

# Utume

Working Towards a Just, Self-Reliant and Value Based Society



**OUR Health ...  
MY Responsibility**

Responding to Covid 19 Pandemic:  
Baskets of Hope Initiative

My Take: Covid19 - Proof of  
a Detached Humanity?

The Power of 13 Years  
Birthday Celebration

In Solidarity With Mukuru Kwa  
Njenga Slums

# OUR Health... MY Responsibility



## What is Coronavirus Disease - 2019 (COVID 19)?

COVID 19 is a new strain of Coronavirus that causes respiratory illness. The first case was identified in China.

### How is it spread?

Contact with an infected person with COVID 19 virus through coughing or sneezing

Contact with contaminated surfaces or articles with the COVID 19 virus

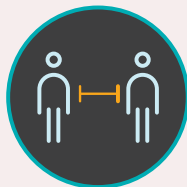
### Signs and symptoms

- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Body ache
- Headache

## Protecting myself and others



Avoid handshaking, hugging and kissing



Keep your distance  
(About 6 feet/2m)



Wear a mask



Avoid crowds



Regularly wash hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer



Cover your nose and mouth with tissue or cough and sneeze into your flexed elbow



Stay home and avoid travelling when you have flu-like symptoms



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth



**WEAR**  
a face mask.



**WAIT**  
6 feet/2m apart and avoid close contact.



**WASH**  
your hands often or use hand sanitizer.

Greetings to you!

2020 will go down in history as the year a virus brought the entire world to a standstill. A virus so deadly that it has threatened the very existence of humanity and dictated our way of life. The outbreak of COVID 19 has seen nations go on an economic crisis. Billions of people around the world are in lockdown unable to go to work and attend school. We no longer fully enjoy the freedom that we have for a long time taken for granted confident that *"it is a normal occurrence."*

COVID19 has caused us to long for embraces with our families and loved ones as this simple act of expressing affection could mean illness or subsequent death. In this June Newsletter, we have featured many compelling stories that paint a picture of how COVID19 has changed the lives of many and forced us to heed to the call for affirmative action towards equality and the restoration of humanity.

In its part, the Archdiocese of Nairobi through its social development agency, Caritas Nairobi has been focal in advancing the fullness of life by implementing community projects with specific focus on vulnerable persons. Equally, in times of emergencies, the Archdiocese has been responding, standing in solidarity with the affected. As such, in 2017 and 2019 when some parts of the country were affected by draught, His Eminence John Cardinal Njue, flagged off to different counties food donations valued at Ksh.8 million and 7 million respectively. This year, in response to the COVID19 pandemic, Cardinal Njue launched the **'Baskets of Hope'** initiative one aimed at feeding vulnerable families within the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

In this edition, *Eric Njoroge, Caritas Nairobi, Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Coordinator*, has written a detailed article about the **'Baskets of Hope'** initiative highlighting how many families have been reached, amount raised so far and the unique donors who have supported the initiative. One exceptional case was a virtual birthday party whose purpose was to not only celebrate life but to give back to the community. Featured in page 14 read about **'The Power of 13 Years Birthday Party'**.

In this issue, we have introduced a new column **'My Take'**. This will feature articles that critically analyze real issues and how they affect our society in general. To set the pace is a story that dares to question if the COVID19 pandemic has indeed exposed how detached humanity is. How the care and consideration for each other has been replaced with the **ME, MYSELF AND I** attitude. The article articulates how a deadly virus has brought to light the immense inequality around us. And how pointless it is to work hard for wealth and power only to benefit self!

Featured is an article by *Sr. Modether Karuri, 'In Solidarity with Mukuru kwa Njenga Slum'*. The *Caritas Nairobi Deputy Director* asks, *"With or without COVID19, are we ever going to act responsibly against the hunger that so many suffer? Are we going to continue looking the other way with complicit silence in the face of suffering which we are all responsible for?"* Among many other stories, we have also highlighted why your child's mental health matters.

As I conclude this editorial, I would like to pose a question; as the COVID 19 pandemic continues to negatively affect our lives, could there be a lesson or two we can learn on our actions towards a better future? Isn't our responsibility to enable the future rather than foresee it? Well, I believe that there are some lessons we can examine. Nelson Mandela once said *"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."*



*Millicent Hamau*

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Caritas Nairobi is the Aid and Development Agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi.

## Vision:

"A Just, Self-Reliant and Value Based Society".

## Mission:

Inspired by the Catholic Social Teachings, we Work With Local Communities and Strategic Partners to Promote Integral Human Development.



