

## IHMs IN ACTION



When Sister Marie-Esther Haflett, IHM, Ph.D., wrote to the president of Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) in Kampala, Uganda, to inquire about joining the faculty, he responded immediately.

"We need you," he wrote back. "Your letter was sent by God."

UMU had been open for only three years when Sister Marie-Esther, who holds a doctorate degree in economics, arrived in 1996, and it had just two academic departments. She has been integral to its growth, serving in many capacities during the 12 years of her current ministry.

Sister Marie-Esther has served as the registrar and the dean of business administration. As dean of science, she set up the faculties of science, math, statistics, computer science and economics. She is currently an associate professor on the faculty of science and teaches several classes each semester.

"Our enrollment is steadily increasing," Sister Marie-Esther says. "When UMU opened in 1993, 84 students were enrolled. Now we have about 800 on campus and another 8,000 in outreach programs throughout Uganda.

"Young people are thirsting for education, and they receive a good one at UMU. It's very rare that one of our graduates can't find a job."

In order to help her students learn, Sister Marie-Esther has even made booklets for them.

"Books are so expensive here, and not all students can afford them," Sister Marie-Esther explains. "I make booklets summarizing the course information for them to use as study guides."

Although Sister Marie-Esther faces challenges from living so far from other members of the IHM community (the nearest IHM Sisters are in South Africa, about 3,500 miles away), the Ugandan people and her students provide ongoing examples of the liberating message of Jesus.

"Ugandans make a real effort to reach out to others," she notes. "They're extremely friendly and helpful.

"For instance, the students have a 'Good Samaritan Community.' They're currently helping to support a widowed mother with 10 children, working with the family to plant a garden for food and providing other acts of kindness for the family.

"When northern Uganda flooded this year, the students helped collect money, food and clothes for a UN group assisting in the region. Most recently, they donated money for repairs when the roof of a local school blew off.

"I'm constantly inspired in Uganda," Sister Marie-Esther says. "People see the needs of others here and reach out to help."