



Mukuru Promotion Centre
Empowerment Step by Step
 Sponsored by Sisters of Mercy

December Newsletter Vol 9 Issue No. 12, 2024

Dear Partners, Supporters and Friends,

This December, I feel full of gratitude for the month and the year that has passed and for your support, which enabled the empowerment of the vulnerable to take place. I am most grateful for those who contributed food after the demolitions took place, and families were left without their homes and possessions, many of whom were without a means of earning a living. Of course, feeding families is a short-term solution, and the hard work of enabling them to earn their own living is ongoing. Thanks to those enabling people to get a startup or training to provide for themselves and their families.

We have been informed that the secondary examination results will not be available until January. Students generally need a C Plus grade to proceed to university, although they can attend private universities with lower grades. The rest of the students can train in other colleges like our vocational training centre where they can train in catering, food production and serving, housekeeping, garment making, art, craft and house painting, welding, masonry and plumbing, computer and hairdressing and beauty. There are other colleges where some of you sponsor them for different training. The training is a great help in securing steady employment or being self-employed.

Inside

Education

Grade 9 Classrooms 3
 Holiday Feeding Program 4
 Holiday Programs 4
 Skills Exams 6
 Kibonden Excursion 7

Transformations

Songa Centre Registration 9
 Special Awards 9
 Whistle Foundation Cheer 10
 Christmas Preparations 12
 Excursion 12
 Visitors 13
 Music Program 14
 Farming Updates 15
 Sporting Achievements 16
 Christmas Celebrations 17
 Graduation Success 18
 Sponsorship Updates 19

Social and Health

Start Ups for Parents 20
 Nutritional Support 20
 Needy Families Support 21
 Clinic Updates 23
 Community Health Promoters 23
 Medical Farewells 24

Announcements

MPC 25

Sadly, we lost a bright, hard-working student from a heavy load he was pushing uphill on a cart (mkokoteni), falling backwards with force and causing internal injuries. He was working after school to help his family. He was in Form 3, about to begin his final secondary year, his family's hope of escaping poverty. His loss is devastating. May he rest in peace, and may his family get help to survive and prosper.

We are grateful to team Pankaj that holiday feeding went on through the long school holidays. About 10% of students are in danger of malnutrition and starvation without school lunches. The schools now close at the end of October and don't open until the 6th of January or so. We miss celebrating Christmas with students. We will arrange a Christmas play in January, which has been prepared by youth worker Boaz with youth from the village so that they get to know the Christmas story.

I am very happy with the work going on in Songa Mbele and the Rehabilitation Centre, and I am most grateful to those who support it with sponsorship, clothes, and food. It's also wonderful to see the training in our Vocational Training Centre and the job opportunities opened for many youths. I appreciate the help for parents to begin their businesses again after demolition.

We look forward to the New Year with hope. We have had some abductions of youth in December who had blogs opposing the government. At least two youths were abducted from South B in December. The general public, embassies and many leaders and politicians have asked for these abductions, which often end in bodies being found, to end. We pray that we will no longer have abductions in 2025.

We are grateful to the Sisters of Mercy for registering Mukuru Promotion Centre as a 'Trust' and appoint Trustees. This will enable us to operate more easily.

I wish you and your family blessings for Christmas and for the New Year. May God reward you for the great work done for the residents of Mukuru and other vulnerable children.

God Bless

Sr Mary Killeen
Director



E_{ducation}

P_{primary Schools}

December was a cool month with limited activities from the four primary schools as schools remain on Christmas holidays. The Government assessed some private primary schools nationwide to operate their boarding section for non-compliance with the new safety rules. Others were barred entirely from operating both day and boarding sections. The Government has put up strict measures to be observed by all school owners, and failure will result in permanent closure.

The Government has also addressed the Grade 9 classroom saga. It admitted it has not yet managed to build 11,000 classrooms countrywide, which will be needed by January 2025. The headteachers were advised to use spaces available in schools and erect temporary structures to host the students while classrooms were built.

