

August Newsletter Vol 9 Issue No. 8 2024

Dear Partners, Supporters and Friends,

August is meant to be a quieter month due to the school holiday break at MPC. However, reading the newsletter, there was a steady number of activities across all the Departments. The school break allows time for the Centre to conduct repairs and maintenance without inhibiting the services, for staff to have training, meetings, and plans for the remainder of the year, and for pupils and students to participate in holiday and mentorship programs.

Thanks to our supporters, we have been able to run the feeding program during the holidays, providing crucial support to families in need. I want to extend a special thanks to the Pankaj Foundation for their sustained support and care for the vulnerable families in Mukuru. Your continued support is not just valuable, it's life changing for many.

Our vocational training students were given a rare and all-important opportunity to gain insight into the behind-the-scenes work of the hospitality industry, a perspective they wouldn't have had without the generous support of KWAL and the Tamarind Hotel. This unique experience has opened new doors for these students, and we are deeply grateful for the doors it opens for these students.

It is wonderful to read about the therapeutic program at Songa and how well some children are doing because of staff training, appropriate aids and equipment. The smiles on the children's faces are something to behold. Raising the profile of children living with disabilities means the stigmatization can be slowly reduced.

Inside

Education
Primary School Updates
Team Pankaj Foundation
Mentorship at St Michael's 6
Holiday Programs 7
Tamarind Excursion 8
Transformations
Songa Mbele Updates 9
Donations
Rehabilitation Updates
Volunteers
Sport and Music Programs 12
Workshops
Face-lifts at the Centre
Supporters
Sensitization Activities
Social and Health
Nutrition Assistance
Home Visits 17
Teen Mothers
Mentorship
Clinic Updates
Emelda's Progress
Announcements
MPC19

We have been fortunate to benefit from the support of volunteers and interns over the years, and we're excited to welcome Annalise, Teresa, and India for the next three months. We are confident that their contributions to the people through the Departments will enrich the learning environment, and we are indebted for their willingness to join us in our mission.

The sports and music programs continue to develop as the students have really embraced the experiences. It is clear that the boys at the Rehabilitation Centre have a real thirst to participate in all activities that provide extra learning that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

The sponsored students gathered in August to hear, participate in, and support each other at the Sensitization Day, now in its 8th year. The return of previously sponsored students to lead the sessions positively reinforces that education sponsorship, if embraced, provides a way out of poverty.

Unfortunately, many families in Mukuru are currently experiencing unprecedented hunger. The nutritional support for August was significantly higher compared to other months. The school holidays allowed social workers to conduct home visits to assess family situations. It was found to be worse than initially thought, with the full impact of the demolition and floods becoming apparent. Fortunately, we have social workers and volunteer counsellors on university placements at each of the 5 sites to assist with monitoring and evaluating interventions. The clinic numbers have remained steady over the month, emphasising health talks for the patients while they wait to be seen. It is good to hear that Emelda, a 14-year-old girl from St. Michael's, is strong enough to progress to her next course of chemotherapy.

Our environmental efforts continue with the dumpsite across the road from the Head Office, involving nearby industries and local residents. Only through collaboration can MPC carry out numerous activities and interventions daily. We are truly thankful for your support.

I thank God and you for the help you have given which enables us to give the services.

God Bless

Sr Mary Killeen Director





Education

Primary Schools

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

Before the school holidays, pupils took their end-of-term assessments. Because the schools were closed for most of August, there were few activities, except for the outreach activities carried out by the schools' social offices to the families in the community that accounted for 70% of the interventions for the month.

The Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) announced the end of the primary teacher's strike just before the start of the new term. However, the Junior Secondary students at St. Catherine Primary School were affected as their teachers participated in the secondary school strike to support their colleagues. The secondary teachers' demands include the implementation of the second phase of the 2021-2025 Collective Bargaining Agreement, teacher promotions, permanent absorption of Junior Secondary School (JSS) teachers, and the reinstatement of their medical cover. The Government has urged dialogue with the teachers to resolve the strike, but this has not happened yet. Term 3 is short, lasting only 8 weeks. National exams for grades 3 and 6 will be taking place. The Ministry of Education is working to ensure that all primary schools are equipped with classrooms for Grade 9 students by 2025. Despite the challenges, such as Sancta Maria Primary School's lack of space, the Ministry is committed to finding solutions. The school has been earmarked to receive additional classrooms for Grade 9 students, demonstrating the Government's commitment to education.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi held a three-day conference for the Heads of Catholic Primary Schools during the holidays. The participants were urged to embrace the sacred mission of taking care of the children entrusted to them, and to prioritize their needs for immediate action, equipping them for life's challenges. The conference's theme was 'Catholic Schools, Centres of Integrity.'

