

# MPC



**Monthly Newsletter**

March 2020

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

## *Mukuru Promotion Centre* **NEWSLETTER**

*Empowerment Step by Step*

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*From the Director*

Dear Friends

I wish you all the blessings of Easter!

March was a very strange month for us as it was for many of you due to the Coronavirus. From the 16th of March, schools, colleges, many businesses closed. This meant that those families who are paid daily and weekly for the work done, were left without income. After one week many families were in distress. Our social workers first of all utilised the food we had bought for school lunches and gave to the affected families of children attending our schools. Later they began distributing to families without income in the nearby slums. In the Clinic, nutrition food baskets were prepared for those patients suffering from malnutrition. Thank you to all of you who contributed to this effort which is still ongoing.

We really miss those visitors who had planned to visit us from mid-March onwards. The boys in the Rehab miss the visitors and also miss going to church and interacting with other projects. They find it awfully hard to be contained. Some of you were very distressed to see images on TV showing police and other security personnel beating poor people. This was a common scene here for some days until people from intensely populated areas learned that they would not be permitted to exit their villages in huge unruly crowds. As the hunger increases so too does the desperation of the crowd. The middle class estates close to slums have locked the gates nearest slums, leaving only one way in and out of the estates. This is due to fear of invasion by crowds of youth from the slums in search of food. We pray for the crisis to end soon so people can get back to work and earning their living with dignity.

We have stocked our Clinic with those drugs which will be most necessary to deal with our normal patients and those who have symptoms of CoVid19. At present those we suspect of having the virus are referred to the nearest Government hospital for testing and treatment. We do not yet have a testing kit for the virus, so the patient's temperature is taken by gun thermometer and those with high fever and cough or breathing difficulties are referred. We have had to place water and handwashing facilities near all gates. The staff have been provided with masks and protective clothing.

We have made some preparations to have a CoVid19 incident management site in St Catherine's, next to our Clinic, if the Mater and the public hospitals prove unable to cope. As

we are very close to densely populated Mukuru slums, it is feared that if the virus enters the slums, there will be huge numbers who will suffer and will be in need of testing and treatment. We pray that this does not happen but prepare in case it does happen.

Even though we are in this crisis the first couple of weeks of March proved full of activities. As you read this month's newsletter you will see the liveliness demonstrated through exercises, movements, and exertions of so many people. We are grateful to Caroline Cullen's group 'Whistle' with their renovations at the Rehab Centre and excitement they bring to the children at Songa on their visits.

MPC has a staff count of over 130 personnel who perform countless tasks each day to ensure the empowerment of thousands. You and your generosity make this all possible.

Thank you for your care and help at this time. May all of us remain safe and well and may CoVid19 be treatable soon.

*Sr Mary Killeen*



*Adam, George, Maurice, Phil, Peter, Colm, Caroline, Maria Angie and Allison*



## Education

The Kenyan Education System has been greatly affected by the outbreak of CoVid19. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the Government announced closure of all learning institutions. Pupils did not attend school on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. This month the school sessions run for only two weeks till the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2020.

The abrupt closure of our schools will have a huge impact not only on the calendar of events but more importantly on the childrens' learning. Some of the areas that we have identified are:

- The new curriculum implementation. Since teacher training takes place during the school holidays this won't take place due to the social isolation directives.
- TSC promotion & replacement of teachers that was underway has been put on hold with some schools (i.e. St. Bakhita having no deputy head teacher).
- Fear of possible postponement of national exam date (KCPE).
- No updates are forthcoming on issues concerning education or national exams since the focus now is on the pandemic.
- Fear of not completing the syllabus.
- Kenya National Examination Centre (KNEC) is equally affected in the preparation of national exams and other assessments since they are not able to meet regularly with exam setters/markers.

The proposed remedy by the Kenyan Government is for the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to propose a program for children to learn from radio, television, or online platform. Most households in Mukuru do not have electricity, radios or TVs so accessibility to the KICD education programs is a major problem. Very few households will be able to access this solution. Our students are severely disadvantaged with any solution that is connected with technology or requires electricity. Many of our parents have lost their casual jobs so it is currently difficult to feed children. It is equally difficult to keep good hygiene since they are not able to buy water and soap.

We are grateful that the County Government has committed to digging a new borehole on the grounds at St Elizabeth. This will enable parents to come and get some water. There is another donor who is repairing the borehole at St Catherine's so this will certainly help with the immediate needs.