Mukuru Junior School Grade 8 enrolment currently stands at 213, which will proceed to Grade 9 in 2025. The National Government Constituency Development Fund (NGCDF) has proposed constructing 4 classes for the school, but this is yet to begin. The school's Board of Management (BOM) has put in place intervention measures in case of delays. The school currently has one (1) unoccupied class, a room set aside as a computer laboratory but not furnished, making 2 classrooms. The BOM put all the ECDE children in one place to get a third room so Grade 9s can use the room. St Catherine Primary School have been placed in the third tier of the NGCDF program. St Elizabeth's classrooms are ready to be handed over to the school by the Ministry.



Under construction St Elizabeth Grade 9 Classrooms

The four primary schools continued to feed children during the month of December, which they took home to share with their siblings. The program has been beneficial for parents and pupils, and providing the meals means the children reduce the prevalence of anememia and boost family incomes, paving the way for a healthier and more prosperous future, particularly in times of economic crisis.



St Elizabeth Primary School Holiday Feeding Program



Sancta Maria Primary School Kayaaba Holiday Feeding Program



Abigail

In Kenya, it is estimated that 4,000 babies are born with sickle cell disease annually, and a further 18% are born with the trait. Sadly, Abigail Nekesa, a Grade 5 pupil from St Elizabeth Primary School, was undergoing treatment at Mama Lucy Kibaki Hospital but lost her life in December. The school's social office assisted the family. This unfortunate, tragic loss of life underscores the urgent need for increased access to healthcare for those affected by sickle cell disease that statistically give a 10% of survival to adulthood without treatment.

St Michael's Secondary School

The Class of 2024 eagerly awaits the examination results, which will be released after Christmas. The new principal at St Michael's Secondary School, Mr Joseph Ngari, commenced in December in preparation for the new 2025 academic year and was warmly welcomed by Sr Mary and staff. Mr Ngari conveyed his leadership style to his staff and set targets for the new year.

The long holiday Christmas break is welcomed by many and experienced by others as a challenging time. To assist the students, St Michael's conducted a holiday program to engage them in various physical and intellectual activities and foster teamwork, critical thinking, and collaboration. The activities included football, basketball, table tennis, board games and interactive talks to enhance learning strategies. The program was embraced by the students, who showed lots of enthusiasm through their commitment to the sessions.



Talk session



Girls soccer



Boys soccer



Chess game



A Form 3 student, Joseph Kisingo, was working as a transporter with the mkokoteni (handcart) when it fell on him during the holidays, a sudden and tragic event. He was taken to Mbagathi Hospital, where he was treated and discharged. The following day, his condition deteriorated, and he returned to the hospital. He was taken to the theatre but could not be saved due to the internal bleeding. Two teachers and 20 students from St Michael's attended his funeral in Ithaeni village, Kaani, Machakos County. Joseph was a promising boxer.



Form 3 students attend burial of Joseph Kisingo

Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre

As the courses come to a close, we are pleased to report that 135 students are now fully prepared to excel in the national NITA and KNEC examinations, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Centre. The Centre also hosted candidates from Mukuru kwa Reuben for hairdressing, beauty, and plumbing. The welding candidates successfully completed their NITA exams at the NITA Centre, while the Food and Beverage candidates excelled in their exams at the AMANI-Chaminade Training Centre. The Food and Beverage students went on an Orientation program to Kibondeni in preparation for the upscaling of the food and beverage class in January 2025.



Food and Beverage Orientation at Kibondeni

Before closing for the year, the Centre diligently reviewed all the 2024 activities, demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement. Staff suggested better ways to bridge the identified gaps, ensuring that we are always striving for excellence. To conclude the year, the Centre celebrated Mass and shared lunch with the rest of the MPC staff, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.

The following photographs are of the different practicals undertaken by the students for the respective courses.



Plumbing



Tailoring



Dressing Making



Masonry



Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy



Special Education students with their finished products



Computer Packages Final Exam



Welding candidates at NITA examination Centre



Transformations

Songa Mbele na Masomo Children's Centre

The Ministry of Education finally sent the final registration forms, which were completed and returned to their office. Hopefully, in January, the Centre will have the NEMIS number and follow the official government curriculum for Special Education.

