' Union has much to celebrate this year, as it looks back over 140 years of *faith in action* and reflects on the positive impact members through the generations have had as they reach out to people in Christ's name.

Britain and Ireland are the focus of our exhibition in the Mary Sumner room. We have just over 70,000 members in the five provinces here.

Birthplace of Mothers' Union in 1876, Mothers' Union is well established as a ministry, a charity and a volunteer force in many parishes. For the first time in many years we are able to show just how much work the members here do to strengthen family life. Dioceses have been giving Mary Sumner House quantitative, as well as qualitative information about the activities they've been doing at the local level which benefit people in the wider community.



**UK & Ireland members raised £1 Million for Mothers' Union's wider work
They helped over 60,000 beneficiaries in 2015
And reached out to nearly 12,000 prisoners and their families**

Members here run a wide variety of local projects to meet the specific needs of families in their area. Alongside specialisms such as running parenting groups, marriage preparation, prison volunteering or providing holidays or days out, members volunteer in child contact centres, support young adults in school or universities, visit those in hospital, and make thousands of items to improve the well-being of children and vulnerable adults. Fellowship and friendship are not only important to members in their own areas, but a key part of the vital prayer support networks that ensure our whole organisation all over the world is prayed for effectively.

Focus on Africa

There are Mothers' Union branches across 26 countries in Africa, with some countries being so enormous they encompass several provinces! Membership here is vast and often incalculable, with women attending branches far from provincial hubs, and language barriers hampering good reporting. Nevertheless we know from our coordinators that from West to East, from North to South our membership is growing. Work here is hugely diverse, but always with the same aim – ending the disadvantages that many community members face, and meeting their spiritual and physical needs. Over the past couple of years, as some provinces become self-sufficient financially, central funding has been successfully redirected, with new emerging relationships and growth in places such as Namibia, West Africa, Ethiopia and Indian Ocean Mothers' Unions such as Madagascar and the Seychelles. Ending dependency is key to ensuring every £1 raised in the UK helps the maximum number of people.



Top: groups facilitated by Mothers' Union in Zambia are helping families become less dependent on external aid. Bottom: Welcoming the Worldwide President.

Did you know?

Many of the Mothers' Union's across Africa were established by Anglican missionaries in the early 20th century. Mothers' Union was a true mission-sending agency, and worked closely with the Anglican Church and other denominations by responding to requests to recruit and send specifically women missionaries to serve as nurses, midwives and teachers, with a remit to improve the lives of women and help grow the emerging Churches. Our Community Development Coordinators today continue to take on that role, developing Mothers' Unions and equipping them for service.

Salt and Light in Asia



Top: Training new parenting facilitators, Myanmar 2016. Bottom: 90th Anniversary of Mothers' Union South Korea, 2015.

With the exception of Thailand, Christianity is the minority religion in every country in Asia where Mothers' Union operates. But a close working relationship with the Churches, means Mothers' Union is able to operate really effectively, being a key partner in the mission work in India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Korea. Members here are active and growing, putting their faith into action in a wide-variety of projects: caring for the elderly, offering theological leadership training to women in the Church, providing for those on the margins of their society – particularly Diaspora communities – and running education and vocational opportunities for children. In South Korea, for example, membership is divided into three distinct age groups, with each group taking on their own projects.

In all countries in this region, Mothers' Union members take the lead in leading Bible-studies and equipping women to lead worship.

Did you know?

India was one of the earliest places to adopt Mothers' Union. After Mary Sumner spoke to Army wives at the Aldershot Barracks in 1888, women began to spread branches wherever they were posted in India. By 1915 there were branches throughout India, and Mothers' Union literature was being produced in the vernacular. Brides' Schools were established, supported by the Overseas Fund, to educate young girls not only in homecraft and marriage, but giving reading, writing and cooking lessons too. Today the Women's Fellowship for Christian Service is affiliated to Mothers' Union and has over 1 million members. They continue to undertake marriage preparation – working with couples.

Growth in the Americas

Mothers' Union has had a presence in Canada and the West Indies since the late 1880s, with Guyana and USA only a couple of decades later. But did you know that membership is growing rapidly in South America? AMARE, which stands for "Anglican Women's Group Renewed in the Spirit". AMARE brings together women speaking different local languages and encourages them to make a commitment to practical ways of showing love in the family, in church and in their communities. AMARE is giving women here a purpose and identity in Christ.

In two years the membership has leapt from 50 to 800 members and is leading "a quiet revolution of love in action."



"We are seeing a shift from them being the receivers, the poor, the oppressed, to being women with something to give." Founding women of AMARE: Catherine Le Tissier, Mirna Paolo, Alberta Cristano.

Oceania



*Top: Provincial Presidents of Oceania
Bottom: Members in Tonga, including the Princess of Tonga, with Lynne Tembey*

Membership here encompasses both the westernised Mothers' Unions in Australia and New Zealand, and the indigenous Mothers' Union's in Aotearoa, Polynesia, Melanesia and Papua New Guinea. Gender-based violence and gender inequality, travel and communication difficulties and poor health and education infrastructures ensure Mothers' Unions are kept busy: Provision of child-care, community health education on HIV/AIDS and TB and raising awareness of gender-based violence are activities PNG and Melanesia are volunteering in. Australia and New Zealand continue to reach out to families going through difficult times.