

March Newsletter Vol 9 Issue No. 3 2024

Dear Partners, Supporters and Friends

March arrived with heavy rain, a blessing to many but causing enormous damage and loss of life in the country. The United Nations has reported that 1.6 million people in East Africa have been impacted by the floods so far, with over 470 deaths. In Kenya, search and rescue operations are ongoing in Nakuru, Nairobi, Kirinyaga, Homa Bay, Machakos, and Tana River, which are among the worst-affected areas.

The reopening of schools for the second term in Kenya has been postponed. The National Disaster Operations Centre estimates that 210 people have been killed so far, 164 injured, and 72 missing. More than 194,305 people have been displaced, and nearly 205,000 have been affected by the torrential rains.

Most of the slums are constructed on land reclaimed from the Ngong River, which is shallow during dry periods but becomes a significant river during heavy rains, particularly in the Ngong Hills above Nairobi. The river flows through Karen and Kibera to Mukuru, bringing with it drowned humans, animals, and debris. Many slum dwellers risk their lives by attempting to retrieve valuable items from the floods.

The government has ordered the immediate evacuation of people living within the 30-metre riparian corridor across the country. This directive has caused additional problems for St. Bakhita Primary, St. Michael's Secondary, St Elizabeth's Primary Schools and Songa Mbele na Masomo Centre as they are located alongside the Ngong River. The previous regulations required buildings to be 7 metres from the river. However, all these sites have experienced land encroachment, and reducing the distance between the river and the MPC sites is now threatening the demolition of the structures, which will immediately impact 3,000 school children.

Inside

Education

Flood damages 3
 Science Laboratories 4
 Vaccines 4
 Competitions 5
 March For Life 6
 KWAL /INUA Partnerships 7

Transformations

World Downs Syndrome Day 10
 Overseas Visiting Groups 10
 New Rehab Gallery 11
 Sporting Achievements 12
 Cultural & Agricultural Updates 15
 Excursions 16
 Rehab Renovations 19
 St Patrick's Day 21
 Pizza Nights 25
 Sponsorship Updates 26

Social and Health

Social & Health Statistics 28
 Clinic Updates 29

Announcements

MPC 30

St Elizabeth's Primary School was particularly severely affected. This school was over 50 metres from the river. Still, due to encroachment and reclaiming land from the river by dumping thousands of truckloads of soil into the river during the dry season, the river was moved nearer and nearer to the school. The school is now surrounded by the river on two sides. Repairing the flood damage to the school, safeguarding the riparian lands and protecting the school land in the future are enormous tasks. The most urgent need is to protect the banks and reinforce perimeter walls.

The huge challenge facing us is dealing with the torrential rains forecast to continue into April and the threat to our schools and centres. We need expert help and vital networking to protect the land from encroachment and erosion.



Aerial view from the wall to the river

Here is a photograph of one section of land that was removed at St Bakhita. The wall foundations are now exposed. At one point there was 20 metres of land between the wall and the river.



St Elizabeth Primary School courtyard

Despite the floods, activities in other schools and centres were significant. The Rehabilitation Centre celebrated St. Patrick's Day with our Irish overseas visitors. The constant support provided by MPC friends is truly inspiring. Thank you to everyone who visited during the month, sent messages of concern, and supported the activities.

May God bless and reward you all.

Sr Mary Killeen
Director



E^{du}cation

P^rimary Schools

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

March is a season for big rains; however, Kenya has been overwhelmed by the sheer volume of rain that has fallen on the country, especially in Nairobi. St. Elizabeth Primary School was significantly affected, and residents residing along Ngong River were swept away. Sadly, many residents can only afford to live on riparian land with the constant threat of flooding in the rainy season. The raging waters flooded the playfield, the boy's toilet and the kitchen front part of the school. The rains affected the homes of 290 children at St. Elizabeth, 33 at Sancta Maria Kayaaba, 22 at St Catherine and 38 at St. Bakhita Primary School. All these cases were dealt with by the schools' social workers. Flooding remains a constant issue for the school sites that border the Ngong River due to illegal dumping and land grabbing that changes the river's course. It is an issue that has been reported many times to the authorities but without appropriate responses.



Collapsed wall at St Elizabeth Primary School



St Elizabeth Primary School Compound



Playground at St Elizabeth

Schools were given a deadline of 27 days to register all Grade 3 and 6 KNEC candidates and verify their details before submitting the final list to KNEC (*Kenya National Examinations Council*). This was a challenging task as there are 1,440 pupils in Grades 3 (617) and 6 (823) at 4 MPC Primary Schools. Children who did not possess birth certificates were required to obtain an affidavit from the County Education Department to allow them to sit for the final exams. The heavy rains caused significant problems for parents as they had to deal with floods and losing their possessions. Obtaining birth certificates is usually extra tricky for parents from the slums due to the associated costs. However, social workers have mobilized groups to assist with obtaining birth certificates so that all candidates can sit the KNEC examination and continue their educational journey.

The Ministry of Education in the new CBC (*Comprehensive Based Curriculum*) has been focusing on co-curricular activities in addition to academics. The goal is to provide a comprehensive education to help pupils increase their self-esteem and develop their sporting abilities. The 4 Primary Schools recently participated in track and field athletics events, including shot put, javelin, ball games, walks, and drama. Of all the activities, 31 players from St. Bakhita Primary were selected for the semi-finals to participate in basketball, shot put, and short races. Sancta Maria Kayaaba had 5 players participating in the shot put. St. Catherine's had 3 players selected for the basketball team, and St. Elizabeth Primary had 3 players participating in track races. After the semi-finals, only 1 player from St. Bakhita Primary was selected to take part in the shot put at the national level, which will be held in April.