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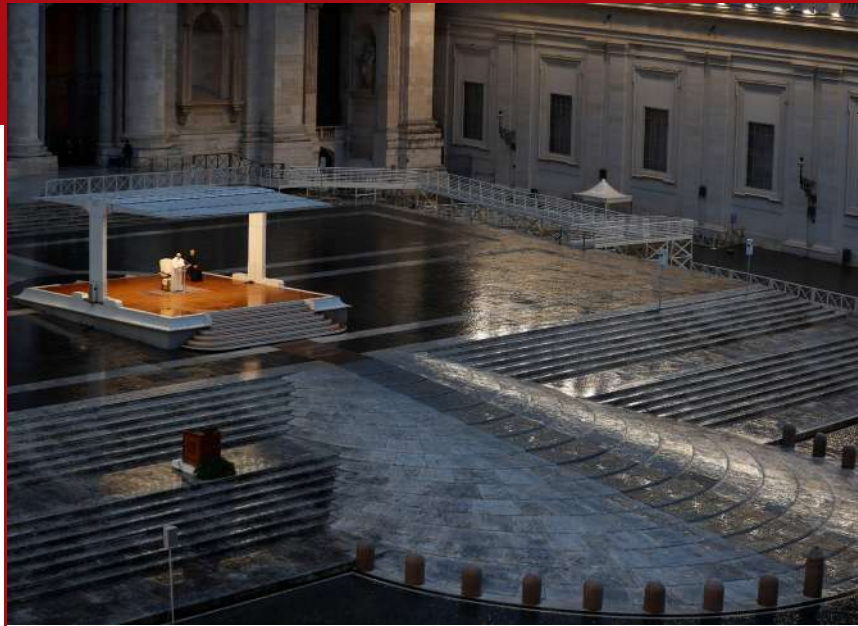
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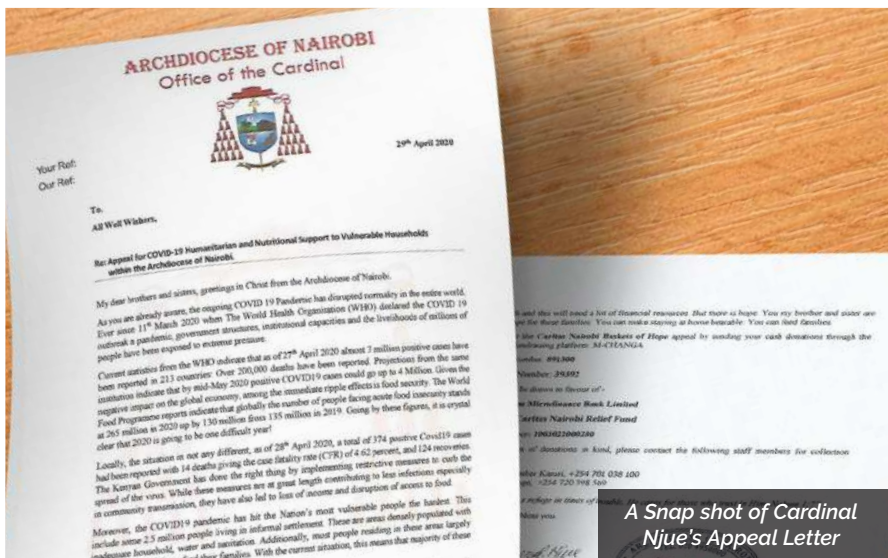
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## CARDINAL NJUE ENDORSES THE 'BASKETS OF HOPE' INITIATIVE

In a letter dated April 29th 2020, the Archbishop of Nairobi, His Eminence John Cardinal Njue called for humanitarian

and nutritional aid for families affected by the on-going Covid19 Pandemic. Through the letter, His Eminence also

initiated the *Baskets of Hope* appeal aimed at cushioning unprecedented socioeconomic challenges faced by many vulnerable households in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

Cardinal Njue indicated that pandemic hit the Nation's most vulnerable people including some 2.5 million people living in informal settlements, "...these are areas densely populated with inadequate households, water and sanitation. Most people residing in these areas largely depend on casual jobs to feed their families but with the current situation, this means that majority of these families are going hungry."

