Sisters of Mercy Mission and Ministry in Kenya 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Congregation of The Sisters Of Mercy

The Sisters of Mercy are an International Congregation of vowed religious women in the Catholic Church. They were founded in Dublin Ireland in 1831. They have a special focus of working with people who are poor, marginalized and disadvantaged by socio-economic, geographic, political, and environmental conditions because of systems, structures, and strategies that make people and the environment poor. For years the Sisters have worked in the alleviation of poverty through education, healthcare, Spiritual Formation and social ministries. The map below gives a synopsis of the Sisters of Mercy story.

The Sisters of Mercy came to Kenya in 1956. They established schools, hospitals and dispensaries as well as mobile clinics in Kiambu, Nairobi, Machakos, Makueni, Kibwezi, Mombasa, Kitui, Eldama Ravine, Njoro, Kipkeleon, Kericho, Kisumu, West Pokot and Turkana among other places.

In education the Sisters have been able to provide education to third level colleges starting with the former Mbooni Teachers Training College and Machakos Teachers College as well as Universities, Secondary schools, Primary schools and nursery and pre-unit education.

The Congregation has also provided education in the slums coming up with informal education and promotion of adult education; artisan, vocational trainings, games and music, art and craft work among other areas.

In social ministry services they have been able to provide rehabilitation to street children and slum dwellers some of whom today have made it in life. The Sisters have also been able to provide safety net to shepherd boys and girls from Turkana by providing alternative education at night while during the day they tend to the animals. This program has been very successful in Lokori, Turkana County. In West Pokot they have been able to provide artisan classes that have made many to be self reliant.

Currently there are about sixty Sisters of Mercy in Kenya and they are spread in 6 counties. They work in collaboration with NGOs, Church based institutions, Government ministries, as well as Community Based Ministries. They are keen to providing a holistic education and total quality health care to those who are sick, malnourished, as well as people suffering from HIV/AIDS. The narrative herewith demonstrates a synopsis of the Sisters work in Kenya alone.
Owing to the fact that Sisters of Mercy offer charitable work in all their ministries and where they charge fees this is subsidized to cater for those who are less privileged they are requesting the Commission to renew the Tax Exception.

**Ministry Activities of The Sisters Of Mercy Kenya Province**

The Sisters of Mercy are engaged in various activities in different parts of the country as illustrated below.

1. **Health care**
   a. Hospitals, Dispensary and Clinics
   b. HIV AIDS Programmes

2. **Education**
   a. Tertiary level
   b. Vocational and Technical
   c. Secondary
   d. Primary
   e. Nursery

3. Rehabilitation and Social Work services
4. Advocacy, Spiritual Guide and counselling services.
5. Collaboration

**Ministry in Turkana County**

1. **Lodwar**
   a. Lodwar HIV/AIDS Comprehensive Care Unit
   b. Lodwar, Mixed Secondary Education

2. **Lokori**
   a. Lokori- Vocational training in Mercy Centre,
   b. Lokori, Shepherd Boys and Girls Education (night class from 5.00pm to 8.00pm).
   c. Lokori Adult Education
   d. Lokori non formal education
   e. Lokori Public Health Care program and
   f. Lokori Nursery school education.
   g. Lokori Girls Primary (Public School) that has been supported by the Congregation and we have a Sister there in senior management.

**Special comments**

In Turkana most children if lucky only go up to nursery school and that is the only education they can acquire in life. With the Sisters of Mercy contribution in education many girls have been able to continue with their education instead of being married off. Women have gotten a livelihood and they are better able to support their families. Some of them acquired the skills of dressmaking and tailoring and they have been able to open their own small business in Lokori and elsewhere.
There are also challenges in working in such places. For example, when Turrow oil came on bound they found a ready community for work because there were people who were educated. These got offers for jobs. Unfortunately, the Sisters of Mercy had to start from point zero as they lost a number of their employees to Turrow oil for better pay. When the Turrow oil work ended the same people also came back seeking positions for employment. This creates disturbances in the community.

Ministry in West Pokot.

Chepareria
a. Mercy Centre Vocational and Artisan training where many of the Pokot women get a chance to acquire skills towards self reliance.
b. Adult education is needed here as many people have no chance of getting any education.
c. St. Cecilia Secondary School (Public School). The sisters try to follow up with the most deprived children and assist them towards achieving their education.
d. St. Michael’s Nursery School. This facilitates children to prepare well for Primary School.

Ministry activities in Nakuru
Sisters of Mercy currently have their formation of young Sisters training program in Nakuru. The Sisters are engaged in various activities on voluntary basis like visiting the sick, offering services in Love and Hope Centre for HIV/AIDS while working in collaboration with the Missionary Franciscan Sisters.

