

**December Newsletter**  
**Vol 9 Issue No. 12**  
**2023**



*Cost of Living Donations*

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Dear Partners, Supporters, Family, Friends and Sisters of Mercy,

Christmas season in Mukuru Promotion Centre was indeed the season of remembering people experiencing poverty and the very poor receiving mostly food gifts. This made it a hectic time for our head office staff and some of our Department heads. Individuals, families, and company representatives arrived daily with food gifts for the poor and for the Rehabilitation Centre, Songa Mbele and St Catherine's Social Office. Many wanted to come on Saturdays and Sundays because they were free. It meant some seven-day work weeks for me. However, I am very grateful to all for their thoughtfulness and help. Seeing people in hard circumstances themselves reaching out to help others was moving and inspiring. Compiling and sending end-of-the-year reports added to the work that needed to be done. Please be patient as we continue to complete the reports.

On the 5th of December, the Irish Ambassador, her Excellency Caitriona Ingoldsby, and her husband, Colm Healy, hosted us Irish Missionaries for a Christmas dinner in her residence. Meeting up with the other missionaries was a delightful experience, but it was sad to see how old we all are and how our numbers are diminishing.

From 8-10 December, we Sisters of Mercy of the Kenyan Province met in Mary Ward Centre, Karen, for our Assembly. It is wonderful to get together to pray, remember who we are and what we are about and share information and experiences.



On December 14, Sr. Patricia and I attended Memorial Mass for Sr. Nuala Brangan IBVM, an Irish Loreto Sister who had led us sisters and others for a number of years in advocacy for justice and peace. She was very active in looking for justice for Fr. John Kaiser, RIP, an American missionary priest whose cause of death, on August 23, 2000 was initially given by the Government pathologist and by the FBI as suicide. Still, the group successfully campaigned for an inquest, which provided a verdict of murder. It was a very tense time in Kenya. The result of the inquest was embarrassing for the authorities. Sr Nuala was transferred to other work, and the movement for social justice by Sisters as a united solid group unfortunately vanished. Her funeral brought back memories of marches for justice, of very active celebrations of Women's Day each year, and of Sr Therese Stritch RSM and other sisters getting arrested for marching for human rights awareness. The Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya is now trying again to advocate and promote the rights of women and children. Hopefully, sisters like Sr Nuala can bring us all together as a strong group.

There is a great need for some sisters to be active in the fight for rights for the poor and for others to work on the ground with the poor, implementing the rights that are already there. It is impossible to do both how they need to be done, as total dedication and focus on the task are required in order to succeed. We are grateful to Sr Deirdre Mullan RSM and her group for empowering impoverished young ladies from Mukuru Informal Settlements for further education and training. The cost of education from early childhood onwards is now so high that the very poor, without support, are locked out. For us, it is tremendous to see what education and training can do to take whole families out of the slums and poverty. One of these girls, when successfully employed, often uplifts the entire family. So many of you are involved in enabling people experiencing abject poverty. Let us continue in 2024 to work with the various poor in their climb out of extreme poverty.

Our newsletter this month is a lot about food. We thought the days of food parcels were long gone. However, due to the loss of employment, high costs of living, and closure of companies, we have a certain amount of hunger and starvation. We hope for a new year with an improved economy so this situation again changes. It is heartening to see the success of the former street boys and their renewed confidence after their time in our centre. It is excellent, too, to see the numbers of youth qualifying in the various trades that can assist them in working or getting paid employment. Congratulations to the staff and to all of you who support the work.

May God grant you all the blessings of His coming among us!

Best wishes,

Sr Mary Killeen  
*Director*

# Social and Health Services

## Social Services

During the Christmas and New Year's holiday break in December, there were fewer activities compared to previous months. While most families travel to the countryside to be with their extended families during this festive season, some remain in the city.

Our main activities in December have centered on providing nutritional support for needy families. We have also been assisting parents in completing sponsorship forms for their children. The food parcels we distribute give some relief to families who are struggling to put food on the table. Most casual workers rely on daily opportunities to earn a living; however, during Christmas, many potential employers close down and go on holiday with their families. A few years ago, Sr Vincent Finnerty planted banana trees at St Catherine's which can now feed 1,400 children weekly when in season. The children's porridge program has been supported by John and Moira Burns for years.



*Food parcels for needy families*

The Social Office at St. Catherine's has been providing support to sick and malnourished babies through the Amaranth flour nutritional program. Amaranth flour is rich in essential nutrients that help boost the immune system and improve overall health. Our donors have played a significant role in ensuring that the impoverished residents of Mukuru have access to basic necessities like clothing, shoes, and financial assistance for rent. Many families have benefitted greatly from our support.