St Elizabeth Primary School attended the Kenya National Music Festivals at Uasin Gishu County, where it presented a few items. Dozens of schools, each with exceptionally high standards, were all vying to secure places at the East Africa level. Although our students did not secure a place this year, they performed well and gained valuable experience. This is a steppingstone for future success and we are optimistic about their growth and learning from this experience.



While the holiday break is a time of joy for many, it can be a period of stress for families struggling to feed their children. MPC's holiday feeding program steps in to provide hot, nutritious, balanced meals, ensuring children don't go hungry during the holidays. This initiative not only provides immediate relief but also has a significant impact on school enrolments and academic performance throughout the

year. It's a lifeline for the needy children who rely on school feeding for survival. The holiday

feeding program, which was held 2 days per week in 3 schools due to their population, is a testament to MPC's commitment to this cause and the relief it brings all family members.



Holiday Feeding Program

In memory of Mr Laxman Bhai Bhimji K. Raghwani, who passed away in September 2023, his extended family visited the MPC to donate to vulnerable families. Mr Laxman Bhai, from Laxman Bhai Construction Ltd, played a crucial role in establishing The Pankaj Foundation, a significant contributor to the MPC schools' feeding program. The family was accompanied by Temple priests and Pankaj Foundation staff at the event held in the multipurpose hall. The donations were received by students from the vocational training centre and vulnerable parents from Songa Mbele na Masomo.





Temple priests with Pankaj; Laxman Bhai family donate sewing machines

Mr Pankaj explained MPC's mission to the guests. Sr Mary thanked the family for their support and assured them of her prayers and further collaborations. The Temple priests conducted a special prayer for Laxman Bhai's soul and his family.





Donations received by the vulnerable Mukuru parents from Songa Mbele

The family's donation of wheelchairs, mini gas cookers, and sewing machines has been a significant boost to the different MPC projects. The wheelchairs have supported Songa Mbele's parents in transporting their children to the centre, while the mini cookers have upgraded the cooking methods of parents who previously used charcoal and kerosene stoves. The sewing machines, however, have played a crucial role in the lives of the youth from the Vocational

Training Centre. These machines have not only provided them with a means to make a livelihood after completing their course but have also made us proud of their achievements, and we are encouraged to continue supporting such initiatives.

The holiday breaks typically allow for repairs to be carried out. Each of the 4 primary schools had a few specific projects. St Catherine transformed one of the classrooms into a science laboratory, St. Bakhita replaced broken tiles and repaired the staffroom chairs, and St. Elizabeth repaired the ECDE toilets. Government funding under the repair and maintenance vote heads for junior schools made all the repairs possible.



Paving and clearing St. Bakhita Primary





Classroom board at St. Bakhita Primary





Tiles repair at St. Bakhita primary school





Transforming the classroom into a science laboratory at St. Catherine's. Repaired chairs.



St Michael's Secondary School

There are 542 students enrolled at St Michael's, with a close 50:50 gender ratio. The Form 4 candidates (125) will get a little nervous as they only have a few weeks remaining in high school before the national examinations, a crucial milestone shaping their future. This should serve as a strong motivation for them to focus on their studies.

Before the start of the final 2024 term, all students received reports on their academic performance. The average for Form One's best-performing subject was CRE, with a B Grade (8.84 mean), followed by Geography with a C+ (7.30 mean). The Form Two subject was Geography, with a B+ (8.15 mean), followed by Biology C+ (7.39 mean). The Form Three subject was CRE, with a C grade (5.9 mean), followed by Computer Studies with a C grade (5.52 mean). The Form Four subject was CRE, with a C grade (5.91 mean), followed by Geography, with a C grade (5.43 mean). Based on these results, the Form Four students will need to put a mighty effort into the last few weeks if they hope to further their tertiary education. Parents were provided an update on their children's progress and what exactly will take place in the next few weeks.



Parents and student at the form four academic meeting

The vulnerable girls and teenage mothers from MPC and Mukuru slum enjoyed their mentorship session. The group discussed the growing number of teenage pregnancies within the community and ways to mitigate it. The counsellor presented some strategies on the issue.