Eugene Nyabaro



Grade 7 and 8 students enthusiastically immerse themselves in the world of science by conducting hands-on experiments, which is a crucial aspect of the new CBC system. These practicals not only contribute to their evaluations but also foster a passion for scientific exploration. The Junior Secondary School students are taking full advantage of the latest science equipment in our laboratories, which is a testament to the Government's support through the JSS capitation grants.

JSS students conducting experiments in the school laboratory.

The HPV (*human papilloma virus*) vaccine program is being rolled out in primary schools, sponsored by the government. In 4 MPC Primary Schools, 90% of parents have consented to the program, which is a great achievement.



At the recent Headteachers' meeting, it was agreed to strengthen the reading culture in primary schools. During the term, more scheduled library time was the focus, and the pupils enjoyed the extra time reading.



In collaboration with MPC, the Mercy Education Office organized a retreat day for some teachers at the Resurrection Garden with stability as the theme. The day allowed the teachers to reflect on the importance of stability in children's lives.



Some MPC staff on retreat at Resurrection garden

St Michael's Secondary School

After the mid-term break, students returned to school to a full calendar of extracurricular events and daily classes. The overall results of the mid-term exams for Forms 2, 3, and 4 resulted in a class average of C—for Form 2, D+ for Form 3, and C—for Form 4. The students have two terms to improve their own grades.

Buruburu Girls High School hosted this year's Science and Engineering Fair competition, where 36 St Michael's students were in attendance. Ten of the 36 students qualified to represent St Michael's at the Regional levels at Moi Girls High School in late March. The regional level projects were 1 in chemistry and 4 in technology and applied science, which included an electric modified Bike, Electromagnetic Lifting Machine, Universal Charger and Grain Cleaner. The project in chemistry was Sanitizer Electron Arrangement. The students did exceptionally well out of 5 projects presented at the regional level. The students presented their projects at the regional level. However, they did not reach the next level, the National. It was a great platform to expose our students to such competition.



Students Presenting Their Work at Nairobi Regional KSF Competition,

The Makadara Sub County Athletics competition was held at Aquinas Boys High School for 2 days. A group of 22 students attended, with 7 qualifying for the regional level at Starehe Boys High School and Jamuhuri High School. The cross-country girls' team ranked 2nd, and the boys ranked 4th. In the other teams, the girls ranked 3rd, and the boys ranked 4th in the competition that involved 10 different schools. St Michael's performed well at the regionals. Fridah Nyatich (Form 3), a standout student, qualified for the National Athletics Games Competition. She came 2nd in 10,000m and 6th in (6km) cross country. Fridah will represent Nairobi County at the National level in April at Machakos County. She also participated in the Kenya trials for the ASIF World Schools Cross Country competition that will be held in June 2024. The team for the ASIF competition will comprise only 10 athletes across Kenya, and Fridah has given herself every chance to perform well. The whole school will be barracking and cheering for her in April and June.



Fridah Nyatich (L) start the 10,000m race



Fridah takes 2nd position 2



6km cross country race in 6th

Over the past 20 years, the Chinese influence in Kenya has steadily increased. The two governments have partnered in several significant infrastructure projects. St Michael's students have been given the opportunity to learn more about China, its people, and its language through the Chinese Cultural Training Centre. According to the Architectural Association of Kenya, over 85% of building contracts worth more than 100 million khs are awarded to Chinese contractors. Exposing students to more Chinese employer organizations is essential to prepare them for potential employment opportunities. Currently, 68 students from Form 1 and 2 are enrolled in the language course on Wednesdays after school.



The March for the Dignity of Human Life took place in Nairobi CBD, with 64 students and two teachers participating. Sr Mary Kanyi from the Mercy Education Office invited the students to attend and raise awareness about the importance of promoting justice, dignity, and fairness for everyone, regardless of their background.

March for The Dignity of Human Life through the Streets of Nairobi.

As part of St. Michael's faith formation, students celebrate monthly Mass presided by Father Daniel Binu. He supports and encourages the students as they continue their academic journey.



Fr Binu celebrates Mass with the students

St. Michael's School has established an advisory committee to examine specific aspects of the school and suggest measures to enhance it. We express our gratitude to the following committee members: Bob Patterson, MPC Board of Management; Peter Ontacha, PTA Chairman; Davis Sagini, alumni; Luciah Njogu, MPC Education Coordinator; and Eric Waweru, Principal. We eagerly anticipate the new developments resulting from their discussions and recommendations.

Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre [OLMVTC]

Orientation for the new 2024 academic year commenced for 221 students enrolled in various courses at OLMVTC. Students were shown the campus and taken through expectations, regulations, policies, and responsibilities for the Centre. At the conclusion, the students participated in the elections for the centre President, Deputy President, Christian union leaders, and sports leaders.



Orientation session



Newly elected student leaders

The government has launched a new initiative to recognize the prior learning of individuals who have served and gained experience in specific fields by issuing certificates. The effectiveness of this initiative will always be the subject of debate. While some individuals view this initiative as weakening the skills required to complete jobs, others view it as a positive step to assist people who have been working but could not afford tuition. Nonetheless, the initiative is a victory for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who will now have employment opportunities and become self-sufficient with their new skills.