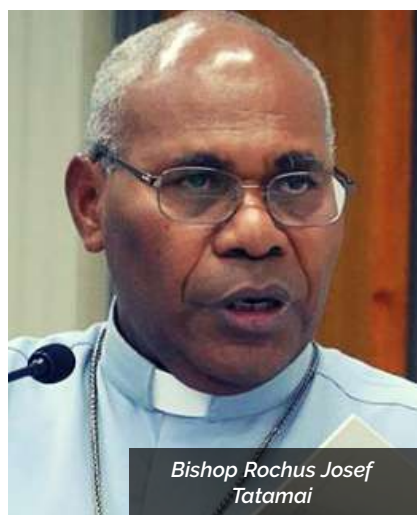
The Caritas Nairobi Baskets of Hope initiative targets to reach 1,000 families within the Archdiocese of Nairobi per month. The baskets which costs Ksh.3,200, contains maize, porridge and wheat flour, cooking oil, grains (rice), beans/ndengu, salt, long-life milk, bar soaps, face mask and Hand-Sanitizer.

## POPE APPOINTS NEW ARCHBISHOP FOR RABAU, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Rochus Josef Tatamai, M.S.C. as the new Archbishop of Rabaul, Papua New Guinea. Bishop Tatamai has been serving as the Bishop of Kavieng since 2018. He succeeds Archbishop Francesco Panfilo S.D.B., whose resignation from the pastoral care of the Archdiocese was accepted by the Pope.

### Biography

Bishop Tatamai, M.S.C. was born on 24 September, 1962 in Raduna and was ordained a priest on 26 November, 1989. He attended the Minor Seminary of Ulapia (1978 – 1981) before entering the Novitiate of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Vunapau. He studied philosophy and theology in Bosmana.



Bishop Rochus Josef Tatamai

On 2 February, 1989, Bishop Tatamai made perpetual vows and was ordained a priest in November, the same year.

Bishop Tatamai has served as Parochial Vicar and Substitute Administrator in several parishes (1990-1993); Director of Vocations of the M.S.C. (1990-1997); Provincial Secretary (1992-1995) and Assistant to the Post-Novitiate Director (1995-1996).

Between 1997-1998, he studied Communication Science at the "Kairos Communication Institute" in Maynooth, Ireland. After that, he served as Vice-Provincial (1998-1999); Member of the Provincial Council (1999), Member of the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), as well as the Religious Television Association (RTA-EMTV) as Executive Secretary and Director of the Catholic Section (1998). He was also Vice-President for the Pacific Region of the World Association for Christian Communications (WACC-PAC), based in Tonga (2000-2002).

Bishop Tatamai has been Chaplain at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Issoudun, France since 2003. On 8 July 2005, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as Auxiliary Bishop of Kerema. Two years later, he was appointed Bishop of Bereina. Pope Francis subsequently appointed him as the Bishop of Kavieng, Papua New Guinea on 22 June, 2018.

**Source, Vatican News**





Nyeri Archbishop, Anthony Muheria during the Launch of 'Hope for You' Initiative

## 2 KENYAN-DIOCESES LAUNCH JOINT INITIATIVE TOWARD “VULNERABLE FAMILIES” AMID COVID-19

The Archdiocese of Nyeri and Diocese of Kitui launched a joined venture meant to provide support to families that have been affected by the COVID19 Pandemic. The 'Hope4U' initiative currently on going, aims at raising an estimated Usd.1.2 million to help feed at

least 10,000 families in the two regions. The initiative also includes a call center to assist those who may be in distress as a result of the pandemic.

"Let us help vulnerable families by providing them with food and other

necessities. We welcome donations in all forms," Archbishop of Nyeri, Anthony Muheria said during launch held at Our Lady of Consolata Cathedral, Nyeri.

On his part, the Bishop-elect of Kitui Diocese, Joseph Mwongela clarified that well-wishers can also offer other forms of support saying, "Because our people have some farm products, we can also give maize, beans, flour or whatever else people may have."

*Source, Association for Catholic Information in Africa*

## CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Mid last year, St. Michael Makwa Self Help Group, spent Ksh 160, 000 to build a house for an elderly couple Mr. Eluid Gathu and his wife. The couple could not afford to put a decent shelter as their main and only source income was from casual jobs. The proceeds however, could barely afford them the basic needs.

Understanding and sympathizing with the situation, Makwa Self Help Group picked building a house as the group's Corporate Social Investment project. Mr. Gathu and his wife moved into their fully furnished house towards the end of last year. We featured this powerful solidary story in the first 2020 quarter edition of Utume Magazine. The same can be read on the Caritas Nairobi website [www.caritasnairobi.org](http://www.caritasnairobi.org)



Members of St. Michael's Makwa Self Help Group during a recent visit to Mr. Gathu's home.