*Holiday Feeding program*



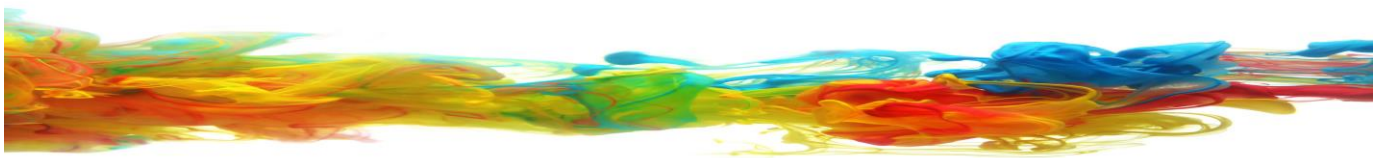
*Panties for the girls*



*Clothes Distribution*

After KCPE results were released, families began securing a secondary school placement for their children. Social workers in primary schools worked closely with parents and school administrators to ensure that as many children as possible inquired about possible sponsorship and assisted them in completing the necessary forms for Form One candidates. The first week of January will be an incredibly hectic time for students, parents, and school staff as they endeavour to get students settled into a new year and secondary school. Teenage girls who gave birth received a care package to support them in caring for their newborn babies.

Throughout the year, the social office at the clinic has been providing financial and psychosocial support to patients, particularly parents of children with terminal illnesses, and helping community clients obtain waivers for their treatments. However, due to the festive season, there has been a decrease in the number of clients served at the office, as many community members have travelled upcountry.



## MPC Clinic

The Clinic provided medical assistance to hundreds of patients living in Mukuru slum. In December, 1,219 individuals with various ailments were treated or referred to a hospital for further medical attention. The most common diagnoses recorded in December were consistent with those of previous months, with respiratory issues being the most prevalent, followed by gastrointestinal and cardiovascular conditions. Children under 13 were the highest patient group, accounting for 46% and 35% of the above categories in December. Research has indicated that young children are overrepresented in the Clinic due to environmental factors arising from living in the slums. Offering affordable healthcare is a commendable service to people living in poverty.

Throughout 2023, a consistent number of children attended the Child Welfare Clinic for routine check-ups and vaccinations. This proactive approach to healthcare aims to reduce the number of children requiring medical attention in the future. A fee-waiver program has always been a feature at the Clinic to ensure that costs are not a barrier. Children from MPC institutions are automatically eligible, and for families struggling to afford basic necessities like food, paying extra for healthcare is a luxury they cannot afford.

The biggest challenge for Mukuru residents is the need for adequate infrastructure. Despite the Clinic's efforts to promote hygiene and health awareness, frequent infections point to the need for improved sanitation, access to clean water, and better waste management.

The Clinic provides capacity building and training for its staff. Recently, the staff attended sessions on an updated approach to managing children's tuberculosis, which emphasized a newly updated treatment algorithm featuring a shorter-term Anti TB regimen designed for children aged 1 to 10 years. The nurses will undergo a 4-month drug course to implement these updated guidelines starting January 2024.

In 2023, the Clinic treated over 20,000 people, a commendable effort for a small health centre. MPC expresses gratitude to the donors who enable the provision of affordable healthcare to the Mukuru residents. In 2024, the focus will be to lobby the National and County Governments to improve the infrastructure in the Mukuru catchment area.

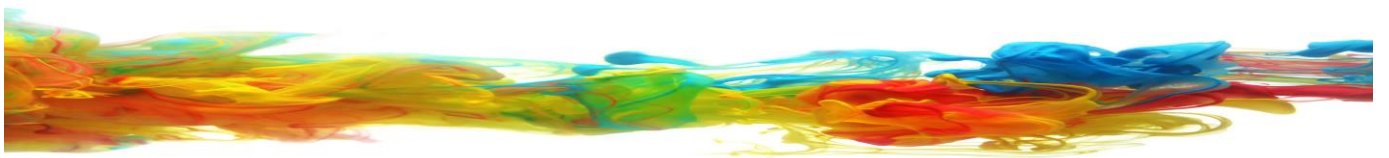


*St. Michael Secondary School teenage mother received baby package for her newborn.*



*Emelda Wairimu*

After her first round of chemotherapy, Emelda Wairimu has improved tremendously compared to how she was two weeks ago. Emelda could talk and walk on her own when she visited the office. She wanted to express her gratitude for your prayerful support. She will have a few more rounds of chemotherapy in the new year. The doctors are confident that with treatment she'll make a full recovery. Emelda is looking for to starting secondary school in January.