OLMVTC has recently partnered with Kenya Wines Agencies Limited and Tamarind Group Hotels to sponsor 30 catering students. The partnership was commemorated by signing a Memorandum of Association on March 20th, 2024, at the Carnivore Hotel. Sr. Mary Killeen was accompanied by two board members, three staff, and 38 students. The partnership has been extended for three years, which includes tuition fees, KNEC examination fees, an additional catering instructor, training materials, uniforms, agency certificates, and insurance cover. At the end of the course, the best performing OLMVTC student will be interviewed for a place in the prestigious Tamarind Training Program with possible employment. Excursions and casual employment will also form part of the agreement.



OLMVTC Catering students with Lina Githuka MD Kwal and Joseph Gacheru MD Tamarind Group Operation Director.

*INUA Program Partners
Ms Githuka, Mr Gacheru and Sr Mary*





Class of 2024 catering students

There was a period of relatively low rainfall in Mukuru. Still, the floods in late March caused renewed concern about flood risk management. The leading cause of flooding in the area is heavy rainfall, which leads to a large concentration of runoff that overwhelms the Ngong River and meets up with the Nairobi River. This results in the overflow of water that affects the houses along the river. The floods affected 20 students differently, with household items destroyed, personal items carried away by the river, and homes destroyed. MPC's social and health department assisted the victims by providing clothes and household items such as mattresses and blankets. Additionally, a sponsored student by KWAL provided further help by organizing food packages for catering students, paying rent, and assisting with renovating their houses.



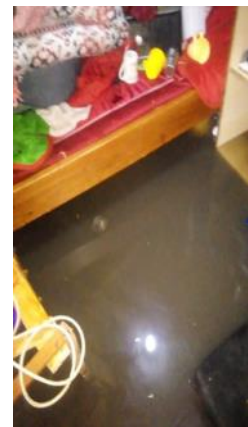
Catering student affected



Roof was destroyed



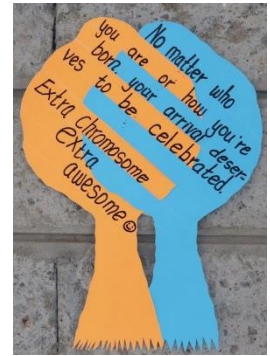
Affected Students receiving blankets and mattresses



flood damage to homes



Transformations



Songa Mbele na Masomo Children's Centre

For the first time, Songa Mbele celebrated World Day for Down Syndrome with the theme "End the stereotypes," as there are many misconceptions. The staff and volunteers were presented with its causes and how best to accommodate children with Down syndrome. People donned coloured socks to symbolize the extra chromosomes, and the children engaged in fun with games and activities. The staff performed a song for everyone gathered. The children were front and centre in the celebrations. It was the first time we had such an experience.



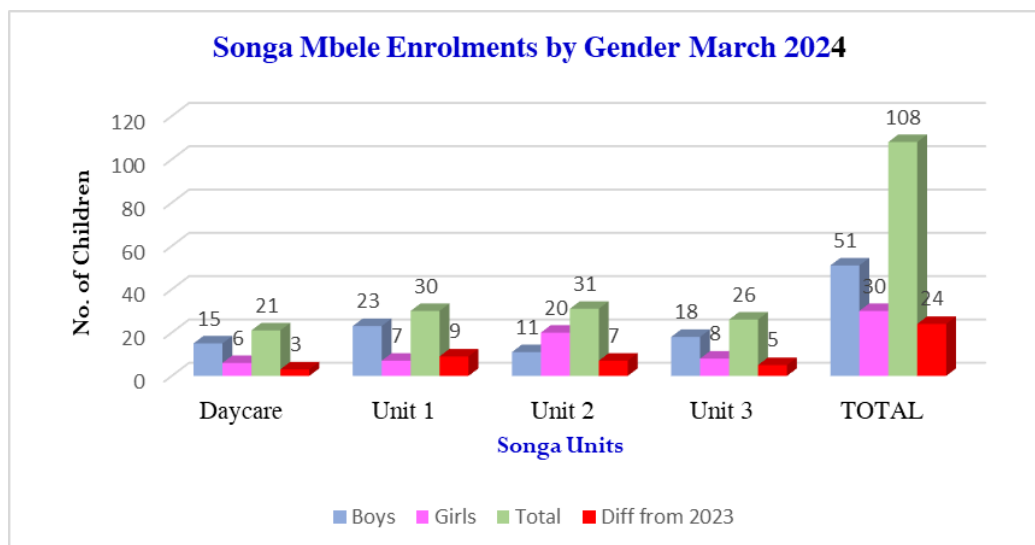
Children performed skits



Staff sang songs for the children



During term 1, the Centre welcomed two additional children, bringing the total number of children under its care to 108. This is an increase of 24 children from the same time last year. Both new children have cerebral palsy, and one of them also has autism. The different Units at the Centre continued to provide daily living activities, communication skills training, physiotherapy, speech therapy, and cognitive development support as usual.



Therapies that are consistent for children with disabilities can provide several benefits. In March, 62 children received physiotherapy, mostly from Units 1 and 2. Of those, 65% attended seven or more sessions. The physiotherapy sessions included sensory integration, stretches to improve joint range, muscle relaxation massage, resistance and weight-bearing exercises for muscle strengthening and stability. For speech therapy, out of 31 children 30% attended seven or more sessions. The children practiced



Parents during the training

pronouncing vowels and words, sign language, colour identification, and vestibular reflex exercises to stimulate and improve posture. Involving parents in their children's development is crucial to achieving individual goals sooner rather than later. In total, 26 parents participated in entrepreneurship training. The training focused on forming support groups, lending and saving, constitutions, governance, and support group membership. The training gives the parents extra skills so they can increase their own self-sustainability.