Mentorship session in progress



Across the four-week holiday break, St. Michael's Secondary School organized a series of activities designed to promote physical fitness, personal development, and cultural appreciation among students. The activities, held on separate days for each year group, included interclass competitions in various games, mentorship, music and dance performances.

The day began with cultural music and dance performances, setting an energetic and vibrant tone for the rest of the day's activities. Students showcased their talent and appreciation for their cultural backgrounds through traditional Kamba and Luyha dances. The performances were well-received, with students and teachers alike noting the importance of cultural preservation in the school environment. The topics covered at the mentorship sessions were self-awareness, peer pressure, leadership and drug abuse.







Dancing

Soccer

Board games







Table tennis

Mentorship Sessions

In a fun way, students learned to identify their strengths, weaknesses, values, and aspirations, which helped them set personal goals and improve their self-esteem. They also developed strategies on how to respond to negative influences and, importantly, to make independent positive decisions. This emphasis on independent decision-making instilled a sense of confidence in the students' growth. The leadership session was embraced well by the students as it provided them with more tools to manage the challenging times in the slums to make healthy lifestyle choices. The holiday activities at St. Michael's Secondary School were a great success.



The sports fields between St. Bakhita Primary and St. Michael's Secondary Schools will undergo resurfacing to provide safer playing conditions. Airtel is sponsoring the project, and we are grateful for their support.



Refurbishment of the fields underway

ur Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre

Despite the few activities at the Centre due to scheduled examinations for 271 enrolled students, there was a significant event for the catering students, an educational visit to Tamarind Tree Hotel. This excursion provided the students with a unique opportunity to learn about the different sections of a commercial hotel kitchen, from the receiving area to the wash area. They were also shown the food and beverage sections and conference rooms, gaining valuable insights into the hospitality industry.



Students being taken through rules of the kitchen

3 Students at the service area





Students on tour at the hotel



The centre has successfully registered 25 catering students for the KNEC examinations, showcasing our students' diverse interests. The breakdown of the registrations is as follows: 9 students are pursuing an Artisan in Food and Beverage. At the same time, 16 are registered for the Craft Certificate in Food and Beverage. In addition to this, 8 students have registered for Office Procedures and will sit their exams starting in early November.



With the growing number of students enrolling at OLMVTC space has become an issue. Plans are under way to expand the catering block. The management and architect were in attendance to discuss the plans and duration of the project.

Skills Expansion Meeting



S onga Mbele na Masomo Children's Centre

The Centre continues to help children and their families strengthen their resolve to provide the best possible care for their children. All children at Songa Mbele are recognized as unique individuals with varying abilities and development needs. The Centre creates a welcoming, fun, and inspiring environment for all. The learning environment stimulates and enhances positive outcomes for the children. There are now 113 registered children who look forward to coming to the Centre. The consistent speech and physiotherapy sessions just take the milestone achievements to another level. During August, over 200 therapeutic sessions were conducted.

The introduction of new therapy equipment, designed to train the children to the highest level of functioning, has brought about a significant and hopeful change. Several children have already experienced the positive impact of this equipment, a testament to the Centre's commitment to their development. A couple of standout children who have benefited from this are:

Ryan Steven, aged 7, Meshack Musyoki aged13 and Kelsie Taraji age10, all with cerebral palsy, with their new walkers. We are thrilled to see them strengthening their muscles, a crucial step towards their long-term success. They have lots of space in the corridors to practice, and we couldn't be prouder of their progress.







We greatly appreciate supporting parents through information workshops. A disability 'Talk-Fest' was offered to parents, providing a platform for them to actively share and discuss how they contribute to their child's realization of goals and independence and deal with the disability stigma and negative attitudes. The workshop was facilitated by Dennis Mwaura, from Cream Vision, who as a person living with disabilities shares his experiences with others.



Participants during the workshop



Cheshire Disability held a day for 10 of its sponsored children to improve self-awareness and identification. Sheila Kekayaya and Hezron Otieno facilitated the session, which included sign language instruction. Cheshire Disability also assisted 2 children with special seats to enable improvement in their posture while at home.



Parents were assisted with 20 cooking gas while eight children received wheelchairs by Team Pankaj.



Carol and Rigley, British Airways crewmembers with Songa staff

The Centre received some food provisions, clothes, shoes and educational resources from different donors who visited the centre in August.

