

*April Newsletter Vol 9 Issue No. 4 2024*

Dear Partners, Supporters and Friends

Returning recently from Ireland after a short break, I can say that the situation and devastation in the slums are something to behold. The destruction seems to be everywhere along the river. Seeing people lose all they have while trying to salvage their possessions is profoundly saddening. The scenes are extraordinary, and the MPC social workers and support staff are stretched to try and accommodate the huge demands of the community in some way.

During my time in Ireland, I had the privilege of reconnecting with our invaluable supporters and Sisters, sharing with them the significant strides we've made at MPC, all thanks to all our supporters unwavering support. One of the greatest joys that I shared with people was the judgement from the St Catherine's Primary School land case when after nearly 30 years of dispute the judge found in the school's favour. This was a great day for children's education into the future.

One of our ongoing challenges is the maintenance of our school buildings. While we receive a modest amount from the government, it is insufficient to cover the extensive repairs and upkeep needed. The permanent structure of our first primary school, Sancta Maria Kayaaba, was completed in 2010, and the school has struggled to maintain its infrastructure due to the limited funds. As we gear up to celebrate MPC's 40th anniversary and the first primary school, we need to upgrade and repair the roof and gutters as the water damage affects many sections of the school.

The situation of illegal waste dumping across from the Head Office received some positive attention recently when the District County Commissioner visited the site. The dumping has blocked the river's flow and damaged the local ecosystems.

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Despite the Commissioner's visit, the issue of illegal dumping persists. Garbage collectors and operators continue to dump waste at the site on a daily basis. It's disheartening to note that many officials, who receive payments for the dumping, find it more convenient and cost-effective to dump the waste there rather than taking it to the designated official dumpsites, which are located further away.

A few school children have achieved well and have represented the County in athletic competitions. This is a great effort, given there is little space to practice.

The Inua Program has been a beacon of success, with renowned Tamarind chefs generously sharing their knowledge and expertise with our vocational students. We were also honoured to host a visit from Heineken CEO, David Paterson, and some KWAL staff, who expressed their desire to sponsor more vocational students.

The boys at the Rehabilitation Centre were treated to a wonderful one-week football camp organized by Christine Brooks, Abby, and Dan from Queens Park Rangers.

As part of acknowledging Australians' contribution to MPC, I would attend the Anzac Day commemorations with Sr. Patrica and Sr. Kathy at the Nairobi War Cemetery. Anzac Day recognizes and honours the contributions of those who have served their country in times of war. It was the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces in World War I at Gallipoli in 1915. I could not participate this year, but Sr Kathy and Sr Patricia did and met with the new Australian High Commissioner, Her Excellency Jenny Da Rin, who was delighted to meet a few Sisters of Mercy as she was educated by the Sisters of Mercy, Paramatta.

The Centre's activities continued well in April despite the turmoil around the different sites. People's resilience is simply remarkable. Preparations for the MPC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary has commenced and if you are in Nairobi on **21<sup>st</sup> May 2025** you will be most welcome. It is early days at the moment but knowing the date will help with planning.

Thank you for your constant support which gives hope to a great number of people.  
God bless

Sr Mary Killeen  
*Director*

## Demolitions Along the Ngong River

Parts of the Ngong River resemble a war zone with hundreds of homes levelled. In response to the deadly floods, the Ministry of the Interior mandated evacuation orders that all persons residing within 30 metres of the riparian corridor of the Ngong River must vacate immediately. Some residents were given time to dismantle their mabati homes. In contrast, others had little time before the bulldozer destroyed their homes. MPC has 5 sites, and 4 of them are parallel to Ngong River. The destruction and chaos that people endure in the slums seems incredulous. MPC is committed to reach out where possible to help the community in this extraordinary situation even as it faces its own challenge to save the newly built Songa Mbele na Masomo Centre for disabled children. When constructed in 2021 the building met all the legal requirements under the various land, water, environment and construction legislations. We would appreciate letters of support to forward to the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, Cabinet Secretary Kithure Kindiki to save the Songa building for children living with disabilities.



*Families Removing what they can before the bulldozer start the destruction.*







*It seems that some homes are spared and others not*





Chaos everywhere.