Sadly, Mr Gathu has gone to be with the Lord. The Archdiocese of Nairobi family together with the St. Michael's Makwa Self Help Group, wishes to extend our heartfelt condolences to the family.



## BASKETS OF HOPE

By Eric Njoroge- Resource Mobilization & Partnerships Coordinator

In many cultures basket signifies harvest or richness of food. Other cultures especially Polynesian, basket is a symbol of fertility. Every time a mother or guardian visits the market or farm she always carries a basket and children associate basket with food or something to eat. The first thing children do is look at what is in the basket. Therefore, with such deep symbolism, basket becomes a source of hope to many.

When the first case of COVID19 was reported in Kenya and the government put several restrictive measures, many families were affected especially in the informal settlement who largely depended on the daily wages. With little or no disposable income, children, elderly and people living with different conditions were heavily hit. In such sad situation, there was a necessity of source of hope and care. It is with this background, that Caritas Nairobi initiated the *Baskets of Hope* appeal to

“*The essence of Baskets of Hope is to be an all-inclusive Caritas Nairobi emergency response outfit. We have had many emergencies in the country and often Caritas Nairobi has been responding to them*”

....

“*The Baskets of Hope will consolidate all emergency intervention appeals*”

mobilize resources to buy food and non-food items as one way of responding to nutritional and sanitation challenges caused by COVID19. A basket contained: 4 packets Maize flour, 2 packets of wheat flour, 3 litres of cooking oil, 2 kgs of sugar, 2 kgs of green gram, 2 pieces of bar

soap, 100ml of sanitizer and face masks. Later, we included porridge flour, long life milk and noodles to target children and elderly.

To make it a successful appeal, we decided to utilize *M-changa*, an online fundraising platform. This is a crowdfunding platform that leverage on the use of technology and mobile phone penetration in the society. Many Kenyans have access to mobile phone mode of payment and therefore, it becomes easy to support from the click of a button. Other features of online fundraising platform include, use of Visa cards, PayPal and EFT transfers. For credibility purposes we downloaded all our needed documents such appeal posters and videos. An endorsement letter from His Eminence Cardina Njue came in hand to reach out to Christians as well as Kenyans of good will. To publicize the appeal, we utilized Caritas Nairobi Social media pages as well as attending live Radio shows in Radio Waumni, Radio Maria and Inooro FM.

The generosity of Kenyans was evident and many people have contributed cash and in kind donations to help the vulnerable families. Chiefly, families, Small Christians Communities and parishes in Nairobi have sent their cash and in kind donations and other have volunteered their professional services especially counselling.

Some of the unique donations came from the diaspora. Notably, a family in America saw the appeal in our social media and decided to donate an entire birthday contribution to the Baskets of Hope appeal. Benjamin's story is well articulated in the next page. The European Union through the International Trade Centre donated 15,000 masks worth Ksh.2, 505,000. The masks were produced locally by the Ethical Artisan Fashions, an entity of Export Processing Zone Athi-River, (EPZ).

Another, unique case is in kind donation. Two elderly sisters and a brother after listening us on Radio Waumini brought bales of Maize Flour, sugar and bar soaps. As we unloaded the donations, I

couldn't stop to marvel at their old age, a good sense of humour and a profound empathy.

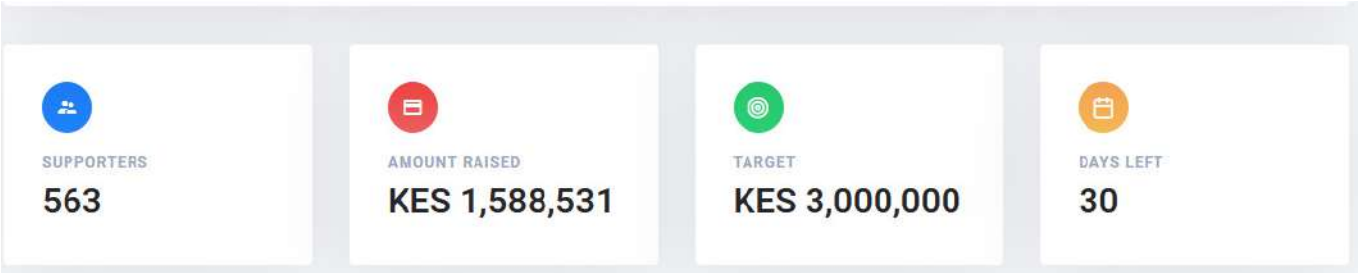
For the cash donations, we have had immense support from more than 550 contributors. Contribution ranged from as high as 1 shilling to 50,000. All contributions were acknowledged personally through texts and sometime phone call by the appeal coordinator. Particularly, we were impressed by repeated contributions from several individuals, the text below exemplify our gratitude:

*Thank you Lucy, your five contributions toward Caritas Nairobi COVID19 Appeal have been received. Thank you for your continued support. You are Great. God Bless you and Stay Safe. Regards. Eric*

The resources received were used to buy food and food items which we later dropped at mapped parishes, particularly, those that had most vulnerable families especially near informal settlements in Nairobi. We also targeted those parishes that were affected by the government lockdown directives such as Eastleigh estate. Other areas that we targeted included; St. Mary's Mukuru kwa Njenga and Ruai areas that had families affected by evictions.

The essence of *Baskets of Hope* is to be an all-inclusive Caritas Nairobi emergency response outfit. We have had many emergencies in the country and often Caritas Nairobi has been responding to them. However, there has not been a well-coordinated relief outfit. Therefore,

the *Baskets of Hope* will consolidate all emergency intervention appeals which will include: Food or Nutritional support and psychosocial interventions. This will be the base of our emergency response and preparedness initiative. As we continue responding to the effects of the COVID19 pandemic in our Archdiocese, we are still in the process of developing a long-term recovery proposals that will target social economic empowerment as well as the psychosocial well-being of our people in the Archdiocese. We are grateful to more than 550 contributors and several parishes and Small Christian's communities for their continued support. The info graph below summarizes our donation level so far.



We care for all, give Hope and Love. Let us share Baskets of Hope with vulnerable households who are in dire need of daily food ration and financial support.







[www.caritasnairobi.org](http://www.caritasnairobi.org)



Archdiocese of Nairobi,  
Nairobi Kenya  
[www.archdioceseofnairobi.org](http://www.archdioceseofnairobi.org)

# Caritas **Nairobi** **Baskets** **of Hope**

## COVID-19 Humanitarian and Nutritional Emergency Support Appeal

We care for all people, we give Hope and Love. Let us share these Baskets of Hope with thousands of vulnerable households in our Archdiocese.

A basket will contain: (Maize, Porridge and wheat flour, cooking oil, grains (rice), bean, salt, long-life milk and bar soaps)

Support a worthy cause, give hope to all.

Mchanga Fundraising Online Platform

**Paybill Number: 4029243**

**Account: CARITAS NAIROBI**

For In kind support please reach out to the needy persons within your neighbourhood.





# Baskets of Hope Photo Gallery



*The Little Sisters of St. Francis donating food items to the Archdiocese of Nairobi Rescue Dada Centre. The center is a Rehabilitation Centre for street girls.*



*The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Buruburu, donated more than 40 bales of maize flour and other food items towards the 'Baskets of Hope' initiative. Lead by the Fr. In charge, Fr. Moses Kago, parishioners mobilized the food items from the Jumuias (Small Christian Communities) and well wishers.*



*Sr. Modesther Karuri distributing food to residents of Baba Dogo*





*Jotham Ochingwa receives food donations from Timothy Njeru, Caritas Nairobi, Food Security Programme Coordinator. Jotham lost his job as a veterinarian due to effects of the covid19 pandemic on the job market.*



*Sr. Perpetua of St. Michaels, Otiende, receives 45 food baskets to be donated to residents of Laini Saba in Kibera Slums*



*Fr. Joseph Martínez of Christ the King Kibera, receives food baskets from Sr. Modesther Karuri, Caritas Nairobi Deputy Director. In distributing the food baskets, Caritas closely worked with Parish Priests who would in turn ensure that the food baskets reach vulnerable families at the grassroots.*



*Caritas Nairobi staff member, Josephine Twili, oversees packing of the food baskets before distribution.*



# MY TAKE...



Photo Courtesy of Vatican News

## COVID19- PROOF OF A DETACHED HUMANITY?

| By Millicent Kamau

It's noon but the streets of New York are quiet, so quiet that the sound of a coin dropping on the ground creates an echo. What used to be an architectural marvel with countless dazzling skyscrapers is now more or less a ghost town. The once perfect cabro side-walks are now bushes, with grass piecing through the cabro. On the roads, there are many cars...beautiful cars...elegant ones, those in the likes of Chevrolet, Mercedes, SUVs etc. But these cars are abandoned and have gathered dust and cobwebs.