Before the Christmas closure, a few intervention activities were carried out in each of the Units. The therapy sessions continued, and this month's big improver was 5-year-old Michael Mwendwa. Michael was diagnosed with mild cerebral palsy and speech issues. He was mostly non-verbal and communicated with gestures. After continuous fine motor exercises, Michael achieved perfect hand-eye coordination, concentration, and attention span. He can control his gestures when he focuses to avoid falling. His speech is improving; he speaks more often in different contexts, and his pronunciation is more precise.



Michael Mwendwa

On the last day of 2024, children were recognized and rewarded for their efforts throughout the year, including Day Care, Units 1, 2, and 3, as well as therapy and home programs. The awards were Most Improved, Most Hygienic, Most Punctual, Most Disciplined and Most Responsible. Parents on behalf of their children were happy as they received the gifts on behalf of their children.



Awards

The social office organized group counseling to assist parents of children with disabilities. The session was facilitated by two psychologists from Mama Lucy Hospital, Stella Gacheri and Joseph Kinoti.



Songa Mbele parents during group counselling



The Centre's work, supported by local and overseas visitors, has had a significant impact on the families it serves. The families received much-needed maize meals, cooking oil, green grams, beans, and rice, which helped alleviate their food insecurity. The Whistle Foundation Ireland, for Christmas, sponsored food parcels for 100 parents, providing them with essential items. In addition, 31 parents were issued with clothes and shoes, further improving their living conditions.



Whistle Foundation Christmas Food Parcels





Donations Received from Braeburn school, Judith Ogutu and her Friends from Kenya Airways, and British Oxygen Company (BOC) gases

Staff from Safaricom visited the Centre, shared a meal with the children, and donated items. They hope to return in 2025 to help improve children’s lives.



Cake cutting with Safaricom staff



Sharing a meal



Josphat Mwanji receives his materials from Helen

Five children were exited to other institutions and received educational materials for the new year. Two will start at Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre, two will attend the School for the Deaf, and one will begin at St Catherine’s Primary School.

Staff from BOC Gas visited the Centre and assisted the children with some basic skills in tapestry work.



BOC Staff and Unit 3 children



BOC Donations

December started well, with a heartwarming scene of donors and visitors coming into the Centre to help with what little they had, ensuring the boys experienced the warmth of Christmas together. The boys' interaction with them, as they entertained them with dance, music, and team-building exercises, created a sense of connection and community.

In December / January, the number of boys residing at the Centre changes due to graduation and family re-integration. Three boys returned to their families before Christmas, leaving 62 boys at the Centre, with the other 20 boys supported through MPC's sponsorship program. We are proud to share that there are 8 boys who have just completed Form One, 4 who completed Form 2, 4 who completed Form 3, 2 who completed their KCSE, 1 who just completed his second year at university and 1 who completed his final year at the Railway Institute, showcasing their academic progress and potential.

The boys were actively involved in the Christmas preparations, learning how to decorate and create a festive atmosphere at the Centre. Their engagement was not just limited to physical aspects. Still, they also delved deeper into the spirit of Christmas by watching an educational film on Jesus' birth. The Mercy Education Office organized an early Christmas party for the boys at the Marianist International University. The day was packed with fun activities and performances, including poetry, dance, singing, drama skits, and inspirational speeches to encourage the boys to overcome the barriers to a university that will provide them countless life opportunities.



Benjamin Goodhope, Lawrence Okot and Leon Kipchumba colouring Christmas



The Rehab Boys and Teachers at Marianist University



Kristina Nwazota, from the World Bank, orchestrated a diverse and exciting Christmas party at the Centre for the boys, with her friends and coworkers. The day was filled with a range of activities, from face painting to bouncy castles and trampolines, ensuring everyone had a great time. The event was further elevated with outside catering and the exchange of Christmas presents.