Last year we had a visit from an Australian Opera singer, Breanna Stillman and her Friends. Impressed by the talent at our schools she donated funds to cater for the purchase of new choir costumes for St. Elizabeth Primary School Choir. Buzzing with gratitude and excitement the choir is motivated to go even a notch higher in their forthcoming competitions. Below the choir shows off their new costume, shirts, skirts and trousers, all 42 of them. A well dressed choir always makes an impression!



*St Elizabeth Choir in their new costume*

Impact International, formerly DLA, supports schools to improve on literacy and numeracy. They do this through provision of technology equipment like television; and also work with teachers to improve their teaching skills in Mathematics and English. St. Elizabeth is one of our schools supported by Impact International. Research was conducted last year by Impact on the supported schools and St. Elizabeth was one of the top six schools in Nairobi that improved greatly. In the second week of March, the school won two awards. The prize was a 40” TV and a DVD and was presented by the Sub-County Director of Education.



## Sponsorship

At the wake of Corona pandemic that has caused much anxiety, the month of March has therefore become the shortest of them all.

Much of the expected activities to take place had to be cancelled. This is in line with the Government order to ban any social gatherings. As such the schools were closed indefinitely.

Some of the activities lined up for March included, school visits, collection of report forms, sensitization day for all the sponsored students as well as overseeing of thank you letters written by all beneficiaries. Sadly, all students were sent home very abruptly and no one had time to organise program.

The students didn't get a chance to do their End of Term 1 examinations. While some students might breathe a sigh of relief, it does not help them in the end. The normal appreciation letters to you were not done at the scheduled time, as they had gone home be that the metropolitan area or upcountry. The school visits too were impossible, leaving the office to postpone and reschedule the activities to future dates. We know that our sponsors understand the situation that is being experienced around the world.

In partnership with Equity Bank, the sponsorship office had also organized a training session for small entrepreneurs who want to develop their own small businesses. This would have been a great help given the current situation. The session would have given a great economic boost to the less fortunate who try hard to upgrade their businesses. One of the topics was on how to manage finance as well as training on how one can run their businesses digitally through online marketing. This however had to be put on hold following the ban on social gatherings. It has therefore been rescheduled to future date, hopefully after the pandemic is fully contained.

All is not gloomy. We received donations from supporters during the first part of March. We are aware of the many students who are in dire need of basic necessities and materials. Both from St Michael's Secondary School, Form Three student Sharon was happy to receive some resources to help her with her studies. Form One student Kennedy slipped into a new pair of shoes. All thanks to our generous donors.



*Sharon some education resources*



*Kennedy received a pair of school shoes*

March has been one of the most interrupted months in living memory for our students. In the past we had teachers' strikes which could go for a couple of weeks but the CoVid19 virus has provided so many unknowns. The first two weeks of the month was quite normal as the teachers and students were focused on their respective roles. The scheduled End of Term 1 examinations may have been on the minds of some of them while others may have had more focused on the Sub-County games such as athletics and basketball when competition was suspended in the middle of the month. The drama and music group had been training and have really improved under the direction of the various teachers. Everything was going so well and then it all came to an abrupt halt.



The Government directive came through on 16<sup>th</sup> March and caught many by surprise. I am sure that we are not the only school who will be able to take a snapshot and realize there is so much of the syllabus that has not been covered. Under the school's senior leadership, led by the Principal they set up a morning hour to help the teachers cover the syllabus until the end of term 1. We are keenly mindful of our final year students, Form 4s. The teachers prepared some extra materials for the

students to come and take home so that they are not totally disadvantaged. We do hope that the CoVid19 virus is contained and that term 2 can resume in May as per normal.

Most of our students receive the only meal they receive each day at school. With so many parents losing their casual jobs in the second half of the month we distributed food parcels to hundreds of parents. During the April holidays which goes for nearly 4 weeks the social workers distribute food parcels to the destitute families. What we know is that this virus is creating more destitute families due to the economy. More food parcels will be necessary to more families.



*Families arrive at Head Office to receive food parcels*

**Social and Health  
Services**

March has been a very hectic month in MPC’s Social and Health Services department. Life was reasonably “normal” until the Government closed the learning institutes around the country. However, we managed to get into the swing fairly quickly.

The number of clients seen this month is double what we usually cater for, but the economic impact has greater ramifications than a virus in the slums. No income, no food.