Other trainings offered to parents and staff were organized by AOSK through zoom based on AOSKICT Training. The training focused on child data and progress tracking to ensure that all child details and progress are updated in a database for official record keeping and references.

The Centre is always bustling with activity, but the children are always excited to meet new people, especially visitors. In March, the Centre had the pleasure of hosting 15 visitors from various companies and organizations, both local and international. Additionally, the Centre receives support from volunteers from other institutions who generously offer their services and donate goods to the Centre. These institutions include Strathmore University, Railways Training Institute, Raffa Institute, Riara University, USIU, MSOLA Sisters, and Medlutek International. All these visitors and volunteers brought smiles to the children at the Centre.



St. Catherine of Alexandria Small Christian Community



USIU Professor and students donated a television and water tank



Local companies' donations play a crucial role in the smooth functioning of the Centre. The cost of living is challenging for average households, but it becomes even more difficult in the slums. The recent floods have affected many families living in the slums, and MPC is aware of the daily struggles of parents. Over 23 families with children received clothes, porridge flour and butternuts. Others received food provisions, hygiene materials, school uniforms, and stationery items. Whenever a natural disaster strikes, our social workers are on the ground, walking through the slums, and identifying families in need. Thanks to your support, several referrals were made to the clinic for medical attention, providing vital support to these families during their challenging times.

MPC Rehabilitation Centre

March has been an exceptional month for the boys at the Centre and is perhaps their favourite month. The Centre had visits from three donor groups: Brothers and Sisters in Need (from Germany), Paula Cullen and Friends (from Ireland), and Catherine Nolan's group from Ireland. These donors have carried out several projects, including renovating rooms, organizing field excursions, and donating clothes, uniforms, jerseys, and shoes. After the recent recruitment services, 66 boys reside at the Centre. Additionally, 21 boys under sponsorship live at boarding schools or work in apprenticeships.

Through the support of donors, friends and organizations, each cohort of boys receives a tremendous opportunity to take full advantage of a second chance. The impact on the lives of the boys cannot be underestimated. Many dimensions contribute to the Centre's success, such as education, psychological and counselling support, connections with family, sporting and cultural opportunities, skills development, spiritual formation, self-discipline, interpersonal communications and healthy diets. MPC often receives telephone calls from other Counties about the program and its successful reputation.

The 3 Rs-Recruitment, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration-have proven to be a successful pathway for 85% of the boys. Our Centre is committed to creating an engaging and safe space for learning, social interactions, skills development, and communications. The boys' motivation to change their lives, coupled with the new levels of awareness they gain, is a significant factor in our success.

Academically, there is always room for improvement. However, the boys have made significant progress, as indicated by their report forms, with over 60% of them able to read and write. Clare Chambers helps out the Year 2 pupils.



Tr Josephine and Claire Chambers teaching year 2



The building industry is currently seeking young men who possess trade skills. The carpentry students at the Rehab Centre are gaining practical skills and on-the-job experience by assisting with various projects. The co-sponsored project by Paula Cullen and Catherine Nolan groups involves renovating an old mabati classroom into a gallery and exhibition room. The idea is to display the student's artwork for sale so they will have some funds when they exit the residential program.

The students, under the supervision of their instructor Charles, are installing a ceiling and false walls to reduce the heat.



Charles and the carpentry boys are renovating the old mabati classroom into a gallery and exhibition room.



Suzanne and Daniel in the new Rehab gallery.

After a few days the gallery was ready to receive its first visitors. During their monitoring and evaluation exercise Suzanne and Daniel from Brothers and Sisters in Need take time to savour the artworks.

It is crucial to have a safe space where boys can discuss the issues that matter to them, both as individuals and as a group. The Centre provides counselling services, and the boys often share their genuine reasons for leaving home and ending up on the streets. Home tracing and visits are important for verifying various statements. The counsellor uses various techniques, such as peer teaching, outdoor activities, and personal experiences, to help the boys develop themselves while learning from one another.



Catherine from Paula Cullen's group donated toys and Games for the counselling office.

Spirituality and faith formation are essential components in the all-round development of an individual. The boys attend weekly catechism classes and imbibe values that help them lead a harmonious life with each other, laying a solid foundation for their future outside the Centre. The Mercy Education Office organized a recollection day at the Resurrection Gardens in Karen, which the boys and staff attended. While it can be challenging for teenagers to find quiet, reflective time, the boys enjoyed the day. They connected with their spiritual life, bringing them closer to God.



MIRC boys and MPC staff at the Recollection Day at Resurrection Gardens

Certainly, the most popular dimension at the Centre is the sporting and cultural activities. Under Paula Cullen's Group's sponsorship, these activities have continually evolved and advanced the development of the boys' giftedness and uniqueness. Much thought has gone on behind the scenes, along with fundraising in Ireland, to ensure the thoughts turn into reality and benefit the boys immensely. The rugby, art, athletics, gym, farming and agriculture programs receive continual support from the group.