## Welfare Services Rehabilitation Centre

The Centre continued opening its doors to well-wishers and welcoming companies who conduct their corporate social responsibility with food, clothes and resources for immediate use. In December, many boys took a significant step towards a better future. After completing a 12-month residential program, 66 boys graduated from rehabilitation. Additionally, 28 boys were able to reintegrate into their families. The graduation ceremony was held to recognize the efforts put in by these boys towards their rehabilitation. After the NITA examination results, 6 carpentry boys will start their industrial placement. In comparison, the other 17 boys will continue their secondary education.



*Graduation Ceremony 2023*



*Stools by carpentry class*

After completing their NITA exams, the carpentry class continued repairing and maintaining the Centre and constructing more items for sale before their graduation ceremony. Adrienne Burke and Vera Smith donated the students a set of carpentry tools to help them in their future careers. The tools included a hand saw, chisels, a claw hammer, a tape measure, safety boots, overalls, timber materials, wood varnish, and turpentine.

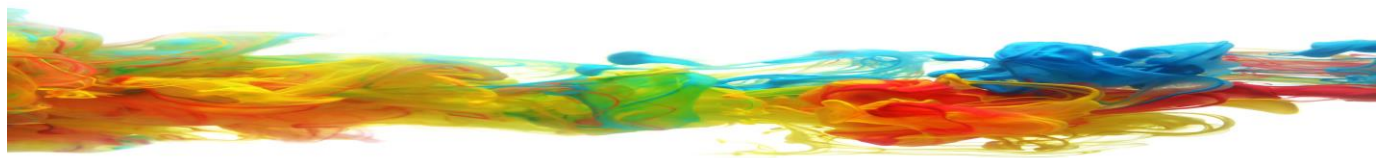


*Sr Mary presents a carpentry boy with a tool set*



*Art exhibition*

The art class has been very productive and created many items for visitors to purchase. Under the guidance of the art instructor, Samuel, the students have been fortunate to receive generous donations of paints, crayons, crafts, and other art materials from Paula Cullen and her group, Whistle Foundation, British Airways crewmembers and others. These resources have allowed the students to practice and perfect their skills and talents.



Sports have always been a big success at the Centre. There are several football codes played at the Centre. The Under 16 Rugby team recently participated in a tournament at Impala grounds in Nairobi and emerged victorious in their category. The boys continue to practice every day and enjoy the camaraderie that team sports provides.



*Impala Grounds*



*Team before the game*

Two boys sponsored by Silver Eagles Football Academy through Coach Kennedy participated in the UFASIMBA tournament for one week in Kakamega County. They led their team to victory in their category.



*MIRC team at the friendly match with Kafoca-Mukuru Studyvile*

*Cornelius Kiprotich and Gordon Otieno at UFASIMBA*

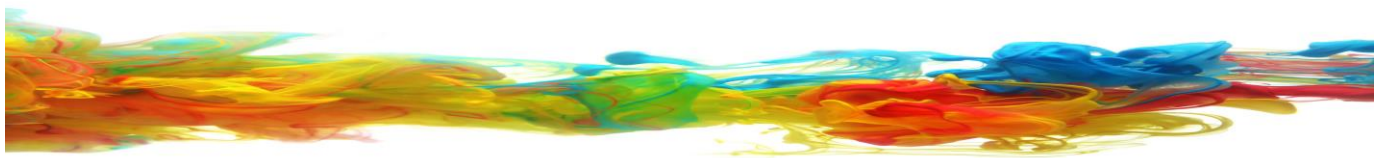
The music band at the Centre has been impressing everyone with their daily performances. The boys practice daily and have mastered playing the Christmas carols and the National Anthem on their recorders that were donated by Irene Plunkett and Paula Cullen's group. Thanks to the AEF Reuben Centre, where they attend music classes on Saturdays, the band is gaining more exposure and experience.



*Swaleh Ali leads the Christmas carols.*



*Music practice*



*Vegetable garden*

The Aflatoun club has successfully harvested Terere and Kunde, which are intended for sale. In addition, the boys have planted tomatoes and onions in the seedbed, growing well. Paula Cullen's team has taught the boys a new technique for planting crops and vegetables in old, unused lockers, and they have surprisingly sprouted. These plants can now be transferred to the garden.

There were many visitors leading up to Christmas. Visitors add a unique experience for the boys through conversations, sport, mentoring, singing and dancing.