PC Rehabilitation Centre

August provides the boys with a diverse range of extracurricular activities as school closes for the holiday break. These activities include sports, arts and crafts, music, and community service projects. It is wonderful to see the boys respond well by participating in these activities with zeal, creating a vibrant environment with love, laughter, hard work, and a sense of belonging for all 66 resident boys, from the youngest to the eldest, including the 20 sponsored boys.

Despite the absence of regular school lessons, the Centre didn't miss a beat, organizing library sessions. These sessions were made possible by the invaluable assistance of 3 interns from Austria and the United States, Annalise, Teresa, and India. Their support in academic and extracurricular work, including revision papers, was instrumental. We are grateful for their contribution, as well as the efforts of Paula Cullen and Friends and Kristina Nwazota, who provided the Centre with materials for the library shelves and learning resources in the newly renovated library. The carpentry boys, under the guidance of the carpentry instructor, Charles, brought these designs to life, producing outstanding bookshelves.









Annalise helps with maths work

India Burke teaching how to read and write English Teresa assists with revision papers

The boys returned to the local South B soccer tournament in fourth position with 18 teams in the competition. The boys are performing well, and 4 of them have been invited to play for the Silver Eagles Football Academy in the Nairobi Super Cup, a testament to their potential and talent. The academy, coached by MPC employee Kennedy, offers a promising platform for their growth. Kennedy is proving his worth as a successful coach, and he led the Highway Secondary School to victory in the Nairobi International Cup, which is currently competing in the East African Cup in Tanzania. The two boys were scouted by a Denmark football representative, and we hope something good will eventually come out of it.



Coach Kennedy with the 4 boys off to the Silver Eagles Academy



Rehab Soccer Team

The rugby team is continuing to train even though it is currently without a coach. In the meantime, James Kamau and Dennis Wanyoro have been leading the training sessions and organizing friendly matches to help the team improve its skills.



Boys enjoy a friendly touch rugby match

The majority of the boys in the music band have made significant strides in their musical journey. They have found instruments they are passionate about, honed their skills to the point of independence, and even learned to read music. This is a testament to their dedication and a big step in the right direction. The other half of the boys are also making progress, working on developing their singing voices.



The boys' development of art knowledge and skills saw them proudly display their creativity with others. The boys taught cadets from St. John's Ambulance how to paint, crochet, and make bracelets. It was a win-win situation because they also learned new tricks like colour combinations, crocheting messages into the fabric and sketching making the session very interactive and educational. Their learning experience was not only enriching but also engaging, sparking a curiosity in the audience about what they learned.

Art workshop with St. John's Ambulance cadets



The boys learning different styles of crotchet from the St. John's Ambulance cadets

Some of the boys have developed such a strong bond with farming that they can now recognize when the vegetables need care, from weeding to irrigation, harvesting, and even treating the sick. This suggests that the boys will carry this knowledge with them when they leave the centre, using it to manage their own farms in the future, and potentially achieving independence.







The boys tending to the Centre's garden for the new planting season





Fully gown kales and pumpkin vegetables ready for harvesting

Thanks to the boys ongoing care for the bunnies, we will have plenty for selling and delicacies. To reduce the likelihood of interbreeding and have a wider variety of breeds, which leads to healthier and stronger rabbits, the Afflatoun Club bought four extra bunnies this month.

With 25 chickens available, the Centre's poultry farming project is performing well. The care and attention given to the chickens' help identify sick ones and treat them promptly to prevent cross-infection. The Centre no longer needs to purchase eggs for the boys as this project has become a sustainability success. We are excited about our plans to have between 70 and 100 chickens by December, and the Afflatoun Club has bought 10 chicks and 4 hens to contribute to the Centre's stock, marking the beginning of our future expansion.

In 2018, the uncompleted kitchen building was transformed with the added floor into the Washington T Booker Library. Seven years later, thanks to the tireless efforts of Kristina Nwazota and Paula Cullen and Friends, the library received a face-lift. New floor mats, coat of paint, shelves, and a reorganization of resources now provide a peaceful sanctuary for book enthusiasts. Kristina and her family meticulously organized the volumes into sections based on book genres, such as children's books, picture books, high school textbooks, history, and geographic literature,



creating a conducive learning environment for the boys. Kristina's appeal for the World Bank staff members to donate resources, furniture, and equipment is a testament to the positive impact the library has made on the boys' learning.