**March Activities**

Case Type (Activity)	Number of Clients
Home Visits	100
Abuse Cases	25
Amaranth Client (Nutritional Supplements HIV/AIDS)	70
Nutritional Support	1,655
Malnourished Babies	15
Disaster Victims	1
Absenteeism	52
Moral Formation Talks	1,107
Counselling	17
Recruitment to MIRC (Rehabilitation Centre)	24
Drug Abuse	2
Profiling	46
Medical Cases	125
Needy Family Assistance	47
<b>Total Clients Served</b>	<b>3,286</b>

As you can see on the summary over 1,600 families received food support to keep them from starvation. We managed to have a number of distribution points for the destitute families to receive some basic food items.

The need for home visits to the community is absolutely necessary so that we know how we can assist.



During home visits the social workers often discover many things about the health and well being of our students. Emmanuel is a Class Two pupil from St Elizabeth Primary. It was discovered that he has a hearing problem and needed a hearing aid that costs 96,000/= (\$906US). Our office accompanied the mother to the APDK (*Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya*) who referred Emmanuel to Mbagathi Hospital for further tests. We helped the mother to complete the necessary forms for the National County as a person living with disability and they will provide the hearing aid. This was a good result for Emmanuel and his mother. We know that going to school will be more enjoyable for Emmanuel as he will be able to hear the lessons and participate fully with the rest of his classmates.



*Emmanuel at the hospital*



*One of the social workers on a home visit*

The home visits put a spotlight on the living conditions of many people. Regardless about the state of some of the dwellings the social workers are received well. They know that MPC is there to assist where possible.

The power of networking for the Social and Health Services is very important as we simply cannot be everywhere. Two significant meetings occurred during the month one with the Light of the World Organization and Cheshire Disability regarding the Mushroom Project, and the other was the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD). Our students living with disabilities at the Vocational Training Center have embarked on growing mushrooms. A program expert came to set up the project and train the youth on a small section of land at MPC. The organization has a buyer who will purchase the produce.

The ICPD looked at the prevalence of early teenage pregnancies. Unfortunately, teenage pregnancies are not new, and this issue seems to be highlighted each year during the national examinations when hundreds of girls around the country are juggling pregnancies, giving birth or breast feeding instead of completing their exams. The Government of Kenya launched a national campaign against teenage pregnancies through the National Council for Population and development in March.

According to Gloria Muturi, journalist, the campaign hopes to galvanize communities on the need to end teen pregnancies through awareness and advocacy citing its negativity on socio-economic growth. The United Nations Population Fund Report, Kenya has recorded 378,397 adolescent and teenage pregnancies for girls aged 10-19 years between July 2016 and June 2017, specifically 28,932 girls aged 10 – 14 and 349,465 girls aged 15-19. As of 2019 the



latest statistics from the Global Childhood Kenya has the third-highest teen pregnancy rates with 82 births per 1,000 births. (source: <https://ncpd.go.ke/teenage-pregnancy-in-kenya/>).



We are always trying to support our parents and caregivers where possible. This month our target was to assist parents who have children living with disabilities.



*Special Needs youth learning a new skill - making soap*



The Child Protection Office (CPO) facilitated moral formation talks and counselling sessions to students of St. Michael Secondary School, Our Lady Vocational Training Centre and St. Bakhita Primary School. The CPO addressed the Head Teachers meeting and share with them the procedures for Child Protection, staff recruitment, volunteers, trainings on safeguarding. When the schools return, we will continue with the program for schools.

Child Protection clubs were established in the primary and secondary schools. The clubs meet on Mondays where they learn and discuss child protection and safeguarding matters and ways to ensure safety among students. World Youth Alliance who advocate respect and human dignity assist with trainings.



## MPC Clinic

The month has been busy with quite a number of things taking place in the Clinic.

Despite the CoVid19 pandemic spreading across the globe, our patients have been attended to well with measures put in place to protect the staff as well as patients. Yes. We have experienced an increase in number of patients for the month of March. There were the various meetings both in-house and with the ministry of health officials. Before the announcement of the pandemic by WHO (World Health Organization) we continued with our quarterly deworming program for the children at the schools.