Ministry activities in Nairobi
1. Mukuru Promotion Centre
   b. Four Primary Schools
   c. St. Michaels Secondary
   d. Skills and Vocational Program
   e. Social Work department
   f. Mary Immaculate Dispensary
   g. Rehabilitation Program for Street Boys.
2. Sisters of Mercy Makadara
   a. Dispensary
   b. TB Treatment and preventive measures.
   c. Comprehensive care unit for HIV/AIDS
3. Mater Misericordiae Hospital
   a. Mater Comprehensive Care for HIV/AIDS
   b. Mater Cardiac Program as works of the Sisters in the Main Hospital still goes on
   c. Mater Heart Run
4. Education where the Sisters of Mercy are the Trustees and where there is Collaboration with the government of Kenya.
   a. Our Lady of Mercy Primary School Nairobi South B (Trustees Land)
   c. Huruma Girls Secondary School (Trustees’s land)
   d. Our Lady of Mercy Shuri Moyo (Government) Sponsors
   e. St. Anne’s Primary School (Government) Sponsors
   f. St. Anne’s Secondary School (Government) Sponsors

Ministry activities in Kitui

   a. Mutomo Hospital (Diocese of Kitui) Administrators
   b. Nguutani Sisters of Mercy Secretarial and Vocationa Training College (Kitui Diocese)
   c. Nuu Vocational Training Centre (Sisters of Mercy/Kitui Diocese)

Ministry activities in Kiambu.

   a. Sisters of Mercy Commercial College
   b. Our Lady of Mercy Bakers (Vocational Part of the College)

Other Ministries activities

1. Sisters of Mercy complement the government in offering wholistic education and specialized health care.
2. They are able to offer employment to thousands of workers working in the Sisters of Mercy ministries.
3. The Sisters also work in collaboration with other organizations, government and Church based organization.
4. Counseling services and rehabilitation of street children especially in the slums
5. Sponsorship programmes for boys and girls who have no one else for their education.
SAMPLING THE MINISTRIES OF THE KENYAN PROVINCE

1. NAIROBI

MUKURU SLUMS

Mukuru is one of the biggest slum in Nairobi, its estimated to be habitat of about 700,000 people in the different village in the slums, it stretches along the Nairobi Ngong river, situated on waste lands in the industrial area of the city between the Outer Ring Road and the North Airport Road and Mombasa road. The slum is in three different constituencies, Embakasi South, Makadara and Starehe. There are numerous villages like Mukuru kwa Reuben, Mukuru kwa Njenga, Sinai, Paradise, Jamaica, Kingstone, Mariguini, Futata Nyayo and Mukuru Kayaba. The Sisters of Mercy worked in Mukuru through collaborative efforts encouraging other religious congregations, governments and NGO’s to come on board and support the disadvantaged children and families.

Mukuru Promotion Centre (MPC)

Sisters of Mercy first went to Mukuru Kayaba and worked in collaboration with the White Fathers in 1985 and established the Primary School. From there the school was able to spread opening doors to a number of other Schools. The Sisters could not manage or the work so they handed over Mukuru Kwa Njenga to the Marianist Brothers and Mukuru Kwa Ruben to the Christian Brothers.

Under the Sisters of Mercy are 4 Primary Schools (St. Elizabeth Lunga Lunga, Mukuru Kayaba, St. Bakhita and St. Catherine Primary). There is one secondary School, St. Michaels and they have been supporting St. Mary’s Viwandani secondary school. Because of health needs other ministries also developed like the social work department, Mary Immaculate Clinic, and the rehabilitation for boys. All the activities are coordinated under Mukuru Promotion Centre (MPC). Currently there are 7 Sisters working there in various capacities.

MPC began in 1985 as a response to the big numbers of children who were out of school from Nairobi South B and South C area. Mukuru Slums were spreading as people were retrenched and left government houses to find an alternative in the slums. This was also a time of the great famine that made a number of people from Ukambani to migrate due to hunger and starvation. As people came looking for jobs some were employed as casual labourers or guards to in the industrial area and factories. Thus, the numbers grew. A number of children were also out of school as a result of the 1980s and 1990s total payment of school fees. From a small school in Mukuru Kayaba spreading to Mukuru kwa Njenga, Mukuru Mariguini, Lunga Lunga, Fuata Nyayo and Sinai among others the works of the Sisters of Mercy spread.
The MPC headquarters is situated on off Enterprise road in the Industrial Area of Nairobi and facilitates the following:

a. The 4 Primary Schools who have approximately 5,000 children,

b. St. Michaels secondary school,

c. a rehabilitation centre for street boys;

d. a medical clinic with a HIV/AIDS testing centre;

e. a community based health care program;

f. a Skills Training Centre for more than sixty students and

g. a sponsorship programme to secondary schools for about one hundred and seventy children, including students with a disability.

MPC employs over 120 staff of whom 78 teachers are employed by TSC (Teachers Service Commission) working in the four primary schools: The other employees are paid from donations received both in Kenya and from overseas. These include the security guards, social workers, administrative staff, and drivers among others.