*Singing and dancing at the Christmas party with Blackwood Hodge Staff*



*Blackwood Hodge Staff*



*Mentorship Session*

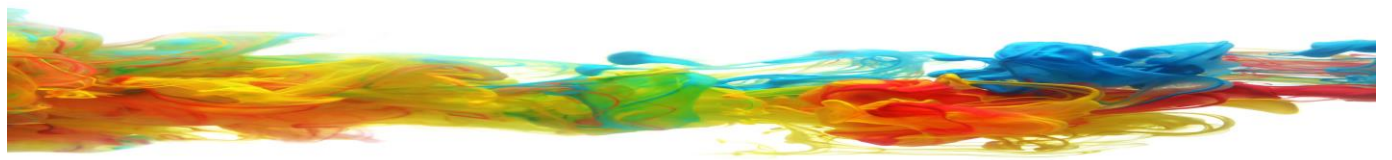


*Swamibapa Temple and Team Kaburu*



*Kafoca-Mukuru Studyville*





During December, the Centre received many visitors, including families, church groups, organizations, and individuals who came to donate items and spread Christmas cheer to the boys. The Public Relations Company, Newmark Group, led by CEO, Gilbert Manirakiza and his team visited the Centre and spent time with the boys. The Centre is extremely grateful to all the visitors who demonstrated the Christmas spirit of love, joy, and peace to the boys and staff.



*Newmark Group Donations*



*Gilbert and his Team*

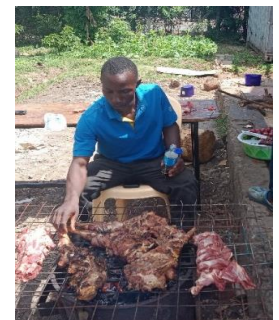


*Newmark Group and the Boys with Sr Mary*



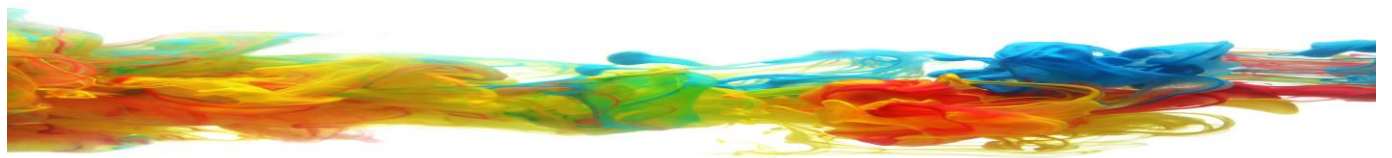
*The Boys give Newmark Group a warm welcome*

The Christmas celebrations at the Centre were filled with joy and happiness, thanks to the generosity of Ireland's Whistle Foundation and Caroline Cullen. The boys were thrilled to receive presents from the visitors, and Frank Cullen arranged a special surprise for them. The highlight of the festivities was the delicious Nyama Choma, Kenya's national meat dish, which was grilled and prepared by St Catherine's groundsman, Edwin. The boys were overjoyed and excited to see the preparations involved in cooking the succulent goats, and they enjoyed feasting on the food, along with plenty of lollies and sodas.



*The boys display thank you cards to Frank and Paula Cullen and John Sheery for the two goats.*





Everything was ready for a sumptuous Christmas dinner but before the meal could be consumed, there had to be lots of face painting, singing and dancing to show our appreciation and gratitude for all the donors and sponsors to the Centre.



*Carol singing and dancing*



*Staff served the boys at Christmas Dinner*



*Sr Mary and Fr Liam with some of the boys on Christmas Day*

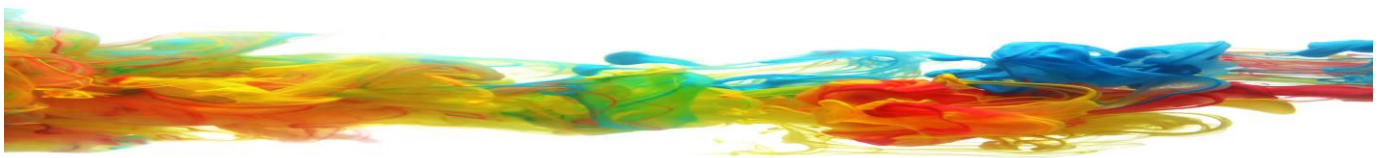


*Face Painting*

Phew! After the sumptuous meal, Samuel Waweru the art instructor and David Irungu, energized the boys some more by getting them to face paint each other. There were lots of laughs and cheers with some of the unique designs.