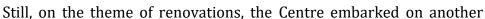


Washington T Booker Library new look

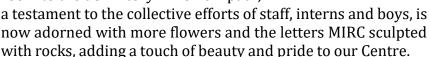
New library chairs



Kristina and Paula collaborated to enhance the kitchen storage, erecting new shelving to protect and store the vegetables.



project that connects the sports field, music room and the ASKEA exhibition room to the dormitory. The new path,













A long-time supporter of the Rehabilitation Centre, Mr Pankaj, invited all the boys and staff to dinner at the Sikh Temple in Westlands. He also gifted each boy a school bag that included practical items such as stationery, books, umbrellas, pens, and pencils, and he was treated to various delicacies. Mr Pankaj was instrumental in developing one of the market gardens at the Centre. He has continued his commitment to the Centre, witnessing the boys' remarkable transformation into young men who will contribute positively to society.

Mr Pankaj and the boys at the Sikh Temple



Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church celebrated its Family Feast Day in August. After the Mass, the boys entertained the congregation with traditional and modern dances. Some of the boys also gave solo performances on the recorder and piano, which thrilled the audience and made them cheer for their musical abilities.

Boys Dance at OLQP Feast Day

During the holiday break, the counselling program at the Centre can conduct more sessions based on the boys' availability. Through group sessions, the boys learned about various subjects related to their sexuality, personal identity, the consequences of drug addiction, and sexually transmitted infections.



Group counselling based on age-groups



The centre has been fortunate to have the support of numerous well-wishers from the neighbourhood and businesses actively engaging in corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the community. Your efforts are not only recognized but also have a positive impact on the homeless and vulnerable. We are deeply humbled by the ongoing support of our local and international donors. Your consistent contributions are invaluable to us and we are truly grateful for your continued support.



Boys receive fresh vegetables, snacks, clothes and other food provisions in August.



ponsorship Office

The sensitization sessions were held during the holiday break for the sponsored students in the program. The objective of the days was to raise student awareness of the sponsorship program's goals and expectations, empower them with knowledge about the opportunities provided for them, and give them a platform to voice any concerns and share with other students proven strategies. There was a high turnout with active participation. The guest speakers this year were Lilian Njeri and Sr. Dorcas.



The students' feedback indicated that the day was a transformative experience. It helped them gain valuable insights into managing time effectively, setting clear goals, discovering their unique talents, and understanding the impact of teenage pregnancy on their future.



There are 625 students under the MPC sponsorship program: 173 pupils in primary schools, 283 in secondary schools, 46 at university, 94 in vocational training, and 29 special needs students.

The month marked the end of the Term 2 school calendar, including collecting school reports and appreciation letters for our sponsored students. During the break, sponsored students can participate in the Centre's community service program, which helps foster a sense of responsibility and civic duty. The collaborative nature of this work creates a stronger sense of teamwork among the students, contributing to their personal and social development.



Community Service



St Catherine's Pupils with their Appreciation Letters

The Sponsorship Office is committed to MPC's goal of empowering students and fostering a program consistently delivering value and transformative experiences through opportunities.



Tocial & Health Services

S ocial Services



Home Visit

Despite the school holidays leading to fewer school-related activities, the outreach activities with nutritional support and follow-ups kept the social offices busy. The Nutrition and Amaranth program, a significant part of our efforts, served 433 clients, with 416 adults and 7 children. All of them have a chronic or terminal illness, and the amaranth plays a vital role in boosting their immunity. The malnourished babies' number 10 babies and other "walk-ins" received nutritional support.

The social workers carried out 110 home visits. Most were given a status assessment because of the demolitions, and 86 hospital visits and follow-ups were completed. After the evaluations,

the social workers identified 224 clients who required food provisions, clothing and rent support. A further 678 needy students from the MPC schools were supported with various school-related items. The absenteeism numbers were investigated, and many were due to the floods and demolitions.

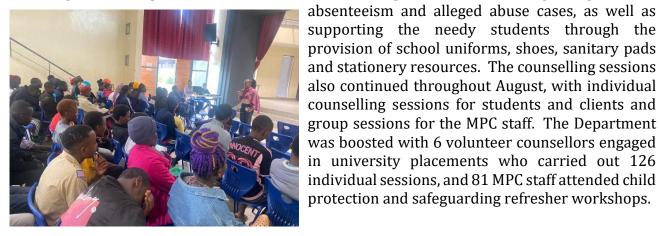


Mother received food parcels

The Department continues supporting community members and families affected by the floods and demolitions. Over 890 individuals are still facing the aftermath, and the department is implementing food distribution schedules for vulnerable youth in the community and parents of the children in our schools. Social workers have also been working on recovery support programs to help children who have been unsettled since the demolition. They focus on helping families get back on their feet by providing sustainable interventions.