# E<sub>ducation</sub>

## P<sub>rimary Schools</sub>

*St Bakhita, St Catherine's, St Elizabeth and Sancta Maria Kayaaba*

The holiday break allowed schools to catch up on professional development for teaching staff, repairs and maintenance. At the same time, the children enjoyed time away from school. The Mercy Education Office organized a BOM training for all mercy-sponsored schools. The focus of the training was how to better understand the role of a Board member. They are urged to speak out on school issues and have realistic strategic plans during their tenure. The Mercy Education Office is committed to actively supporting the Boards and their members in their roles in the schools.

The Ministry of Education has finalized the procedures for Grade 9. Students will continue to attend their current schools, and teachers will receive training on the Grade 9 curriculum. The Ministry has also committed to constructing additional classrooms to accommodate the students. However, just as the schools were preparing to start the second term, the Ministry directed that the reopening of schools be delayed due to heavy rainfall and flooding in April. Many schools were flooded, and some were used as temporary rescue centres. The floods severely affected St. Elizabeth Primary School, with all buildings experiencing water levels reaching up to 1.5 meters high. The electrical systems, furniture, resources, and infrastructure were all damaged, with an estimated replacement cost of around 1,500,000 KSh (€10,500). In addition, the school's perimeter wall collapsed, the playground was submerged, the school hall, kitchen, and toilets were flooded and the awful smell from the sewerage. St. Elizabeth Primary School hopes swift government action will prevent encroachment on the school land.



Each MPC-sponsored primary school Headteachers continue to be vigilant with the repairs and maintenance programs. Minor repairs have been carried out consistently. The gates and toilets were recently repaired at Sancta Maria, and St Bakhita repaired its kitchen, security lights, drinking water points and staff toilet. MPC repaired an energy-saving jiko and purchased a new 500-litre jiko for St Catherine's

Primary School; however, major items are urgently needed. In 2024, MPC will celebrate its 40th anniversary with Sancta Maria Kayaaba Primary School as the first primary school. Sancta Maria began with temporary mabati structures. In 2006, the current permanent building was completed by the German KfW Development Cooperation in collaboration with the National and County Kenya Governments and the Sisters of Mercy. Significant repairs are desperately needed after nearly 20 years of exposure to the elements. The most considerable repair items are the gutters and downpipes, which are corroded, and the rains have caused lots of damage to the tiles all around the school. The specialized size of gutters needs to be considered due to the volume of water from buildings that are over 150 metres in length.



*Repairs and maintenance projects at MPC Schools*





*St Elizabeth Primary School flooded dining area and submerged play area at the school*



*Repair of steel doors and sewer line.*



*Vacant areas at St Bakhita received a face lift with a productive agriculture program.*



*Repaired and new energy saving jiko at St. Catherine Primary School*



*Sancta Maria Kayaaba gutters and playground.*





MPC hosted members of the Mukuru community and local environmentalists to celebrate Earth Day with a focus on "Planet versus Plastic." The community waste management dialogue aimed to advocate for a clean environment for all. The discussions centred around proper waste disposal methods, the adverse effects of careless waste disposal, and the burning of hazardous materials such as plastics. A previous study, Tupumue Project (Let's Breathe), demonstrated that the Mukuru informal settlement pollutants is nearly 3 times higher than the acceptable WHO levels, and the school environment levels are lower than those found in homes. The respiratory health of children living in slums has reported communicable diseases, such as pneumonia and acute respiratory tract infections which are leading causes of childhood morbidity and mortality. Children in Mukuru slums are more likely to experience more wheezing, trouble breathing, more days off school and visits to medical doctors compared to middle-class areas such as Buruburu. In 2023, the MIC Clinic treated 5,194 patients with respiratory issues, and 44% of them were children under the age of 5.



*Likoni Road, dumpsite [opposite MPC Head Office]*

The District County Commissioner, Mr. Kipsang, and the representative from the Nairobi Rivers Commission, Eva Muhia, were present at the meeting, along with county environmental officers. The meeting addressed the vital issue of illegal dumping, leading the DCC to order the cessation of operations at the Likoni Road dumpsite. Area Chiefs are responsible for ensuring enforcement of the DCC's order.



*DCC Mr. Kipsang, Nairobi River Commissioner*



*Assembly at MPC Multipurpose Hall*



*Ngong River [Kayaaba area]*



*Eugene Nyabaro*

The Kenya National co-curricular activities were held at Narok County in April. One of our pupils from St. Bakhita Primary School, Eugene Nyabaro represented the Nairobi County in the shot-put tournament.