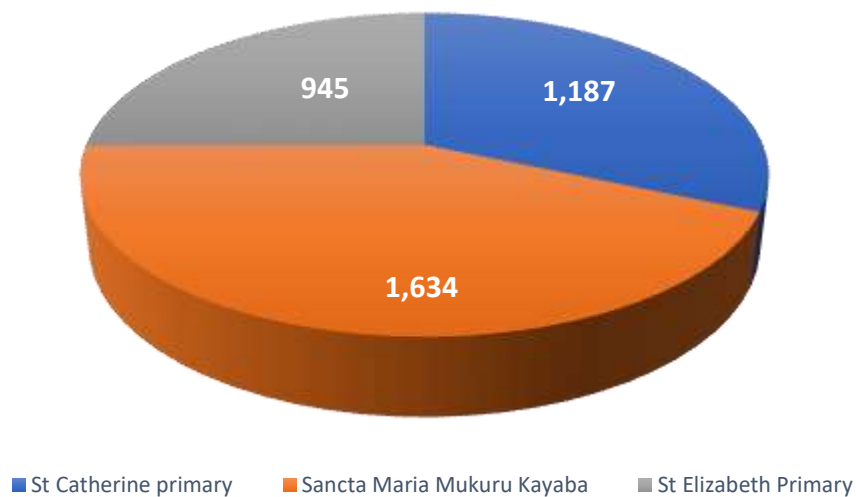
We organized a program to deworm the Class Two children in our schools and managed to cover three out of the four primary schools. Our clinic staff were supported by the internees with the help of social workers as well.

*Clinic nurse distributes the deworming medication at St Catherine Primary School.*



Over three thousand seven hundred children received the Albendazole tablet to help protect them against worms. In developed countries this medication is rarely dispensed. For our children it is necessary.

### MPC 2020 Deworming Program For Children





Our Clinic and Rehabilitation staff received some training facilitated by the APDK organization (*Association of Physically Disabled of Kenya*) who deal with empowering persons living with disabilities. The training included learning types of disabilities, causes, prevention and management of various disabilities with the aim of reducing prevalence and overcoming prejudices and traditional beliefs towards persons living with disabilities.

*APDK and MPC Staff after the training*

The Coronavirus Pandemic has shaken the whole world with new infections and deaths rising each day. We have been actively following Government directives through the Ministry of Health. They have provided us with information on the coronavirus such as its symptoms, preventive measures and health talks to patients and staff members. MPC management has worked hard to make sure that we have enough supply of sanitizers, soap, clean water and face masks for proper personal hygiene measures around the compound. Our nurse has also attended meetings held by the Sub-County officials to gather more information on this disease.

Our staff continue to hold internal sensitization briefings for the staff to discuss the updates on the virus as well.

One of the water stations at the main gate to ensure that patients coming to the Clinic wash their hands before their consultation with the medical health workers.





We were grateful to receive donations from the Maria, Allison and Angie for the mothers and children at the Clinic. The baby items trousers, dresses and t-shirts for newborn will be a big help to many mothers who do not have the means to buy the necessities for their newborns.

The Clinic's statistical information for March has an overall patient increase of 8.6% or 210 patients in March. The major increase was with the under 5s at 9% and the other categories ranged between 8.0% and 8.6%. The respiratory illnesses recorded accounted for 7.1% increase this was lower than anticipated but it is early days with the coronavirus. The laboratory performed an extra 168 tests during the month as compared to February. The biggest jump in the top five tests was for Urinalysis. Both Malaria and Helicobacter Pylori were down 20% and 25% respectively.

	Highest Laboratory Tests for March	No. of Tests
1	Stool for ova and cyst	170
2	Full Haemogram	139
3	Urinalysis	146
4	Malaria test	90
5	H. Pylori	24

#### Patients Treated in March

Category	Gender	Under 5	6-13yrs	Above 13	Total
New Cases	Male	118	56	148	322
	Female	92	60	258	410
		210	116	406	732
Revisits	Male	149	39	158	346
	Female	152	52	292	496
		301	91	450	842
<b>Total March</b>		<b>511</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>1,574</b>

### Most Common Treated Diseases in March

Disease	No. of Cases
Abdominal pregnancy	39
Allergies Unspecified	37
Acute Upper Respiratory Tract Infection	<b>565</b>
Respiratory Tract Infection	<b>166</b>
Fever	76
Gastritis / PUD	46
Gastroenteritis	289
Hypertension / Diabetes	40
Skin Infections	49
Urinary Tract Infection	206
Other Diseases	382
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,895</b>

There were 7 patients on tuberculosis medication in March with 3 new cases. Two out of the seven cases required supplementary foods parcels. There were 56 antenatal clinic mothers and we immunized 70 children. Our immunization numbers are up as we continue to raise awareness with the mothers.