In this city, there lives a scientist, Dr. Roberts Neville, his only companion is his German Shepard dog, Sam. Dr. Neville once held the prestigious titles of daddy and husband, but he no longer does; his family perished. Every day at noon, together with Sam, Dr. Neville goes to the city's sea port and plays a radio transmission, *"I am Dr. Robert, the only survivor of the deadly virus. If there is anyone out there, please contact me."* The tremble in his voice tells how desperate and lonely Dr. Neville is. He plays the transmission several times and waits for hours hoping that someone will show

up. This has been Dr. Neville's routine for the last three years and regardless of his fruitless efforts, he does not give in.

Before the sun goes down, Dr. Neville hurries back to his house. He turns off the lights. Rolls down the windows and doors made of steel. He is protecting himself from the hostile nocturnal human like creatures. These creatures came to be after a virus that was meant to cure cancer wiped out most of the world's population with the surviving but infected persons mutating to violent beasts only active at night. Dr. Neville is immune to the virus but he nonetheless has to protect himself and use his immunity to find a cure and restore HUMANITY, the one thing that makes life worth living.

The above story, is based on an all-time block-buster, *'I am Legend'* starring Will Smith. I decided to base this write-up on this movie because some aspects of it resonates so much with the effects caused by the on-going global COVID19 pandemic. I like to think that this movie was sort of a premonition of the current situation. While we may not have

nocturnal mutants roaming the streets, one thing similar to the movie is the fact that the COVID19 pandemic has indeed threatened the very existence of humanity as we know it. According to reports, the COVID19 has the potential to cause far more grievous effects given its mode of transmission and the fact that no cure has been found. This pandemic has confronted us with a harsh reality; the uncertainty of human existence and vulnerability of human life.

But even more conspicuous is the fact that a virus that has practically brought the whole world into a standstill, has exposed how detached humanity is. How detached we are from each other. How as humans, we are so consumed with the endless search of wealth and power forgetting that the very existence of humanity is dependent on the collaboration and cooperation of each and every person: Me and You!

I recount an incident that a close friend, Myles, went through. Her neighbour (about five houses apart) died from COVID19. This was actually the first death from COVID19 reported in Kenya. With

the news spreading fast, what followed next from the neighbouring estates was stigmatization. *"Buying groceries from the neighbourhood kiosks became awkward. The stares and glares were unbecoming. I opted to shop in areas where I was not known just so to feel normal and accepted,"* says Myles. As she narrated her experience, I wondered if this stigmatization by the neighbouring estates automatically translated to immunity against COVID19.

I acknowledge that the pandemic has caused people to be fearful and suspicious but have we to some extent taken this too far? Remember how people flocked supermarkets and shopping malls to buy in bulk? I mean it is okay to adequately prepare yourself in times of a pandemic but did we stop at any one time and think of the other person or was it a case of *'me, myself and I'*?

Remember when the virus was first reported in Wuhun China? The truth is that majority of nations failed to take immediate action; this happened much later when positive cases were reported in other countries and the spread became rampant. Alas! This is serious! Suddenly, the rest of the

world became concerned all because the virus had crossed borders and had now become a more relatable problem. Some leaders are on record openly terming COVID19 as *'The Chinese Virus'*. Again, I wonder, what if China was the only infected country? Would we have taken this pandemic as a global catastrophe?

The rate at which the virus is spreading has exposed countries' inadequate health care systems especially in developing countries. Year on year billions of monies are allocated to fund expansion in terms of capacity, technology and human resources but how much has been achieved? Are we there yet? For a long time, we have talked about poverty alleviation and food security but the current on-going pandemic has proven that indeed we are far behind from realizing these United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. According to the World Food Programme for instance, the number of people facing acute food insecurity will increase to 265 million in 2020, up by 130 million from 135 million reported in 2019, as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19. Families living in informal settlements depend on casual jobs for their livelihoods but with the loss of these opportunities, this automatically

translates to numerous families going hungry.

The origin of the virus is still a mystery. However, one thing is for sure, this pandemic has exposed the immense inequality around us. How detached we are as humanity! How pointless it is to work hard for wealth and power only to benefit self. COVID19 has forced us to recognize the value of people around us by honoring the sacredness of life and accord everyone- not just family, friends, colleagues but also strangers- the respect and care they deserve.

Let us examine the lessons COVID19 has taught us and think of how we can start embracing each other more and how we can work toward a better future. Our responsibility is not to foresee the future but to enable it as in the case of Dr. Neville. Unfortunately, he died but having accomplished his mission. Dr. Neville discovered the cure and handed it over to other uninfected persons who eventually reached out to him after hearing the radio transmission.

*"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."* Nelson Mandela.