Cheryl Wang gifts John Mkulima and Stanley Maina



Brandon Junior, Joseph Mwangi, Isaac Obama enjoyed the trampoline



MIRC staff and boys receive donation from the World Bank Friends and Colleagues of Kristina.



Kristina and Ivy served the meal and fizzy drinks.



The boys enjoying popcorns and bouncing castle with Cheryl Wang

Sir Lincoln Kariuki, a friend of the Centre, lives in the United States and visits Kenya each year. During his visit, he prepared 'Nyama Choma' roast meat —Kenya's national dish for the boys. He also gave some donations and encouraged them to succeed and consider working in a foreign country like he does. The boys were greatly inspired as Sir Lincoln provided an overview of his life in the United States. This time, he brought his whole family and grandparents, who shared a wealth of knowledge with the boys, making the visit truly memorable.



The Lincoln family and friends with donations



The boys serving lunch



Charles Ndirangu and Francis Mukono showing the boys how to prepare Nyama Choma.

The band has had a fantastic month showcasing their skills to the many donor groups who visited the Centre. They have mastered eight Christmas carols, which they have been singing and performing with violins, recorders, and keyboard. Australian opera singer Breana Stillman, a key figure in raising music appreciation at the Centre, was pleased with the boys' performance. Her efforts have been instrumental in facilitating the music sessions at the AEF Reuben Centre with the Ghetto Classics Band.



Irene and Paula present Collins with a violin

A big thank you to the Irish National Symphony Orchestra, which collected instruments for the boys to start learning music under the new music teacher, Mr Collins. Mr Collins, an online student of the Juilliard School of Music in New York and Harvard, is not just a teacher but a mentor who will guide the boys on their musical journey. Thanks also to Breanna, the BA crew, and Team Paula, who delivered the instruments to the centre.



Breanna performing Christmas carols for the boys



Instruments



Listening and singing with teacher Mr Collins

For the third consecutive year, the Blessed Anuarite Small Christian Parish Community took the initiative to organize a Christmas party in honour of the saint for the boys. Their active involvement was evident as they helped with a busy bee clean up, laundry, played games, listened to music, cooked chapatis, and concluded the day with Mass in the dining hall with the boys.



Fr Dan celebrates Mass at the Centre



Blessed Anuarite Small Christian Community with the donations



Africa teaches the boys yoga

British Airways crewmember Africa Matamoros Ramos, with her unique skills, taught the boys some yoga movements and conducted a session with the staff during her visit to the Centre. The boys, in turn, shared their different dance techniques with her. Africa, who has visited the Centre multiple times, always prepared some pizzas, but this time, she taught the boys how to make pizza.



More moves



The boys show Africa some dance moves

Among all the visitors in December, the daily activities continued at the Centre. Counselling sessions were conducted in preparation for the festive season, exiting the Centre, and other customs. The carpentry boys have completed their exams and are brimming with enthusiasm to start their attachment. Their eagerness to sharpen their skills and utilize them to become sustainable and financially independent is a source of hope and optimism.



One of the most notable football events was when Gordon Otiemo, a highly gifted young player, went to the Chipukizi Tournament in Arusha, Tanzania, with his coach, Kennedy Otiemo. His success is a testament to the Centre's role in nurturing talent and providing opportunities for growth. He demonstrated a high level of gaming knowledge and has a promising future.

Coach Kennedy and Gordon Otiemo at the Chipukizi Tournament in Arusha, Tanzania.

As the other boys prepare for the third MIRC Football Camp led by Coach Edwards and Chrissie Brookes, a BA crewmember, they have maintained their excellent performance in their local competitions at home.



The boys after winning a local tournament match

With the assistance of their teachers, Samuel and Terryann, the art class is the creative force behind all of the Centre's Christmas decorations. We were also able to sell candles for Advent.

December saw a pause in gardening to allow the soil time to replenish its nutrients. However, with their diligence and care, the boys tilled the gardens, mixed the soil with manure, and gave it time before the seedlings would be transferred to the main gardens in January. This careful approach ensures the health and productivity of our gardens.