*Thank you to all the donors for helping the Centre to experience a memorial Christmas*



*British Airways crewmembers*



*Nairobi Water and Sewerage Co.*



*Allan and Friends*

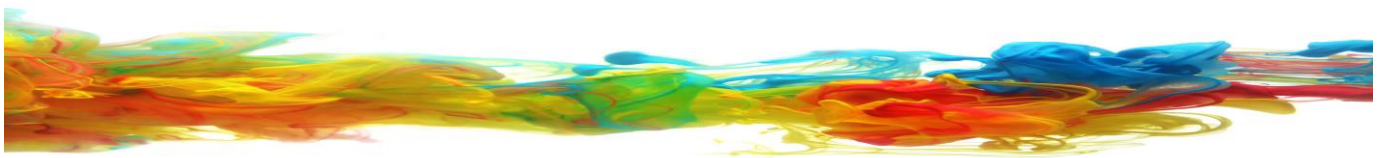


*Entwined Group*



*Action in Focus*





## Sponsorship Office

The sponsorship office spent December preparing for the upcoming academic year. Schools are scheduled to open on January 8, 2024, and much work must be done before then to ensure everything runs smoothly. The office sent out reports for the sponsored students, which have been uploaded to the database for easy access. Over 450 primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary students were sponsored in 2023. We would like to mention two groups in particular who are seldom acknowledged given that they comprise of hundreds of individuals from Liverpool, England and Perth, Western Australia. The groups have facilitated sponsorship for destitute children at St Catherine's that includes uniforms and educational resources for years. Thank you to Sr Kathy Kettle and especially Sr Barbara Dooley who coordinates the program.

Many boys are sponsored at the MPC Rehabilitation Centre, and 28 former street boys have successfully completed the recovery program. This was a remarkable moment for everyone involved, as they witnessed the positive outcomes of their hard work. We congratulated and encouraged the boys, urging them to stay in touch as MPC, through its generous sponsors, continues to support their educational and career aspirations.

David Safari, an orphan, received sponsorship from another organization for his primary and secondary education. He showed great potential but unfortunately got involved with alcohol. MPC sponsored him to enroll in the Deejay course and stay at a Rehabilitation Centre. During his stay, David discovered his passion for photography. Sadly, David had a relapse and was given sponsorship to attend the Greater Life Concern Rehabilitation Centre. David expressed his gratitude towards his sponsor, and we hope that he continues to show good progress in his life.



*David Safari with his donated laptop*



An ex-convict named Stephen Muturi was enrolled in the sponsored 'Revive' program at MPC. Stephen was eager to start a landscaping business and was given a 'start-up' package containing tools and materials. His work is remarkable, and he operates within the Mukuru area. Stephen is very grateful to his sponsors and expressed his appreciation.

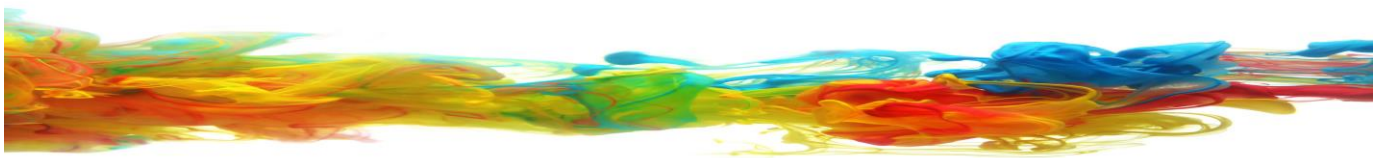
*Stephen Muturi with some seedlings*

In December, the vocational training students successfully completed their NITA (*National Industrial Training Authority*) and KNEC (*Kenya National Examinations Council*) exams. The Fidel Goetz Foundation sponsored students have completed courses in Front Office, Catering, Hairdressing, Plumbing and Masonry and Garment Making and this is a moment of great celebration for them, considering the challenges they have faced. The MPC courses are designed to make them ready for immediate employment as soon as they complete their exams.



*Vocational Training Students*





## Songa Mbele na Masomo Children's Centre

The Centre's activities continued for three weeks in December before closing for the Christmas and New Year holidays. The Centre is scheduled to reopen on January 8th, 2024. Although learning and therapy sessions continued during this time, there was a noticeable increase in visitors from various organizations in Nairobi who wanted to spread some Christmas cheer to the 104 children. Some children found it challenging to stay focused on their learning and therapy sessions due to the excitement of receiving gifts from the visitors.

Before closing, Fr Daniel Massart celebrated a Thanksgiving Mass at the Centre, and parents and their children were invited to attend. For some parents a child living with a disability can be perceived as 'cursed'.