# St Michael's Secondary School

The results of the end-of-term examinations were shared with the 535 St. Michael's students before they went on holiday break. Form One was the best-performing year group. Based on the results, all students will need to improve their study skills to boost their grades.

St Michael's Secondary School End of Term One Examinations 2024														
Year Level	Average	Grade	Biology	Physics	Business Studies	Chemistry	CRE	History & Government	Geography	English	Computer Studies	Mathematics	Kiswahili	Agriculture
Form 1	4.874	C-	C+	C+	C	C	C	C	C-	C-	C-	C-	D+	D
Form 2	3.864	D+	D-	D+	C-	D-	C	C-	C-	D+	D	D-	C	D
Form 3	3.79	D+	E	D-	C-	D-	C	C-	D+	D+	D-	D-	C-	D
Form 4	3.894	D+	D	D-	D+	D	C	B	D+	D	D+	D-	D	E



To conclude the term Fr Binu presided at the Mass before wishing the students a safe and happy holiday.



Form 3 St Michael's Secondary School student participated in the National Athletic Championships at Machakos Boys in Machakos County for seven days. Fridah Nyatich, competed in the cross-country and 10,000 meters events. Fridah performed exceptionally well, with Fridah finishing in the top 20 out of 48 athletes nationally.

*Fridah Nyatich (L) at the Nationals donning Nairobi County Uniform*

Mr Harrison Eteye, a senior teacher, and Stella Mathe, the sponsorship officer, attended a 2-day workshop on "Keeping Girls in School" at the Little Sisters of St. Therese Mazanti House in Karen. The focus of the workshop was "Empowering Girls through Personal Accompaniment." The attendees were equipped with knowledge on the importance of mental health and wellness in achieving a fulfilling, balanced life to succeed as a student. Some topics included understanding students' potential, psychological and spiritual dimensions of accompaniment and its impact on girls' education, strategies for implementing personal accompaniment in schools, and support networks for peer counsellors. The workshop also stressed that teachers can play an essential role in shaping a positive educational journey for all students. Further training was given on understanding adolescents, substance abuse, and trauma, including topics of depression, anxiety, and aggressive and disruptive behaviours. The workshop was sponsored by the Bakhita Partnership For Education to provide a more supportive and nurturing education environment.

## Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre

The better part of April had 233 OLMVTC students on holiday after finishing intensive end of term examinations. For many students just attending the exams was plagued with difficulty due to the really heavy rains. By the end of April, the Government announced that 57 people had died in the floods. We pray that all students will report back safe and sound.

The Centre had very special guests from the Inua Program who visited before the holiday break: renowned Tamarind chefs John and Gabriel, along with the KWAL team. The chefs had an opportunity to sample what the students had made and give their feedback on the areas such as texture, quality, presentation and service that needed improvement. The students were very grateful for the extra tips required to perform at another level.



*Chefs John & Gabriel sample the students food.*

The examinations started with 4 days of theory followed by 8 days of practicums. The new course, Welding and Fabrications, was introduced in May 2023 thanks to sponsors Whitford Parish Overseas Mission Group Western Australia. The students who enrolled in the new course sat their exams at NITA in Nairobi. The Centre ended the term with a Mass of Thanksgiving.

During the break, the Centre moved quickly to upgrade the current workshop areas as recommended by the NITA officials. Since the number of students has increased, the area must accommodate at least 6 students at a time for examinations. The expansion started, and phase one was completed by the end of April.



*Concreting basement*



*Welding of the roof panels and the erection of the pillars*



*Roofing*





# Transformations

## Songa Mbele na Masomo Children's Centre

After a busy term of personalized learning programs and therapies, the 109 children at the Centre continue to improve their capacities. To keep abreast of all the latest methodologies for children living with disabilities, some staff participated in professional development seminars such as early childhood development, functions and behaviour modifications, and AKVO training on online reporting organized by Cheshire Disabilities. Supporting parents through meetings is essential for the overall development of children. Parents living in the slums face many extra challenges that make life a little more complicated than parents living in middle-class areas. Improving parents' awareness of the rights and responsibilities of children living with disabilities provides an extra layer of support for children. Counselling psychologist Sheila Kekayaya presented a workshop for the parents, sponsored by Cheshire Disability Services.