We temporarily relocated the chickens and rabbits to the gym to protect them from predators and theft. Teresa Heeran has engaged experts to design a new structure for a safer and nicer home so they may flourish.



Chicken and rabbits living in the gym temporary.



Frank Cullen has established a tradition at the Rehabilitation Centre by donating a goat and sodas for the boys to celebrate Christmas Day. This year, the art teacher, Samuel, enhanced the occasion by providing face painting.

Christmas Day 2024



Sponsorship Office

As we wrapped up the year, December was a time for us to reflect on our achievements for the **726** sponsored students in 2024 and look ahead to the future. In a season when students typically enjoy extended breaks, we remain committed to keeping them engaged in positive activities, thereby reducing their exposure to social risks such as teenage pregnancy and crime. Our efforts, which included community service, were also aimed at building stronger relationships with our donors, celebrating student success stories, and expressing gratitude for the generous support we have received.



December marked a significant milestone as we celebrated the graduation of some sponsored students from universities nationwide. These success stories are a testament to the transformative impact of the sponsorship program, which has empowered young people to overcome significant financial and social barriers. Edward Mokuia graduated with a Bachelor of Technology in building construction from Masinde Muliro University, a feat that was made possible by the program. His graduation is a beacon of hope for other students in similar circumstances, proving that determination and hard work, coupled with your support, can overcome challenges. Edward is very grateful for the support received from his donors.

Edward Mokuia Graduation

The Office organized a series of community service initiatives. These initiatives were designed to foster a sense of responsibility, keep the students engaged, and encourage students to contribute positively to their surroundings. Sponsored students maintained and beautified the school grounds, ensuring the environment remained conducive to learning. These activities enhanced the school's appearance and helped instill a sense of ownership and pride in the students. The aim was to prevent at-risk behaviours, such as teenage pregnancy, drug use and involvement in crime while providing opportunities for personal development and community contribution.