*Thanksgiving Mass*

Fr Daniel encouraged the parents to continue to support their children with their uniqueness. Afterwards parents met with the teachers and therapists to discuss their children's progress and milestones. To prepare for 2024, an awareness campaign was launched in the community to make people aware of the services offered by the Centre. The Centre has a capacity for 200 children, and the community needs to know about the available services.

A success story to wrap up the year is about Peter Mwendwa. He has been undergoing therapy for four years. He has made significant progress despite having cerebral palsy that affects the right side of his body. His joint range and muscle strength have improved significantly with the constant therapy. We are hopeful to hear more success stories like this in 2024.

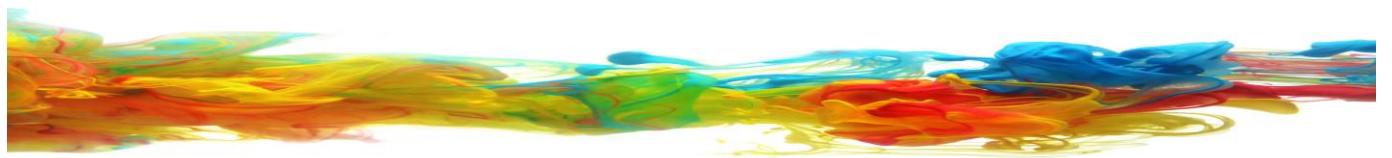


*Peter stretches out in style*

Cheshire Disability Kenya sponsored a disability awareness training workshop at the Centre on Intellectual and Learning Difficulties, which was attended by the staff. Learning more about disabilities can help the staff to better understand which approaches are practical for the children and help the parents more effectively.



*Disability Workshop for Parents*



The Centre received donations of food provisions, hygiene and sanitation materials, learning resources, stationery items, clothes and shoes. The Centre shared the donations with over 140 needy families.



*BOC Gas Team*



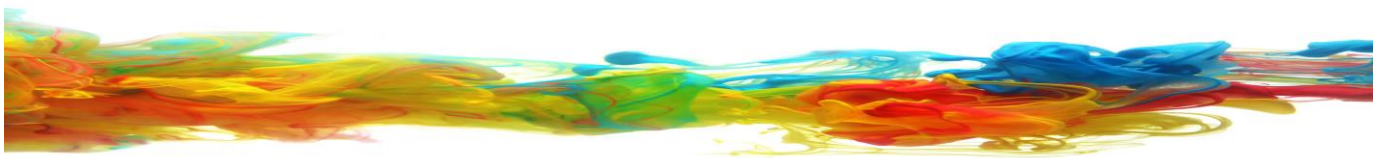
*Aschir Tobias with some of the children*

Songa Mbele continued to receive visitors from different organizations, companies and individuals among them: Red Cross, Development Initiatives, Nehemiah Faith Ministries, Naivas Ltd, Nairobi City Water & Sewerage, Holy Infants Centre Timau, Somirene, Sisters of Mercy, British Airways crewmembers, Shah Ranmal Raja Trust, BOC Gas, Leah - Austria, Birmingham UK, Braeburn School, Beruriman Ltd, Stephen & Family, Georgette D'Costa, and Sarafina Self.

Sponsored children received learning materials that included pencil case, pencils, pens, school bags, exercise books, color pencils and rulers, already for 2024.



*Jenita and Lucia from British Airways*



## Education Primary Schools

During the school break in December, there is a risk of many children and families going to bed hungry due to the closure of schools. Luckily, the MPC school holiday feeding program, with the help of the Team Pankaj Foundation, provides meals three times a week. However, it is unfortunate that in 2023, there has been an increase in the number of sick children and deaths in primary schools, and this can be attributed to the high cost of living and parents' inability to provide for their families, as most of them rely on casual employment.



*MPC School  
Holiday Feeding  
Program*



The release of the 2023 KCPE (*Kenya Certificate of Primary Education*) exams was challenging. Some candidates expressed dissatisfaction with the results as some pupils scored lower than expected. As per the standard procedure, the Government usually sends out 'calling letters' to pupils for secondary schools to help parents secure a place for their children. However, this process was delayed, leaving parents in a state of confusion and worry. Depending on the marks obtained, some children receive scholarships to national schools. Unfortunately, most pupils from the slums cannot afford the fees of national or private schools.

In Mukuru, St. Michael's Secondary is the only secondary day school available. By the middle of the month, the 'calling letters' were finally released, and parents are now under pressure to secure places for their children by applying for sponsorships. If there are any outstanding fees from primary school, the results slip will not be released. This makes it impossible for children to join Form One in any secondary school.

