



Mukuru Promotion Centre
Empowerment Step by Step
Sponsored by Sisters of Mercy
www.mercymukuru.co.ke
info@mercymukuru.co.ke
Tel: +254 733 701 444
PIN: P051101187Z

20th July 2023

Feeding Program

Mercy eNews International 20th July 2023

In 2022, hunger was a major issue for MPC with over 4,000 nutritional and food packages disbursed to the malnourished along with approximately 1.7 million lunch meals and 2,366 to needy and vulnerable families. The Amaranth Special Program for mothers with HIV/Aids numbered 828 with 200 malnourished babies.

Since 1985 the Sisters of Mercy through the Mukuru Promotion Centre (MPC) in Nairobi, have been listening to the “cries of the poor”. Initially, parents knew their children were marginalized because there was no place for them to be educated without being ostracised and maligned by society. Today, slum dwellers have reasonable access to education, healthcare and social welfare services like never before. The most pressing issue facing slum dwellers in the 21st century is food security.

Many international news agencies reports highlight the consequences of the Ukraine – Russia war cutting supply chains, the five years of drought in the Horn of Africa impacting over 40 million people causing displacement, disease, and malnutrition, and the huge cost of living increases around the globe with the threat of economic recessions looming. Local welfare agencies can in developed countries call on governments to do something to address the alarming situation. Back in the slums the advocacy and the will is there however, it does not match the desperate demand for approximately 600,000 people living in a densely populated area at a rate of 1:83,000 per sq km.

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) ceased its Feeding Program to schools in Kenya at the end of 2017 which enabled over 6,000 children each day in MPC learning institutions to receive at least one meal daily. After several submissions and meetings to make an exception for the slum dwellers, to the Ministry of Education’s School Health, Nutrition and Meals Unit, WFP Office and the Kenyan Government they suggested that MPC charge the parents 11 khs (€0.08) per child per day for meals. Most MPC parents are casual workers who make 200Khs per day (€0.15), cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and construction labour jobs and when they do not work, they have no income. MPC was already subsidizing 26 staff members (approximately 572,000 khs per month (€4,800) to improve the teacher-pupil ratio in the schools but adding another 950,407 khs (€7,310) was an extremely daunting prospect.

To feed 6,170 students per month, based on the WFP nutrition formula the following volumes of food are required: 6,500 kilograms of beans, 13,200 kilograms of maize, 690 litres of cooking

oil, and 380 kilograms of salt. Additionally, pre-primary and special needs children are provided with various vegetables and occasional fruit. For several years, generous donors have contributed 190,000 Kenyan shillings (equivalent to €1,460) per month to complement the nutritional program. However, securing funds for the feeding program was a stressful task that took up much time without any guarantee. In 2019, MPC appealed to many individuals who assisted with the feeding program with one family combining to support one month's supply instead of buying each other Christmas presents.

The CoVid19 Pandemic has caused significant anxiety, leading to many children and parents struggling to access food as several industries closed due to government restrictions, decimating the subsistence economy and doubling the cost of food. Additionally, with school closures, children were at an increased risk, leading to an unprecedented number of 12,850 teenage pregnancies in a 3-month period in Nairobi County alone and a sharp rise in domestic violence cases. Fortunately, thanks to generous donations from supporters, MPC could distribute thousands of immunity boosters packs, nutritional supplements, food parcels, and water to the most disadvantaged families. MPC through its social offices has an efficient network system in place, enabling them to disseminate these hampers quickly and to identify the neediest of families.

The problem of food security is still prevalent as external factors continue to impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals living in slums, with an unemployment rate of approximately 70%. Through its networks, the Sisters of Mercy are raising their voice and affirming their commitment to stand in solidarity with impoverished people in Mukuru.

Sr Mary Killeen

Director

maryk@mercymukuru.co.ke