Most of these people leave their rural homes because of poverty and with a hope of finding work. Others come to Nairobi slums to save their lives from tribal wars, especially during the campaign period leading up to elections. Some are successful but the majorities of people are unskilled and uneducated, therefore, remain jobless. They do washing, cleaning, collection of rubbish, mending and polishing of shoes, cooking of food for workers and many other service tasks for people living in the nearby estates. They live in very poor shacks mostly made from corrugated iron sheets; some however resort to cardboard or plastic materials to provide shelter. Current statistics show that over 60% of Nairobi’s population lives in slum conditions. Slum dwellers pay rent for their shacks to landlords. There is no space for children to play. There are no recreation facilities for adults or children with the exception of bars, video shops and pool tables. As a result many turn to local brew, drugs and crime.

Photos showing the neighbourhood of MPC
The above photo showing the realities of where most of the children come from

The wall of St. Bakhita Primary School at MPC collapses due to the community encroachment on the river. Flooding inhabits work to progress. Advocacy through the different arms of government is paramount.
Sisters of Mercy Contribution to Education in the Mukuru Slums

Through MPC the Sisters of Mercy are trying to introduce Child-Centered Education where the emphasis is on the individual child, the building of self-esteem, the learning through play and discovery, and a positive approach through music, art and acrobatics. The four MPC-sponsored schools are located in a very heavily populated village off Enterprise Road, St Elizabeth is in Lunga Lunga slum village and St. Catherine’s Primary is across the road from Mariguine Slums of Mukuru, while Mukuru Kayaba is in the middle of the village.

The success of the four Primary Schools motivated the Sisters of Mercy to have a secondary school. This was to facilitate both boys and girls from the four primary schools who do well in exams and fail to get to avail of the secondary schools where they are called because of fees. Therefore, the Sisters developed St Michael’s Secondary School, a community school which commenced in 2008, with 45 Form I students. In 2013 a second stream was introduced. It now accepts about 85 students into form one each year. In 2015 the mean score of the form four results was 6.7 (Mean Grade C).

The fees for this school are 15,000/- per year. Quite a number of students are sponsored. The whole school is subsidized to keep the fees low. All facilities were provided by the Sisters of Mercy.

Technical and Vocational Education
Over the years the Sisters of Mercy learnt that not every child that goes to either primary or secondary school will complete and end up with formal employment. Therefore, technical education gives an alternative to so many children who acquires skills and competencies necessary for making a living. This gave birth to the skills learning centre.

Our Lady of Mercy Vocational Training Centre provides training in computers, hairdressing, beauty therapy, dressmaking, art and crafts plumbing and masonry, and catering. There are more young women than men who avail themselves of the Skills Training. There is an adult learner component in the computer classes. The students who go through the two year program graduate with a technical certificate from the Centre as well as get KNEC certificate or other bodies that administer exams. This makes it possible for many of the students to find employment in hotel and hospitality industries either as house-keepers or garment making while a good few start their own industry in beauty, hair salon, among others trades.

Primary Education

Since its inception Mukuru Promotion Centre has focused on education. Education is a precious gift; the quality of a society is determined by it, and the United Nations Millennium goals states that it is right for all children and not a privilege. We consider primary education an important element in the empowerment of a community. The 2015 academic year was challenging for all education institutions due to the 2 teachers strikes, one in January that went for 2 weeks and then again in August that lasted for 6 weeks. The students missed a huge chunk of lessons, however, MPC teachers, (21 sponsored 10 none sponsored) teachers in the 4 schools enabled at least the Standard 8 students to have some revisions for the KCPE exams.
### Statistics as Dec 31st 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>TSC Government</th>
<th>MPC Teachers Sponsored</th>
<th>MPC Support Staff</th>
<th>BOM Sponsored (Support staff)</th>
<th>KCPE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Bakhita</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Catherine</td>
<td>1,346</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Elizabeth</td>
<td>1,539</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukuru Primary</td>
<td>1489</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,339</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>554</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have over 5,300 children who attend one of the 4 Mukuru primary schools in our catchment area who are grateful for the opportunity. All the primary schools are committed to the mission and goals of Mukuru Promotion Centre. The Kenya Constitution and the Education Act 2013 state that primary education is free however, there are many other extra costs such as firewood, excursions, exam fees, which prevents people from the Slums from attended. A sum of $50US does not seem much, but to a person who only earns $40 per month they cannot afford to use 80% of their monthly income on the extra fees. Mukuru Promotion Centre through its sponsorship program provides funds for 500 primary students. Our students are very conscientious and diligent because they are aware of the preciousness of the gift of education. We are grateful to the many groups and individuals who assist with sponsorship: Sisters of Mercy, England, Ireland and Australia; Mukuru Liverpool; Friends of Mukuru Western Australia; Millimani Lions Club; Child Fund Kenya, Airtel, Topin Industries and Mukuru Promotion Centre and we trust that these partnerships will continue with the same generous spirit.

The World Food Program for pre-primary and nursery students ceased, we were fortunate that a generous donor, Mr Shah, from Topin Industries, now provides over 330 daily lunches to the pre-primary and nursery students at the 4 schools. He also attired over 200 very needy students with new uniforms at St Elizabeth’s and St Bakhita schools.