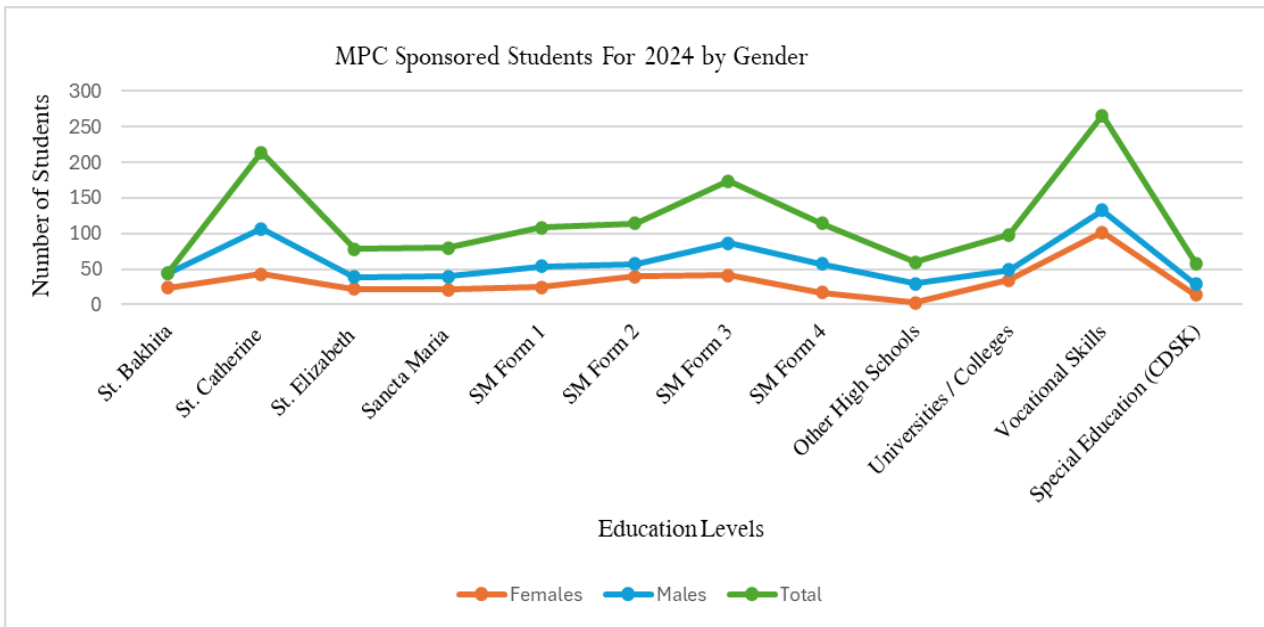
Community Service

As part of our end-of-year outreach efforts, personalized thank you letters were scanned, posted on the database, and sent to donors, expressing sincere gratitude for your support throughout the year. These letters highlighted the significance of helping achieve positive outcomes for students, student progress, and key results from the year's schooling.

As we prepare for the start of a new academic year, we formulated the process for the fee payment for Term 1 2025 for our sponsored students in an attempt to ensure a smooth transition for the students when they report back to school after the long Christmas break. Schools reopen on January 6th, 2025.

The sponsorship program continues to play a vital role in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing them with the resources necessary to pursue their educational goals, to access schools and participate in their education journey. In December, the sponsorship program admitted 11 girls from the Vocational skills program.

As we look forward to the New Year, we are excited about the potential of our program expansion. This growth will not only allow us to welcome new students but also continue to empower our other sponsored students. With the dedication of all involved, we are confident that the program will continue to grow and make a lasting difference in the lives of many more students, giving us all a sense of optimism and hope for the future.





Social & Health Services

Social Services

The Department carried out 3 food distribution exercises to support needy families and families with chronically and terminally ill children. The distribution exercises were done at the beginning of the month, mid-month, and at the end, whereby needy families received food packages to help ease the burden of providing meals for their children. Families with sick children received food items to help boost the children's immunity, significantly improving their health. These families were incredibly grateful for the Christmas package and our donors who made it possible to put a smile on their faces.



Families of sick children receive food supplements at St. Catherine's from Pablo Horstman Foundation



Kayaaba Needy Family

The social workers have focused on facilitating the establishment of close to 40 business startups for victims of floods and demolitions. These startups, which are part of the recovery program, range from small-scale retail shops to agricultural ventures, providing these families with the means to earn a living and provide for their families. In addition, teenage mothers have been provided with care packages, including baby clothes and hygiene materials, to assist them in caring for their babies. Furthermore, some of these young mothers have also been given the opportunity to start their own businesses, such as tailoring or hairdressing, thereby enabling them to support themselves and their children, a crucial step as a majority of them are single parents.



United Nations Women's Guild donated materials for Teenage Mothers and Care Packages

Needy families who sought help were served and supported on a need-basis, with most needs requiring food support and clothing aid. As we approach the end of the year, we are deeply grateful to our donors, partners, and the community members who have generously given their time, resources, and support throughout the year. Your selfless contributions have made a significant difference in the lives of the vulnerable families in the Mukuru community.



Whistle Foundation Ireland donate Christmas parcels to Needy Families



Former Skills students affected by floods and demolitions receive household items and bedding courtesy of the Silent Majority Fund.



Fondo donates food packages to needy families

The clinic social worker continued to follow up with the sick children under MPC medical support. A good number of these children received medical attention during the year and have fully recovered. However, it's important to note that a few cases of chronic and terminally ill children still need our close follow-up and support going forward. The month also saw a reduced number of clients who received waivers at the Clinic as many families travelled upcountry for the festivities.

December was an eventful month for the Clinic, marked by substantial patient numbers, notable achievements, essential visits, and memorable celebrations. Despite reduced days, we registered **1,306 patients**, with 628 paediatric cases. Female patients constituted **62%** of visits, while male patients accounted for **38%**. The Clinic conducted **693** laboratory tests, including **230** tests for children, ensuring accurate diagnoses and treatment. Respiratory illnesses remained the leading diagnosis, followed by genitourinary conditions, highlighting the community's ongoing health challenges caused by environmental factors that we are dedicated to addressing with our accurate diagnoses and effective treatments.