A follow-up visit to the Regional Director of Education's office on the issue of Headteacher's replacements was made. She assured MPC that replacements will be sent at the school year's opening, leaving little room for preparation for pupils or staff. Teacher shortage was also raised at the meeting, with a similar response that the issue would be considered. St Bakhita and Sancta Maria Primary Schools await their new Headteachers for 2024.

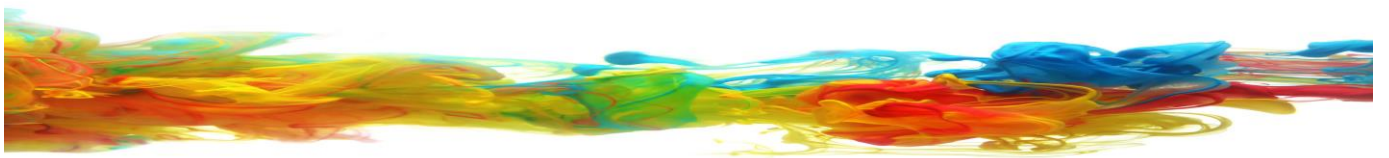
It is a tradition at St. Catherine's Primary School to organize a Christmas Party for children, which is managed by Sr. Barbara Dooley from the Social Office. During this event, needy children receive toys and experience the joy of Christmas. Thanks to the generosity of the people of Liverpool, a total of 1,263 children were able to enjoy their toys and party.



*Faith Nduku receives her Christmas gift from Sr Barbara*



*St Catherine's pupils receive Christmas toys*



## St Michael's Secondary School

St. Michael's Secondary School organized a short holiday program for students interested in learning and having fun during the break. The program lasted for three weeks and had an average attendance of over 200 students. The students participated in various activities during the program, including computer programs, indoor and outdoor games, agriculture projects, maths, English literature, and assignment tips. Some outdoor games involved students from neighbouring St Mary's School, Viwandani.



*Computer Lab*



*Soccer Game*

Sr. Mary Kanyi, the Education Director for the Sisters of Mercy, organized a two-part day to bid farewell to the Form 4 students. The students attended two lectures; the first focused on topics like self-respect, interpersonal communication, and living a purposeful life, while the second one discussed the harmful effects of substance abuse and drugs and the importance of parental respect. The day ended with the students sharing a Christmas cake.



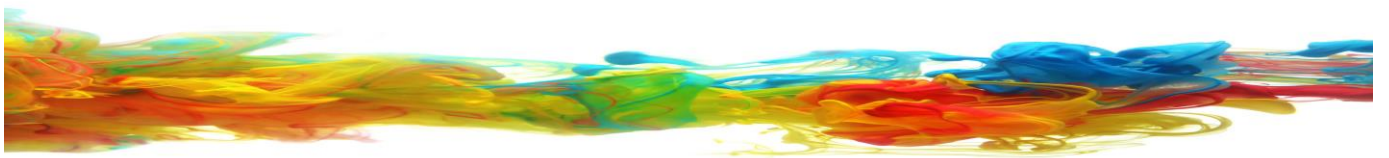
*Some of the St Michael's Staff at Marist University*



*Form 4 Students*



Sister Mary cuts a cake with Form 4 students to mark the end of their studies at St. Michael's. The students' future prospects will be determined by the KCSE results, which are set to be released in January 2024.



## Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre

Before the start of the long holiday break, which marked the end of the academic year, the Centre held a Mass to express gratitude for all the achievements of the students in 2023. The Mass was presided over by Fr. Joseph from Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in South B.