The children thoroughly enjoyed the Prize Giving Day with their parents at the Centre. They are motivated and love attending, having different learning experiences, and especially mixing with other children. MPC is actively pursuing official registration of the Centre as a Special Needs Centre with the Ministry of Education (MoE). We eagerly await the quality assurance officer's assessment. Currently, the Centre is registered under the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services as a Community-based organization and is recognized by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD). We believe that registration with the MoE will further enhance the services we provide for the children.

During April, the social office conducted many home visits as there was concern about the impact of the floods on families living near the river. The centre had to relocate its power supply box to higher ground. After the water receded, it was evident how extensive the flooding was. The whole undercroft area at Songa Mbele was under a metre of water.



*Undercroft area at Songa Mbele*



*Sensory Garden Area*



The meter box was promptly relocated to a higher position as the water had risen to the level of the power meter box, and more rain was expected.



*The meter box relocated to a higher position*



*Autism Ambassador Muthio*

World Autism Awareness Day was celebrated at the Centre with the children to promote the human rights of autistic people. Each year, the association conveys different ideas, words, and concepts for others to consider when they interact with autistic people. It was a unique day for the children, especially the 15 children with autism at the Centre as they conducted the Sarakasi Dome dance. Our special guest was the Autism Ambassador, Nzilani Muthio.

For many years the Centre has provided the opportunity for people to learn sign language thanks to the support of eRko Slovakia. The Centre continued offering sessions for everyone to learn Kenya Sign Language. The enthusiasm and eagerness of the staff, children, and families to master this skill is genuinely inspiring. Another initiative at the Centre is the business start-ups, which have benefited 14 parents. The project aims to empower parents to become financially independent and support their children.

Throughout April, the Centre welcomed several visitors from both international and local organizations. The County Health Minister, Geoffrey Mosira toured the Centre, gaining firsthand insight into the daily activities that support children living with disabilities. The Minister sincerely appreciated the impactful work and pledged to facilitate networking among government authorities.



*County Health Minister Mosira, Nairobi County officials, Dinah and Myllene Bosibon with Sr Mary*



*Lunchtime*



*Unit 2 Classroom*

We express our gratitude to the well-wishers who donated food provisions and materials to the Centre in April which will be dispersed to the families who have been impacted by the floods.



# MPC Rehabilitation Centre

During the school holiday in April, the centre was bustling with various activities. The boys were fully engaged in learning, playing sports, and socializing. Each day started with a library session from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. to keep the mind active, catch up on overdue assignments, attend remedial classes, and focus on personal studies.



*Holiday library session*

In April, one of the highlights was the one-week football camp organized by Christine Brooks, Abby, and Dan, a soccer coach who trains players in the English Premier League with Queens Park Rangers. The camp involved rigorous training drills to improve the boys' skills in quickly handling a soccer ball.



*Dan, Chrissie, Abby and BA crew welcomed by the boys*

Chrissie, Abby and Dan brought each boy a set of Queens Park Rangers jerseys, boots, training footballs, cones, beeps, and on-field training equipment. Under the watchful eye of the coach, the boys were put into groups based on ability, size, and age. The intensive training sessions helped the boys master and perfect the game style. After running kilometres each day, kicking a massive number of balls, delivering passes, stopping, starting, goals, and tackling without infringing, the boys received a certificate of participation that gave them all a significant boost.



*Big boys after training*



*Smaller boys at training.*





The Centre has a small group of 10 boys who coordinate the music program; their immense passion is a testament to this. Every Saturday, the Centre practices music; in the evenings, many follow up with their own practice in the music room. Chrissie and Abby donated a violin to the Centre, and the music leader, Swaleh Ali, is keen to learn how to play the instrument. A good ear and touch always help when mastering a violin.

*Chrissie, Swaleh and Abby*



*Some of the boys playing Tin Whistles and Recorders for visitors*



*Joel and Dan work on an art piece*

The boys continue to thoroughly enjoy art classes, as they give them a chance to connect with themselves and bring a sense of tranquility and peace. The class was working on an order for bracelets and paintings. We appreciate Paula Cullen's Team for sponsoring the art program.



*Lawrence and Nasri crocheting*



*Samuel, art instructor show the finished products*



The gardening program gets a boost during the holidays as many people help with the preparation for agriculture. The heavy rains provided the opportunity to plant vegetables in both the greenhouse and the open area.



*Planting vegetables*



*Watering after planting*



*New chicks*

The heightened poverty levels in Nairobi have made few things secure, including chickens and rabbits. Teresa Heeran generously donated funds to replace the stolen chickens and rabbits at the Centre. Thanks to the police's efforts, some of the stolen rabbits were recovered.