The rugby team progressed from amateur to intermediate level thanks to the coach, Kenya Rugby 7s player Denisha Ndinya, and his intense training sessions. The boys could view the professional games on television, connecting their practice with the strategies used on the field, giving them a greater understanding of the game. Through Paula Cullen's team, Leinster Rugby and St Gerard's Bray, Ireland support the boys with coaching and rugby gear.



Mr Ronald Gideon Okoth of Kenya Rugby also visited the Centre on St Patrick's Day and spotted 4 players he would like to bring into a regional under 14 and 16 training squad and play at the regional level. The 4 boys are Kelvin Ngare, George Malenya, Cornelius Kiprotich and Erick Wenyene. A special thanks go to Paula Cullen's team, Leinster Rugby, Blackrock RFC and St Gerard's School, Bray and all the Irish donors who have helped promote rugby at the Centre.

Kelvin, George, Cornelius and Erick scouted by Ronald Okoth from Kenya Rugby.



Mr Ronald Okoth (left) head of Kenya Rugby Union with the boys ahead of their rugby match on St. Patrick's day

The other world football code soccer also has a home at the Centre thanks to Paula Cullen's group. The group support the Centre with football boots and runners. The boys value having a pair of football boots, which has inspired them to practice daily. The World Bank team donated a lot of footballs to the Centre. In addition, Patsy Egan from Catherine Nolan's group donated essential football equipment such as a tactic board for the coach to teach the players how to attack and defend, a footspeed ladder for training sessions to enhance the players' footwork and speed, and captainship wristbands that boost team spirit and unity on the pitch.

Coach Benter registered the boys for this month's FKF (*Federation of Kenya Football*) Youth League tournament. The boys have already played two league games and convincingly defeated their opponents. The boys are extremely talented, and the Centre is doing everything in its power to develop their football skills. Assistant coach Kennedy provided assistance to Gordon Otieno and Cornelius Kiprotich, who is also a standout rugby player. The two young football players are excelling at the Silver Eagles Football Academy. The academy will be financing the boys' participation at the upcoming event in Nakuru which is scheduled for April 2024.



Soccer team thanking St Gerard's School for the tracksuits and jerseys



Under 13s team with their Sligo Rovers jerseys



Under 16s rugby team with their Leinster jerseys



Under 10s soccer team member Mungai.



Patsy Egan donates football equipment to the Centre.

Gordon Otieno, Assistant Coach Kennedy and Cornelius Kiprotich at Silver Eagles Academy.



Breana Stillman, an Australian soprano opera singer, sponsors the music band at the Centre. The band consists of ten dedicated musicians who attend weekly music classes at the EF Reuben Centre. Thanks to their commitment and hard work, their musical abilities have improved significantly, and they can now play various instruments. Among the students, Swaleh Ali, Meshack Samoka, and Evans Otieno have displayed a natural talent for music and serve as leaders for the other aspiring musicians who practice daily in the music room, thus further developing their skills.



Swaleh Ali plays violin to British Airways crew members

The art instructor at the Centre, Samuel Waweru, has been assisting the boys in exploring and nurturing their artistic skills. In March, the boys were highly productive and fulfilled an order for bracelets by Paula Cullen's group. They also created other exquisite items during this period. Paula Cullen's group continues to support the art program by providing essential materials for the boys to utilize in their practice.



RTI students help weeding and pruning

The Centre allows the boys to learn a valuable skill - farming and agriculture. By acquiring knowledge on cultivating crops and vegetables, the boys can use this skill in performing agricultural activities when they return home. This will ensure that they always have access to food, reducing the likelihood of returning to the streets. Due to the rains, the newly planted seeds of tomatoes and other traditional vegetables have a greater chance of flourishing. During the holiday break, the boys have prepared the ground to grow extra vegetables for the Centre's consumption.



The boys dropping eggshells in the garden as they act as fertilizer.



10 mature chickens

The number of chickens in poultry farming has steadily increased each month. In March, we reached 45 chickens; however, a mongoose managed to get into the chicken coop and killed 7. Luckily, at the time, Paula Cullen's group was at the Centre and repaired the damaged coop and made it more robust with an additional chain-link fence to reinforce the existing one.



March eggs collection



Healthy rabbits

Rabbit farming is another vibrant project. Three pregnant rabbits have given birth to 24 bunnies, and their growth has been smooth. Others are nearing maturity soon and we will start selling them or exchanging them to have more breeds. The boys have been instrumental in caring for the rabbits. Paula Cullen's group bought some rabbit feed to supplement their diet and replenish their energy and milk while breastfeeding the young ones.



Cornelius and Griffin the preparing to go and feed the rabbits

As mentioned earlier, local and international visitors are special guests at the Centre. Without the visitors, the boys would not have received exposure, interactions, and experiences from people from different cultures around the world. Early in March, Suzanne and Peter from the Brothers and Sisters in Need (Germany) visited the Centre for their monitoring and evaluation exercise. The donors conveyed their positive satisfaction as the projects proceeded as planned, impacting the boys' lives and the Centre's operation.



The Centre staff welcome Brothers and Sisters in Need



Sr Mary, Kelvin and Mary Kanana with Suzanne



Suzane engages with the boys



Suzanne and Daniel with a week old rabbits

There is always great excitement when Paula Cullen's group, which consists of Irene, Vera, Catherine, Claire, Teresa, and Paula, visits. These 'semi-retired' women pack a colossal amount of work into the 3 week visits. Apart from interacting with the boys the whole time, this incredible group of women attend many meetings with other MPC departments as their generosity is far-reaching, although predominantly focused on the Rehabilitation Centre. The meetings involved an update on the solar energy infrastructure completed a few years ago at the Centre. Discussions centered on power consumption data to resolve the hot water system.