As an essential service the Clinic will remain open during the month of April, so that they can attend to the increasing number of patients. At the end of March, the Clinic had not received any patients with CoVid19 symptoms. On saying that we don't have the testing kits either. The Government has plans to set out a number of testing Clinics around the metropolitan area and we wait for further instructions.

## Songa Mbele na

### Masomo

The first few weeks of March were busy with many activities happening at the Centre. Apart from the childrens activities there was lots of construction happening.

The levelling of the playground, gabions constructions and the wheelchair circuit were completed thanks to the Irish Garda. While that was underway it was important to start on the new disability friendly toilet given the earth works than needed to be done. We didn't want to have a great circuit only to be dug up for the plumbing for the toilet. The students from Sancta Maria College Dublin sponsored the new incinerator that is now completed and functional.

Before the Presidential order came through a number of activities were conducted including many visitors. The Star Kids Initiative group continued with their mentorship talks with the children. We had the Red Cross volunteers, Lelo hostels and KIBIT College here to do their community service and clean-ups at the Centre.

Normally around this time we have a visit from Caroline Cullen and her group 'Whistle Foundation'. The children get excited when they know that Caroline and her group are in 'town as there is always an excursion. Moving dozens of children in wheelchairs has lots of logistical issues but its all worth it in the end. This time the children were taken to Stedmak Park and recreational Centre.

Last month we reported that The Kenyan Child Foundation will be constructing a new centre at Songa. Although there were restrictions on peoples' movements, we managed to have a few Zoom video conference meetings to keep the process going.

The pupils from the Day Care Unit, Special Coaching Unit, and the Coaching Unit all registered minimal absenteeism this month. A total of 47 clients received therapy sessions with great improvements noted. Our staff continually encourage the parents and caregivers to be consistent with the therapy especially at home.



*Levelled Ground and Wheelchair Circuit Completed*



The wheelchair circuit and playground equipment look very alluring to any child. We are grateful to our donors Irish Garda, Paula Cullen and Friends, and Noreen Walsh and 'Bridging the Gap with Hope' who made it possible for the children to enjoy the space and appreciate the importance of play in their development.



*Arrival at Stedmak Park*



*The first ride*



*Group Photo before leaving Stedmak Park*



*A Red Cross demonstration*



*Disability friendly toilet nears completion*



*Incinerator ready for use*



March found us continuing with recruitment which we had to stop mid-way due to the coronavirus pandemic.

To protect our community from CoVid19 we have taken proactive measures to keep the boys and staff safe. These measures include setting up hand washing points for staff and boys, sanitizing boys before going to class, sensitizing the boys about the virus by a nurse from the Clinic. We are constantly reminding the boys about keeping the social distance. No visitors are allowed to come into the Centre.

Before the virus 10 boys had already had their medical check-ups. Comfortingly the boys do not have any medical conditions. A few of them experience the normal withdrawal issues from drugs and have attended the Clinic for treatment. The other services that are provided for the boys have been scheduled and timetabled for the year such as the academic lessons, vocational training, therapy sessions, recreational games and reading. Most of the boys have shown a positive attitude towards learning and a willingness to improve their lives with a brighter future.

One of the big advances at the Centre this year in the education sector is the use of ProFuturo's tablets. We are grateful to ProFuturo (Spain) and Clare Chambers and the Calary Parish, Wicklow who made it all possible. This was a work in progress for two years and finally they arrived. The staff have had some training on how best to use the technology. There have been ProFuturo trainings for all Rehab staff. The orientation sessions helped the staff and boys to become familiar with the tablets. The tablets will help with the different levels of ability for the boys. Having been on the streets for a while the educational levels are very different from one boy to another. The tablets will be a great help for accelerated learning. The Don Bosco Centre's trainer Moses is guiding us to use the new technology. It's a great incentive for the boys.



*Boys being instructed on how to use the ProFuturo tablets*



Despite the harsh weather conditions, we have tried to maximize our land use by planting vegetables that help to supplement our budget.

*Cowpeas ready for harvest.*

Just before the pandemic, Caroline, Colm, Phil, Maurice, Peter, Allison and Maria, visited the boys. In their short space of time they embarked on some renovations and fun activities with the boys. The old ablution block got a face lift and was converted into a badly needed laundry. The electrical wiring and lighting the senior boys' room and of fixing up the dining room windows. The boys also received some cool croc sandals. Before the group left, they shared a pizza night with the boys who really enjoyed the experience.