*New rabbits*

Although many extracurricular activities took place at the Centre in April, the important essentials of the residential program continued. The counsellors were able to have more individual sessions with each boy at the Centre. The V.C.T. office from the Clinic conducted sessions on adolescence and understanding boys' bodies for the group sessions.



*Victor from the Clinic's office presenting to the boys*

Before leaving Nairobi for their biennial trip Paula Cullen's Group and Catherine Nolan's group donated new mattresses. The second consignment of the 41 mattresses arrived at the Centre with welcome cheers of delight from the boys.



*Boys very happy receiving new mattresses*



*John enjoying his comfy new mattress*

A World Bank employee, Kristina Nwazota, visits the Centre often, and the boys refer to her as Auntie K. Kristina invited 14 boys to attend the "Bring your child to work" day. The boys interacted with their peers, participated in an AI basic training session, and received mentorship from an Elite life coach. The boys engaged in various creative activities like painting, playing kids' games, having a sumptuous lunch, and having a first-time experience on an elevator, and they thoroughly enjoyed the day.



*Kristina Nwazota and Jeff Wanden Berghe with 14 boys 'Bring Your Child' Day*





*The boys enjoying the activities, games and competitions at the World Bank*



*Chrissie and her Team*







*Station One - Fitting Out*



*Skill Development*



*Photo Op*



*Match Strategies with Coach Dan.*



*MIRC boys, Chrissie, Abby and Coach Dan*





*Boys celebrate their win after a friendly*



*The Centre receives donations from Chrissie's Team.*



*Donated cups, plates, spoons for all at the Centre*



*Pizza Night*



*After a successful football camp the boys showed the group how to make chapatis.*



## Sponsorship Office

The first term break in April was enjoyed by over 500 sponsored students, including 173 primary pupils, 228 secondary students, 41 vocational students, 38 university students, and 29 special needs students. During the break, the office collected academic reports and distributed them to the sponsors. A sensitization day was also scheduled for the students, during which Sr. Dorcas was the guest speaker. She presented on time management and career guidance, and the 100 students from St. Michael's Secondary School appreciated the interactive session.



*Sr Dorcas address the students*



*Students assist in the street garden outside St Michael's*

Some staff attended the two-day workshop on mental health and empowerment sponsored by AOSK Bakhita Partnership for Education. The first day focused on student well-being, including mental health awareness and drug and substance addictions. The second day involved empowerment strategies for students and devising actionable plans.



*Wathe chickens are ready for delivery*

Wathe Mwangangi is a beneficiary of the Ex-convict Empowerment Project. With MPC's support, his chicken business has experienced significant growth. We are grateful to Noreen Walsh, who sponsors the program.

By contributing to the sponsorship program, our donors engender hope for a brighter future and the educational endeavours of our students.

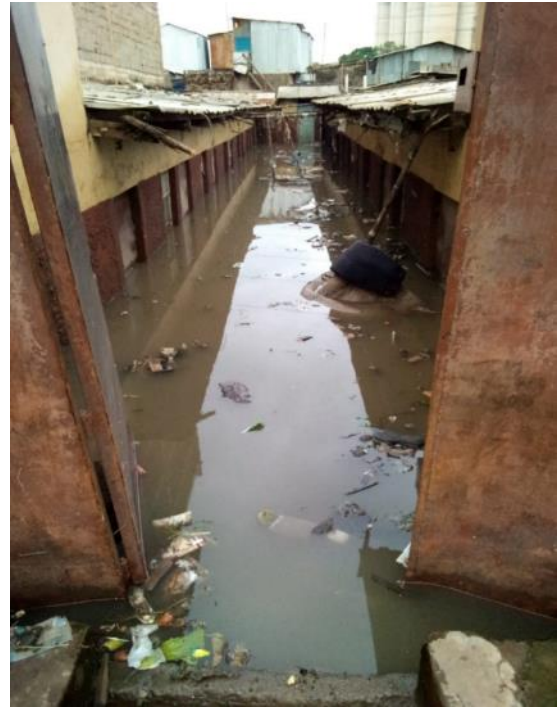




# Social & Health Services

## Social Services

During the school holidays, school-related activities were reduced, but the social offices continued to serve incoming clients. Heavy rains in the country led to many families being displaced and losing their possessions. The largest number of victims were found in Mukuru Kayaaba followed by Lunga Lunga. It has been reported that the torrential rains have displaced over 212,000 people, 200 people have lost their lives and nearly 2,000 schools have been destroyed (*source: Aljazeera News*). In the Mukuru catchment area MPC social workers were busy conducting home visits, gathering information on the extent of the disaster, and providing available interventions and support to affected families. Families living in low-lying areas near the river had to move to different places due to the flooding. Over 140 affected families received support such as food, clothing, bedding, household items, and medical assistance.