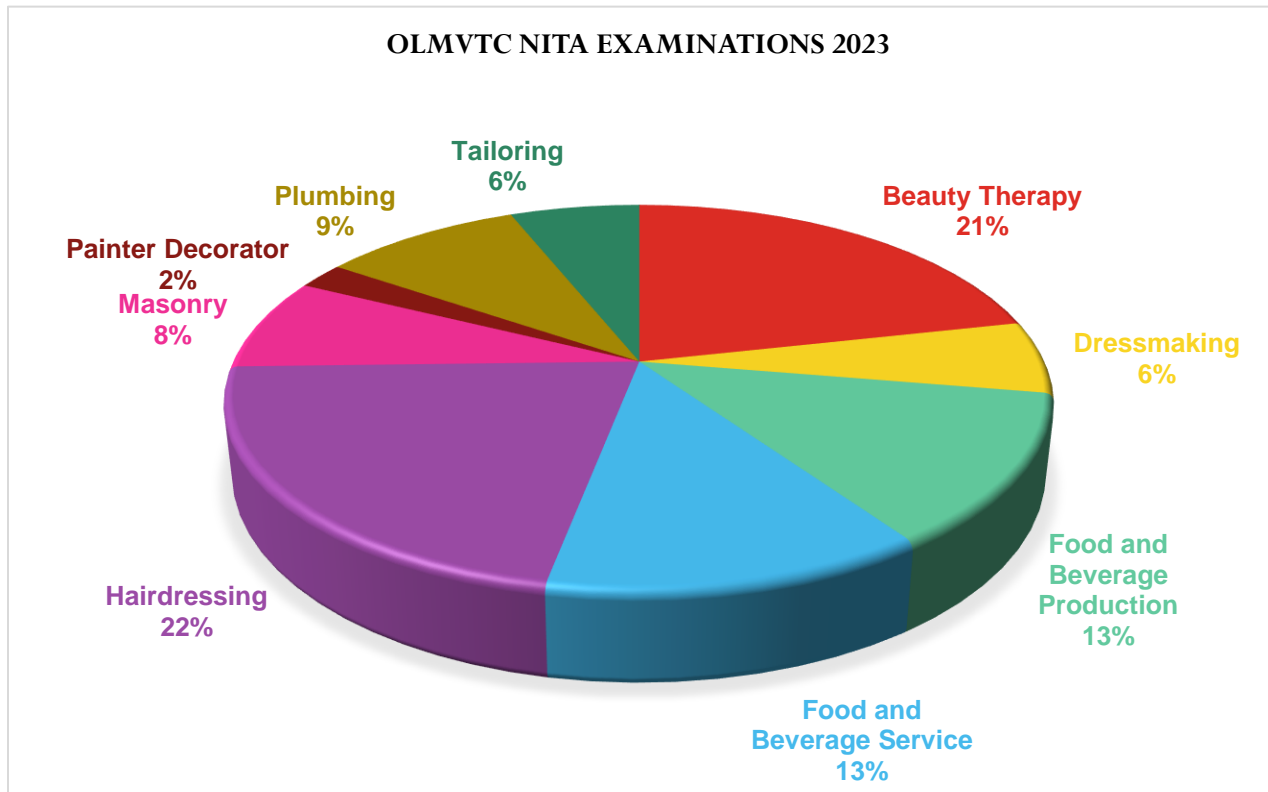


*Fr Joseph blesses the students*

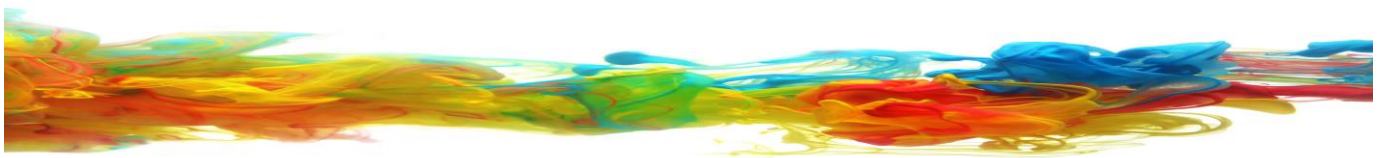


Before going on holiday, the students had to complete the NITA examinations. During their in-service session, they were instructed on the examination procedures for the different courses. The Centre registered 181 candidates for the NITA examinations, with Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy being the most popular courses. Some course examinations, such as plumbing, masonry, and painting, lasted several days.

*HOD explained the NITA procedures*







## NITA Examinations at the Centre



*Hairdressing*



*Beauty therapy*



*Dressmaking*



*Plumbing*



*Masonry*



*Catering and hospitality*



*BA crewmembers visit the Special Ed Art class at the Centre*

Throughout the year, especially in December, the British Airways crewmembers visit MPC laden with practical items for the children, adults and seniors of Mukuru. Items such as clothes, shoes, toys, books, beddings, towels, cosmetics, toiletries, art materials, sweets, educational resources, hairdressing products, material for dressmaking and magazines to gauge the latest fashions. All MPC departments utilize the contributions, making a difference to the children and students across the 5 sites.



## Announcements

There are many activities that continue throughout the month that are not reported but are very necessary to maintain the outreach services of MPC.

- ❖ The provisions storeroom was completed along with a water tank for St Michael's kitchen.



*Provisions Storeroom at the Head Office*



*Water tank*

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## Mukuru Promotion Centre

*Empowerment Step By Step*

Sponsored by Sisters of Mercy

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