# THE POWER OF 13 YEARS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

By Caritas Nairobi Communications Team

***"Thank you for being a friend; travelled down the road and back again; your heart is true, you are a pal and a confidant, thank you for being a friend... thank you for being a friend."*** Does this ring a bell? Well, these are lyrics from the song Thank You for Being a Friend by Andrew Gold and the cover song in the old time favorite TV series 'The Golden Girls'. This song forms the basis of this write-up, friendship; the kind that goes beyond borders..the kind that not even a pandemic can impede upon!

Benjamin Macharia, known to many as *Benji* is one lad saying a big thank you not to just one friend but to many. *Benji* a 13-year-old boy with Kenyan roots, lives in Boston with his family. He is a sixie (equivalent of Standard 7) and attends The Roxbury Latin School. *Benji* is an active youth member of the Kenyan Catholic Community & Friends at Sacred Heart Parish in Quincy and attends Kiswahili Mass every Sunday. He is also a member of the Jumuiya of St. Mary in Weymouth-Boston.

On his 13th birthday, he received the surprise of his life. His sister, Catherine, and a group of friends hacked a plot to organise a virtual surprise birthday party. This would be the FIRST birthday party *Benji* ever celebrated. And aside from celebrating *Benji's* life, the virtual party provided an opportunity for these friends to reunite having been away from each other due to the CODID19 lockdown advisory.

To celebrate *Benji's* milestone, Catherine and *Benji's* friends agreed on giving back to the community through supporting a worthy cause. *Benji's* mother, Mary, had just received the *Baskets of Hope* initiative poster through a *Whatsapp* group. Inspired by its objective, that of feeding vulnerable families that have been affected by the COVID19 pandemic, Mary and Catherine embarked on a background check of the initiative to ascertain authenticity. A search through the internet led them to the Caritas Nairobi Social Media platform which furnished them with

detailed insight of the initiative. They were also able to establish rapport with Mr. Eric Njoroge, Caritas Nairobi Partnerships & Resource Mobilization Coordinator. Eventually, the Baskets of Hope initiative was unanimously picked to fulfill the celebration's 'mission'.

For several days, the friends (Eric (Sophomore) 10th grade, Alma 8th grade, Neema 7th grade and Tabitha 7th grade) held secrete virtual meetings to plan the party while Mary convinced *Benji* to accompany her for evening walks. The plan work perfectly. *Benji* did not suspect a thing! And so the evening of 22nd May 2020, turned out to be like no other ordinary '*pandemic*' Friday. It was an evening amongst a group of friends that ushered true comradeship all remotely gathered. A zoomed gathering transcending across oceans and into three continents, defying time zones.

Mr. Njoroge who was part of the party, provided more information on the Baskets of Hope initiative. Two simple

words resounded from across the ocean, Baskets and Hope. Njoroge's presentation painted a poignant reminder that was facing humanity across the globe. It called for the collective social responsibility; coming together to fill one or two Caritas baskets to make staying at home bearable for vulnerable families.

*Benji* and a cohort of boys from his class at Roxbury Latin School, and friends from his youth group were inspired by the presentation. Consequently, they all pledged to contribute a minimum of USD13 (Ksh1, 300) towards the Baskets of Hope. A total of USD 1, 040 (Ksh.110, 000) was pledged, paid and wired to Caritas Nairobi.

And so, at 13 years *Benji* celebrated his first ever birthday party in style and thanks to his family and friends. Indeed, the '*power of 13*'. While the pandemic may have practically brought the whole world into a stand- still, these friends were certainly going to jump the pandemic hurdle all for *Benji's* sake. And what better way to celebrate life than to extend this friendship to vulnerable families who are miles and miles away from them. Truly, **THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR!** At Caritas Nairobi, we tweak Andrew Gold's song to *Benji* and his friends and say, ***"Thank you for being friends of Caritas."***



The 'birthday boy' Benji





*Sr. Lucy Wanza, Regional Superior of the Little Sisters of St. Francis (LSOSF) donating food items to a resident of Mukuru Kwa Njenga Slums.*

# IN SOLIDARITY WITH MUKURU KWA NJENGA SLUMS

*By Sr. Modether Karuri- Deputy Director-Administration*

*"...an emergency like COVID-19 is defeated in the first place with the antibodies of solidarity," Pope Francis.*

At the crack of dawn on the third day after the shameful crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth, three women ran to the tomb, weighed down by the burden of desperation and hopelessness. The man they had placed all their hope in, followed faithfully and looked up to as their Messiah, lay in a tomb. A huge stone stood between them and the remains of their Messiah. Even as they ran towards the tomb, their minds wondered, *"Who will roll over the stone for us?"* These thoughts however did not hold them back from their desire to anoint the body of their 'dead' Messiah.