The Teen Mothers Program involves teenagers from the MPC schools and community attending monthly mentorship sessions. These sessions aim to provide emotional support, boost self-esteem, and encourage educational and career advancement. The program also aims to help the

The Department's holiday mentorship sessions for high school students were not just successful, but also inspiring. They were keenly embraced, with hundreds of students taking advantage. The Department continued to follow up with students regarding chronic



supporting the needy students through the provision of school uniforms, shoes, sanitary pads and stationery resources. The counselling sessions also continued throughout August, with individual counselling sessions for students and clients and group sessions for the MPC staff. The Department was boosted with 6 volunteer counsellors engaged in university placements who carried out 126 individual sessions, and 81 MPC staff attended child protection and safeguarding refresher workshops.

Holiday mentorship Sessions

The Clinic continued with the follow-ups and monitoring of the sick children and clients under MPC medical support programs. A few cases that needed one-off treatment are doing well, and

long-term patients with chronic and terminal illnesses are monitored closely. There are 3 children with cancer, and one has just received a prosthetic leg after his amputation. The other 2 children are undergoing chemotherapy. The Clinic provides for the very vulnerable and needy who would not have access to any form of healthcare. We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the donors who assist us in caring for that particular demographic.



Nutritional Support



St Catherine's Primary School pupils received donated resources

PC Clinic

The Clinic treated 1,786 patients, with 311 accessing non-medical services and 794 laboratory tests conducted. There was a significant 27% decrease (158 cases) in respiratory diseases compared to July, possibly due to warmer weather. Cardiovascular cases increased by 9%, and a substantial 200% increase in Sexually Transmitted Diseases among the reproductive age group. An investigation is ongoing to identify the causes and underlying factors behind the surge.



While patients wait to be seen by a doctor, the Community Health Promoter is crucial in giving health talks to promote good health practices and raise awareness among patients about the importance of getting screened for tuberculosis. This holistic approach to healthcare ensures that our patients receive treatment and education, empowering them to take control of their health.









Patients listening to TB Health talk by CHP

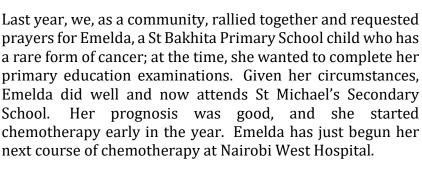
IEC material on TB

Mukuru pupil

Mitchelle OLMVTC student

The medical social worker conducted 9 hospital visits and 2 home visits. The clinic was able to supply a pair of crutches for Hilary Odhiambo, a pupil from Sancta Maria Primary School who Additionally, Mitchelle, a former vocational student, is undergoing broke his tibia. physiotherapy at the clinic.







Activities outside the Departments

- ♣ Scams have become a modern-day curse. Just a reminder to all supporters that MPC has a domain name, "mercymukuru.co.ke", from which all official emails are sent. If you receive something claiming to be from MPC, please check the ending of the email address before responding. It is crucial to exercise caution, as it is not authentic if it does not have mercymukuru.co.ke ending.
- If anyone is travelling to Nairobi soon, could you please get in contact with Paula Cullen on cullen.paula8@gmail.com to assist with transporting musical instruments to MPC.
- ♣ CEL Tours and Travel Ltd visited the Centre with donations.
- We welcome 3 volunteers from Austria, a mathematics teacher, a social worker and administrator, who will spend time at a few of the MPC departments.
- ♣ In August, training workshops were held across MPC. Mercy Chege, the DKA Kenya Office Representative, emphasized funding sources and strategic planning. The training was attended by partner organization representatives and resource mobilizers from various NGOs in Nairobi that receive DKA funding.



Resource Mobilization Training at Head office

4 An environmental meeting occurred to discuss the dumping site across from the MPC Head Office. Residents and nearby industries collaborated on the next steps for ecological conservation and addressing the ongoing issue of dumping in the area.



Environmental meeting underway at MPC hall