Claire Chambers and Paula Cullen meet with Peter Giertsen from the Solar company with Kelvin and Reinhardt.

The other meeting involved the landscape architect, who presented his pitch design to the group. After subsequent meetings, a final design was agreed upon. The project will now go into tendering, and fundraising will begin to see it through to completion. The tricky element is that the land has huge Kenya power poles diagonally positioned that cannot be moved.



Paula, Vera and Sr Mary look at the new designs



The team inspects the field area



Catherine Nolan and MIRC staff and boys after the excursion trip

The boys were treated to an excursions at Stedmak Gardens and Recreation Centre for a full fun day of activities. They played games at the amusement park, went to the zoo, had lunch, and swam in a heated pool which was sponsored by Catherine Nolan. Needless to say that the boys were exhausted at the end.



The boys enjoying a chicken chips and soda for lunch during the excursion trip



the boys enjoying games and rides



Lining up for the zoo



Time for a swim



MIRC staff with Vera Smith at Stedmak Recreation Centre

Catherine Nolan and her group Teresa, Patsy, and Pauline had a full day of fun with the boys. They have been working on the new renovations that will transform the old mabati classroom into an art gallery showcasing the incredible artwork produced by the boys. Visitors can now see the boys' work in one exhibition gallery room named after ASKEA Girls National School, Carlow, the institution that sponsored most of the funds required for the transformation. The carpentry instructor, Charles, and his apprentice carpenters are completing the shelving.



Catherine Nolan's Team Teresa, Patsy and Pauline painting with the carpentry boys helping with the new gallery exhibition room

Catherine Nolan's group initiative led to the purchase of 37 new mattresses, while Paula's Group generously donated 4 for the small boys.



Catherine Nolan and Claire Chambers donates mattresses to the boys on behalf of herself and Claire Chambers



Catherine Nolan's Team donates towels to the Centre and Paula Cullen's Team donated the double decker beds

To maximize the smart TV capabilities that the Heeran family donated it was necessary to connect Wi-Fi in Calary Hall. The Heeran family donated funds to extend the signal to the dining hall.



Wi-Fi materials

Continuing with the theme of connection. The Heeran family donated a new public address system for the Centre to be used on special occasions such as graduation ceremonies. Before the Centre would borrow the school's PA system but there were always concurrent events. The system also doubles as a music speaker which is ideal for gatherings in the Calary Hall.



Teresa Heeran presents the Public Address to the Centre

The Centre specially marked St Patrick's Day this year with a sports day where the boys participated in games of soccer, rugby and basketball and showcased their acrobatics skills. Guests included members of Paula Cullen's group, Catherine Nolan's group, Kristina Nwazota, her husband Jeff, and their friend Nuru and Sr Mary, Sr Patricia, Sr Anne and Sr Barbara. A prize-giving ceremony took place right after the games and activities. The day was "green" and joyful. The boys and guests were treated to various delicacies, including Irish stew accompanied by another favourite, chapatis.



Kristina, Sr Mary, Sr Babra, Kelvin, Sr Patricia, Sr Anne and Jane



Catherine, Teresa, Vera, Irene, Paula, with MIRC staff on St. Patrick's Day



Stephen holds an Ireland scarf as the boys cheer on the match



Sr Patricia, Sr Barbra, Sr Mary and Teresa on St. Patrick's Day



Boys receive treats



Paula Cullen presents the Award to Reagan Olunga as the top scorer



Catherine presents Joel Mackenzie his award



Rugby coach Denishe Ndinya and soccer coach Benter Hadar and Geoff receive their awards on St. Patrick's Day

Before returning to Ireland Paula Cullen's group hosted a pizza night for the boys.



Hmmm...pizza...yeah!



After St Patrick’s Day came Easter. Kristina Nwazota of the World Bank planned and financed the Easter celebrations for the Centre. Apart from organizing outside caterers, she brought chocolates, soft drinks, and plenty of sweets to everyone. It was a wonderful day as she taught the boys new Easter games like the Easter Egg Hunt and dancing chairs.



Easter treats for the boys prepared by Kristina Nwazota



Ramadhan Ali celebrates upon a successful Egg hunt



Kristina serving the boys lunch.



Easter lunch



The boys enjoying a game called the dancing chairs

After a wonderful time feasting the boys had to get a little physical to burn off all the calories, enter the dancing chairs.

Kristina Nwazota also organized bread supply to the Centre for each month. It will certainly speed up the breakfast line.



Just in time for breakfast – fresh bread.



The Centre's parking area, just outside the clinic, where visitors park their vehicles, has undergone renovation. Previously, the area was dotted with a ditch that would fill with water and create muddy pools, making it inaccessible. However, the area has been fixed thanks to Paula Cullen's group. They organized the delivery of 10 tonnes of blue metal to repair the area, resulting in a car park that can be used in all weather conditions.



The carpentry boys spread out the blue metal gravel



Each time Paula Cullen group's visits in March every new boy receives a new uniform, socks and a few casual clothes to replace the worn out ones for other boys.



Patsy Egan sorting out new uniforms

Milton and John delighted to get new uniforms



Catherine Nolan's Group bought a pair of new school shoes for the new boys. Leon is delighted with his new pair of shoes.



The Centre is grateful to all those that have supported the boys no matter how be it through finances, food provisions, donations, stationaries or clothes. Our special thanks goes out to the following donors for their continued support of the Centre.