The Antenatal Care (ANC) Clinic, a cornerstone of our commitment to maternal health, served 97 women, while the Child Welfare Clinic (CWC) successfully immunized 92 children, reinforcing our dedication to the health of mothers and children. Ten paediatric cases with different conditions were referred to other facilities, ensuring they received the specialized care they needed.

The social worker conducted 8 hospital visits and 1 home visit to cancer patient Emelda Wairimu. Additionally, 4 clients were referred for food support at the St. Catherine Social Office. Another 6 malnourished children were referred to the nutritional centre for assessment and supplementation.

The Clinic had the privilege of hosting support supervision by the Ministry of Health (MOH) Tuberculosis Coordinator, who reviewed adherence to TB drug regimens. The coordinator, in recognition of the Clinic's achievements, congratulated it on its excellent progress in sputum collection and maintaining an accurate presumptive screening register, as well as documentation of the Appointment register and patient follow-up. This recognition serves as a source of pride and motivation for the Clinic's efforts in combating TB within the community.



MOH brief at the staff room

The Clinic's social worker also participated in a Ministry of Health briefing and gender-based violence training at the Casino Headquarters. The briefing highlighted the Clinic's progress while identifying areas for improvement. A primary concern raised was the urgent need to enhance the uptake of GBV (Gender-Based Violence) screening. This is a crucial issue that we are actively addressing. Efforts are underway to implement the LIVES model (Listen, Inquire, Validate, Enhance Safety, Support) to effectively identify victims and ensure they are linked to the appropriate support channels. The other areas of concern were the uptake and optimization of PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis) in the Comprehensive Care Clinic.

This month's significant milestone was the announcement of FREE mother and child health services for the community. The MPC Director and Deputy addressed Community Health Promoters (CHP) for the slums at the Head Office to encourage them to act as a bridge between the Clinic and residents. These promoters are vital in referring patients needing healthcare while raising awareness about available services. Within the Clinic, CHP has been actively educating patients and urging parents to seek timely medical attention for their children. This initiative, which has already shown promising results, addresses a persistent challenge of parents delaying hospital visits until their child's condition worsens.



Community health promoters meeting at MPC



December was a month of gratitude and celebration, and the team played a significant role in it. We bade heartfelt farewells to nurse Magdalena, who completed her volunteer program and returned to Austria, and Dr Yana, who concluded her one-year tenure as a general doctor and headed back to Slovakia. Both were honored with farewell cakes, a collective acknowledgment of their invaluable contribution to the Clinic.



Farewell to Dr. Yana and Nurse Magdalena



Announcements

Activities outside the Departments

As the year drew to a close, December provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress and challenges of 2024, a year marked by resilience, growth, and community-driven initiatives.

Throughout the year, we focused on strengthening education, supporting vulnerable families, and advocating for sustainable development in Mukuru.