*Flooded Lunga lungu homes*

The demand for nutritional support in April was extremely high. St Catherine's social office played a vital role in ensuring that needy clients, flood victims, and the sick received proper assistance. All clients were provided food packages, household items, bedding, and nutritional supplements such as amaranth for ill children and adults. The Social Services Department covers a 14 km area of the slums, where hundreds of thousands reside. The Department received numerous donations from well-wishers, donors, and supporters to help the flood victims and needy families which amount to 1,426 interventions in April.



*Flood victims receive essential items*



*St Elizabeth Families*

The social workers conducted numerous home visits to identify the most affected areas. People's lives were swept away instantly, and many vegetable vendors lost their stock. After recently starting a new business, this Mukuru parent will have to start again.



*Nutritional Support*



*Start-up business in Mukuru Kayaaba*



*Mentorship Session at Skills*

The Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre (OLMVTC) students on industrial placement were also visited as part of the follow-up to determine their progress. Many shared their struggles in reaching their work placements after the floods destroyed their homes and washed away their clothes and shoes. Still, they remained upbeat as they were enjoying their placements.

During April the OLMVTC students received sessions on conflict management to assist them when on Industrial placements.

A teenage mother from St Michael's Secondary Student receives some essential items for her newborn child.



*Dinah, Sr Mary and Margaret show off this year's fashion*

Hilary Stone and her group from England have been busy knitting baby hats and clothes for the children at Mukuru for a number of years. In April, we received this year's delivery, just in time for the colder weather. The knitted items will go to St Catherine's Social office for Sr Barbara to distributed to the needy mothers.



The Clinic has continued to play a crucial role in the Mukuru community by providing access to healthcare services. Unfortunately, the public hospital services have been unavailable for the past two months due to the ongoing doctors' strike. This has had a significant impact on children receiving specialized treatment, as they have been unable to attend their appointments. As a result, some of these children will need to undergo additional tests due to the prolonged period without hospital appointments, adding to the financial strain on parents who cannot afford these extra expenses. There were 158 referrals to the Clinic from MPC institutions. The social workers have been closely monitoring the situation, especially for those who are chronically ill. The Clinic treated 1,525 patients during April, an average of 76 patients per day and conducted 722 laboratory tests with a daily average of 36 tests. The most common ailment in April was respiratory issues, with the age category under 5 being the highest group.



*St Bakhita children benefit from the feeding program at the beginning of April school holidays*



# Announcements

## Activities outside the Departments

- ✚ Kenya Wine Agency Limited (KWAL) staff and the Heineken Chief Executive Officer, David Paterson who visited MPC to where they would be sponsoring the catering students and also meet the MPC Director.



*KWAL and Heineken CEO meet at the head office with Sr Mary and MPC staff*



- ✚ There were a number of visits from British Airways crew in April who brought assortments of donations for skills and the primary schools.



*Some of British Airways Crew; Ana, Louisa and Lucy visiting head office*



- ✚ Preparation for MPC's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events is underway. There was also a visit by Sr Kathy Kettle from Australia, she visited most Departments and assisted while Sr Mary took a well-earned break in Ireland.
- ✚ The schools closed for the April holidays, and Team Pankaj was able to provide food for 3 days a week within this period to the needy school children. This assisted the families facing the floods still have a source of food regardless of the dire situation.



✚ Sr Kathy and Sr Patricia attended the ANZAC Day Dawn Service ceremony at the National War Memorial in Nairobi and met the High Commissioner, Jenny Da Rin, who was delighted to meet a few Sisters of Mercy as she was educated by the Sisters of Mercy, Paramatta. The High Commissioner expressed her keen interest in visiting MPC when her schedule permits.



*Her Excellency Jenny Da Rin, Sr Kathy and Sr Patricia*

MPC will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2025. While there are several planned events throughout the year, the major event will be held on **Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025** at Sancta Maria Kayaaba Primary School. **Keep the date!**