Team Pankaj
Kristina Nwazota
Mr Singh

Team Paula Cullen
Lemby and friends
Individual donors

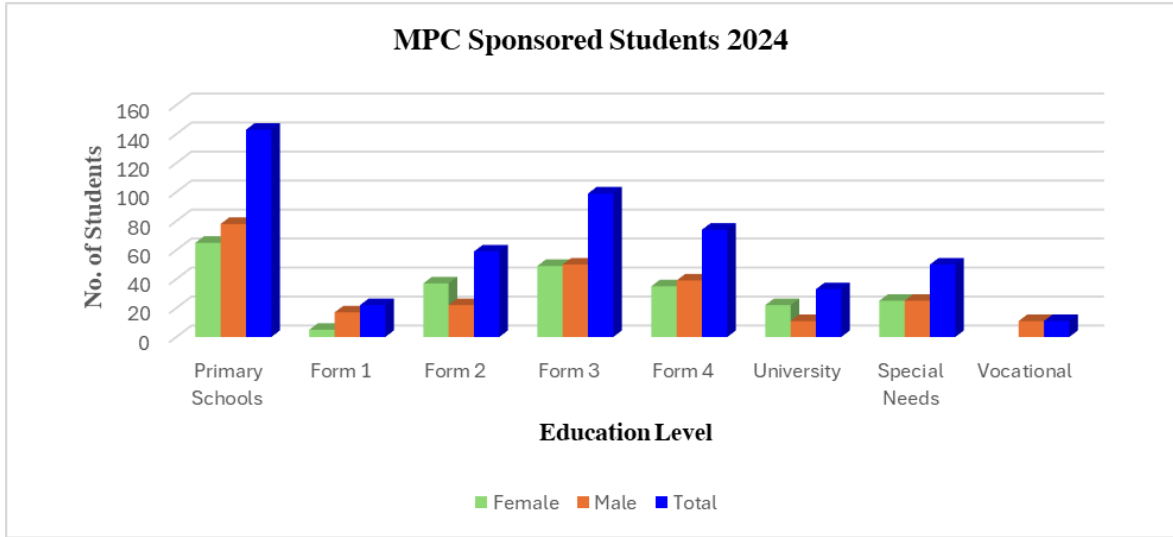
Team Catherine Nolan
Stephen Nganga
BA Crewmembers

It appears that our overseas visitors are establishing a tradition by treating the boys to pizzas. Both Catherine Nolan's and Paula Cullen's groups had pizza nights, with Catherine Nolan's group a few weeks after Paula's group.



Sponsorship Office

Currently there are 491 students being sponsored at some level of education with the possibility of more in the months ahead. In March the Office received visits from donors and significant development proposals to enhance the lives and education of our children.



Over the past seven years, Paula Cullen's Group has sponsored many boys at the Mary Immaculate Centre. It's worth noting that in 2024, the group plans to sponsor 30 boys. We are grateful for Paula Cullen's Group's continued commitment towards ensuring that the young boys lead a life of reintegration and education.



MPC Staff with Clare, Irene, Vera and Paula



Angela and Christine from VIVO Energy.

Vivo Energy met with Sr Mary and staff from the Sponsorship Office to discuss their new initiative to support secondary school students. As part of this initiative, they will donate computers to St. Michael's computer laboratory. This donation is expected to significantly enhance the technology resources available at St. Michael's, leading to an improved learning environment for the students.

Airtel Kenya has partnered with MPC for over 25 years and advocated a new proposal to upgrade the sports field. The plans are currently in progress, and this development is highly anticipated as it will provide better sports facilities and extracurricular activities for our students.



Meeting Victoria and Joy of Airtel

Robert and Odette from Canada visited their beneficiaries, Linda Nasiche and Felicia Akumu, at St Michael's Secondary School. They personally engaged with the students to discover a little more about the challenges they face each day living in the slums and how grateful they are for the opportunity. Both students are doing well academically.



Robert & Odette meet their beneficiaries



St Catherine pupils write thank you letters

As the term ends, one of the tasks assigned to the pupils is to write letters expressing gratitude towards their sponsors. It is always a heartwarming experience to be part of this process and witness the joy that the children feel for being able to attend school.

We organize monthly seminar sessions and rehabilitation activities for ex-convicts in our community. However, we have been facing challenges with lower-than-expected turnout. The majority of the attendees are struggling with health issues related to alcoholism. To address this, we provide interventions through counselling and business support programs.



Second Chance Program session with the ex-convicts

March was a busy month with many international visitors and follow-up meetings. It is essential to support vulnerable individuals, even when their challenges are not typical but are specific to everyday life in the slums. Thank you for helping lift people out of poverty and the injustices that arise from it.



Social & Health Services

Social Services

The social workers in five of our centres continued to attend to needy clients who visited the office, providing assistance based on their specific needs. Clothing aid and nutritional support were among the most significant needs addressed. Unfortunately, the country experienced heavy rains, which caused flash floods, and the residents of Mukuru slums were severely affected. The floods caused havoc and resulted in the loss of several lives. Many families were forced out of their homes as our catchment area was one of the most affected. The flooding caused by the overflowing river swept away all their household belongings. In response, we provided affected families with bedding, clothes, and food to help them cope.