*Renovations of the old ablution block*



*Lighting of senior boy's room*

*Pizza night*



*Caroline with boys from the street*



*Sandal Distribution*



*David refused to change his old sandals*



*The Croc Sandal Assembly*

The CoVid19 virus may have put a halt on planes from flying but the internet has enabled our donors who were due in late March to appear before the boys. Paula and Frank Cullen connected with the staff and boys at the Centre on St Patrick's Day via Skype. They shared with the boys about their lockdown in Ireland and how to avoid contamination.



*Paula and Frank talking to the boys from Ireland*

Extra curricula activities are always important. To stay healthy the use of acrobatics was re-energized each afternoon. The boys practise each afternoon and have lessons on Mondays and Fridays.



*Boys doing acrobatics*

The scouts group has also started this month and are being introduced to the drills and disciplines. The basketball court moved a little closer to being completed. The rains have caused a long wait for the Centre.



*Rehab basketball court*

The other activities at the Centre include indoor games, like pool, soccer, play station, puzzles, mini pool and lots of board games.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has caused the number of local food donations to the Centre to reduce. This will give us the opportunity to teach the boys that it is important to consume or use only what we need.

**Vocational Training  
Centre**

March was an unexpected short month in the learning calendar due to the interruption of coronavirus pandemic. It was unfortunate that the students were in the middle of their first term. Over 190 students learning has now been left in limbo until the Government authorities provide some direction for vocational training institutions.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent in the calendar of the Catholic Church. The Lenten season is a period of 6 weeks for individuals to prepare through prayer, fasting, and repentance for the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ and the Easter season. Fr Joseph invited the students to write down three things that they could change about themselves during the season. He will return to them what they had written down after Easter to see how they managed during the Lenten journey.

A few of our staff attended the Mercy Education Office Faith Formation day at Resurrection Gardens in Karen. It was an eye opener as the guest speakers for the day talked in depth on how important Spirituality is to students in the learning environment. We have a number of students at the Centre who are taking catechism classes. Henry Ochieng from Our Lady Queen of Peace has been taking these students for classes and the response from students has been very positive. He also gives talks to all students once a month and we are indeed very happy for his input to our students.



*Teachers at Resurrection Garden*


The catering practicals were on course before we were interrupted by the pandemic. The catering students had completed several practicals and were looking forward to catering for seventy entrepreneurs from Mukuru informal settlement. This training was to be sponsored by Equity Bank and was to run for one week. The cancellation of this training in line with Governments directives to ban all gatherings in the country affected negatively our catering students. They viewed this training as an opportunity to demonstrate their newly acquired skills. Both Hairdressing and Dressmaking students were progressing well in their practicals. We remain hopeful that normalcy will return soon so that our students dreams can be realized.



*Dressmaking students show case their artwork*

*Beauty Practicals*





## *Happenings...*

There were a few significant meetings in the month. We were visited by Primary School Ministry of Education and other Government officials who promised to revisit the issues of school feeding program within slums, secondary school intake and level of poverty and its impact on education.

The officials did recognise that the level of poverty has increased due to increased unemployment. Mr Koigi from Makadara SCDF, visited MPC and discussions were held around the secondary school enrolments. About forty parents turned up for a meeting and it was discovered that their children had received placements in secondary schools however, they did not have the means of joining the schools and as a result the children have remained at home. The Government has pledged to present the case of schools within informal settlements catchment areas like St Michael's to receive the government subsidies that cover tuition fees only.

A couple of years ago Nairobi County introduced and financially supported 'Early Childhood Managers' for all early childhood education centres in primary schools in the County. The concept was good however in practice the managers were blocking the poorest children from accessing the centres through demands for funds and materials from parents. We have requested that the County remove these centre managers as they do not support MPC philosophy.

A long-time supporter, Mr Ginesh, who had donated food, education resources and other items to our centres over many years died suddenly in Nairobi. Sr Camillus, an English Sister of Mercy, who was the Head Teacher at St Elizabeth's for a number of years also died in London. She gave a foundation of order and discipline in the school and with the help of friends, established the school on its new site in Lunga Lunga. May Mr Ginesh and Sr Camillus rest in peace.

Mukuru Promotion Centre

**Empowerment Step by Step**

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