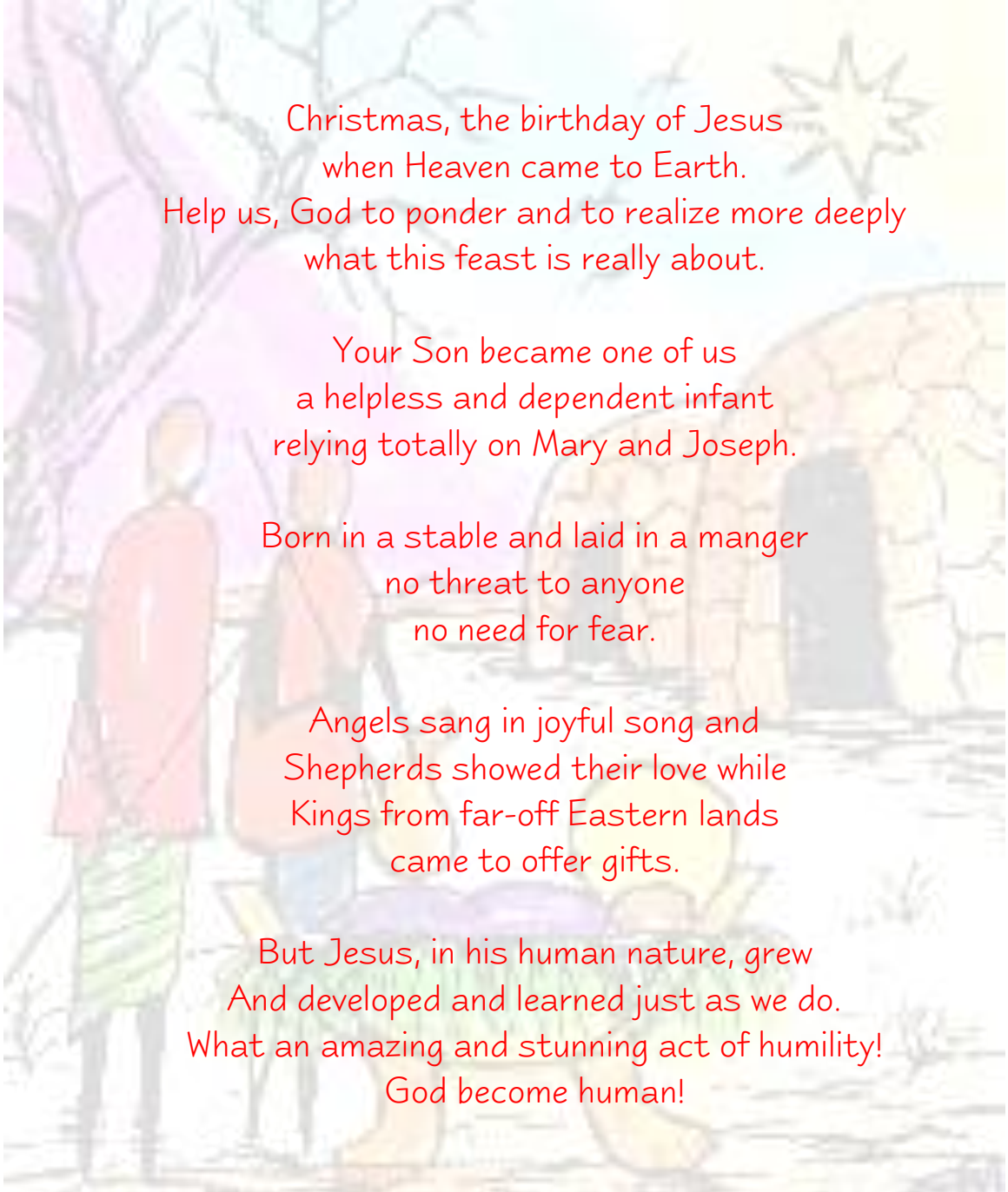


MPC Staff Christmas Lunch

- Head Office concluded the year with a Mass followed by lunch together.
- Mater Hospital donated used items such as office chairs, tiles, porcelain sinks, toilet bowls and firewood for the Skills courses.
- Breana Stillman visited the Head Office with musical instruments for the music program at the Rehabilitation Centre that were collected by the Irish National Syphony Orchestra and Paula Cullen's Team.
- MPC closed for the Christmas and New Year holidays on December 23rd and will resume operations on January 2nd 2025.



Christmas



Christmas, the birthday of Jesus
when Heaven came to Earth.
Help us, God to ponder and to realize more deeply
what this feast is really about.

Your Son became one of us
a helpless and dependent infant
relying totally on Mary and Joseph.

Born in a stable and laid in a manger
no threat to anyone
no need for fear.

Angels sang in joyful song and
Shepherds showed their love while
Kings from far-off Eastern lands
came to offer gifts.

But Jesus, in his human nature, grew
And developed and learned just as we do.
What an amazing and stunning act of humility!
God become human!

Sr Maureen Mohen RSM