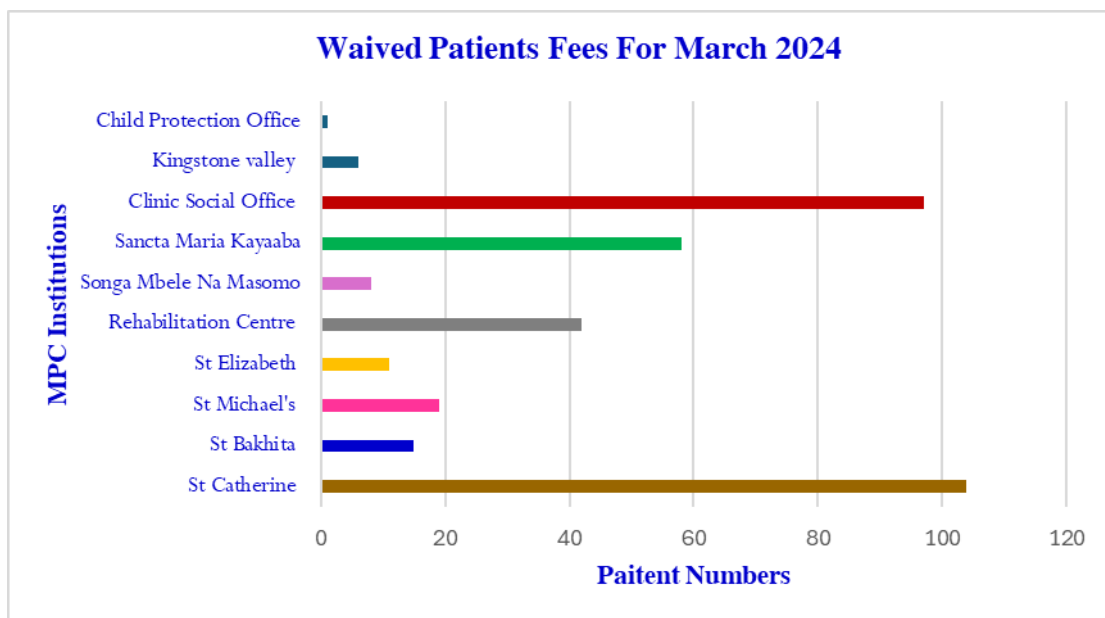
The Amaranth program has been instrumental in regularly aiding sick clients and malnourished children. This aid has helped to strengthen their immunity. Additionally, social offices have provided nutritional support to families in need, assisting them with whatever was available. As the schools prepared for the first term break, social workers ensured that students in need were supported to study comfortably. Girls in need were provided with menstrual hygiene materials, as many of them were unable to access them at home due to poverty. Furthermore, some students were given school uniforms and stationery to help them attend school with dignity.

The Child Protection Office worked closely with the social workers to ensure students were mentored through the weekly mentorship sessions across all the institutions. The staff and volunteer counsellors provided psychosocial support for students and staff in group sessions across all centres. The office also followed up on the alleged abuse cases and rescued four children undergoing both parental negligence and physical abuse. The recorded physical abuse cases are on the rise, and we are working to educate parents on better ways to solve conflicts amicably with their children and help reduce the number of domestic violence cases on children.

MIC Clinic is a crucial healthcare provider for the Mukuru community. Due to the current doctors' strike, public hospitals cannot offer services, making it difficult for many community members to access private hospitals because of their high costs. Consequently, the Clinic has seen a significant increase in patients. The Clinic's social worker has been checking on sick children in various hospitals to ensure they attend the Clinic. Still, unfortunately, they are unable to do so until the doctors' strike is called off. The Clinic has waived its treatment fees to support the needy clients and students from learning institutions. However, the main challenge is that parents with chronically ill children do not have health insurance, which is something the Clinic emphasizes for every parent to have.



In March 2024, MPC Clinic provided medical treatment to 1,980 patients and administered over 700 laboratory tests. The statistics are higher than the previous month due to the Easter period. The medical social worker handled 24 ongoing cases and referred 8 patients to other health facilities for further treatment. Due to the continuing doctor's strike at national hospitals which is now in its 3rd week the number of waived cases increased to 369. Despite these challenges, the Clinic continued to provide healthcare services to a diverse patient base, treating various medical conditions and conducting routine check-ups to promote community health and well-being.



The March de-worming program targeted Sancta Maria Kayaaba Primary School. Other primary schools will also receive tablets to remain parasite-free.

Nurse distributing de-worming tablet to Sancta Maria pupils

Our health is crucial as it affects our capacity to be independent. Many parents are currently facing numerous challenges, and the last thing they need is for their health to fail them. The Clinic is dedicated to ensuring the community can access healthcare services easily.



Announcements

Activities outside the Departments

- ✚ British Airways crewmember, Ellie and Charlie visited the projects and distributed essential donations.



Charlie and Ellie at the Head Office

- ✚ Suzanne and Daniel (*Brothers and Sisters in Need*) dined at the Skills Centre and met with Andrew Otieno who designs the Christmas Cards.



Suzanne, Andrew and Daniel

- ✚ MPC held a vigil in remembrance of Danica from eRko Slovakia, who was to visit MPC in March 2019 but died in the Ethiopian Airlines tragedy.



- ✚ Sharlet Too, a donor from Texas, USA, who supports several teenage mothers, paid a visit to MPC while catching up with one of her beneficiaries, Irene Adhiambo. Irene is a teen mother and student at St. Michaels' Secondary.



- ✚ Mercy Chege, a DKA correspondent visited MPC and is based in Kenya.