This scenario mirrors the heavy air of hopelessness and desperation that is evident especially in the urban slums of Nairobi. Most residents in the slums of Nairobi depend on casual jobs whose proceeds barely meet their basic needs. COVID 19 has led to the scaling down and event closure of many businesses with casual laborers being the first hit. Families that used to offer slum dwellers job such as laundry and household chores have opted to do the work themselves so as to reduce the COVID19 infection risk. Slums are populous and social distancing is almost

impossible. With this, the assumption is that slum dwellers are at higher risk of contracting the virus and catalyst of its spread. Consequently, slum dwellers have been discriminated upon, leaving them hopeless.

Since the announcement of the First Covid 19 case in Kenya on the 14th of March, life changed drastically for many families living in the Mukuru kwa Njenga slums. St. Mary's Mukuru Parish which is under the management of the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) serves residents of this slum and have been a source of refuge for many families.

The Parish runs a programme dubbed **"Matthew 25"**. This is an initiative where the Parish works closely with volunteers and community leaders to identify the most vulnerable members of the slum community and support them to access help. This may be in form of spiritual support, medical support, feeding programmes, linking children with education support etc. To feed the hungry, the Parish relies on donations from well-wishers and from contributions made by Christians during Mass. With the closure of churches and the loss of jobs for many parishioners, the demand for support increased while the availability of supplies continued to sink.

Through the Caritas Nairobi Baskets of Hope initiative and the popularization

of the same through different communication channels, many well-wishers have responded positively. Making sacrifices to share with needy brethren. One of such groups is the Congregation of the Little Sisters of St. Francis. Heeding the call by His Eminence John Cardinal Njue to join hands in solidarity to share *'Baskets of Hope'* with the most affected and under the guidance of Caritas Nairobi, the Sisters offered their support to 100 families within Mukuru kwa Njenga slums. This donation was received on behalf of the Parish by the Parish Priest Fr. John Munjuri. *"The situation is getting worse as even those who have been instrumental in supporting the 'Matthew 25' initiative have also become vulnerable and also need support,"* said Fr. Munjuri.

As I walked out of the slums, I looked at the surroundings and my heart was filled with a poignant feeling. Children playing near heaps of garbage. What filled the air was a pungent smell of clogged drainage and sewerage systems already overloaded due to the overuse of the inadequate sanitary facilities especially as more people stay at home. Disturbing thoughts run through my mind: With or without COVID 19, are we ever going to act responsibly against the hunger that so many suffer, knowing that mother earth is capable of feeding everyone? Are we going to continue to look the other way with complicit silence in the face of suffering which we are all responsible for?

Most importantly, are we willing to change our lifestyles that plunge so many into poverty, promoting and encouraging ourselves to lead a more austere and humane life that enables an equitable distribution of resources? Are we as a Christian community take the necessary steps to stem the devastation of the environment, or will we continue to deny the evidence?" Shall we ever develop the antibodies for solidarity towards our brethren in need?

As Caritas Nairobi, this pandemic has helped us to realize the importance of uniting the human family in the search for sustainable and comprehensive development. We remain committed to our mandate of alleviating poverty, human suffering and being ambassadors of Christ, rolling away the stones of desperation and hopelessness among the People of God within the Archdiocese of Nairobi and beyond.



# GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:

## RESPONSE IN TIMES OF COVID-19

*Maryann Sambigi- Gender and Youth Development Coordinator*

The world over, whenever there is a tragic event, whether conflict, disaster or pandemic, gender based violence incidences increase. For instance, in Kenya, since the Covid-19 pandemic started, the Kenya National Deaf Women Peace has recorded 53 cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV). This is just a small fraction of what is going on everywhere. It is also evident that specific people are affected most, these being women and children, the elderly and people living with disabilities (PLWDs). Worse is the fact that the female gender is the worst hit. Actually, many women are in 'lockdown' at home with their abusers while being cut off from normal support services.

In fact, women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months. The number is likely to increase as security, health, and money worries heighten tensions and strains and are heightened by restricted and confined living conditions.

In recent months, with the world having been hit severely by the COVID-19 pandemic and specifically in Kenya, people's lives are no longer normal. During this time, the country is experiencing increased cases especially, of sexual and gender based violence. People are experiencing social/economic stress. Citizens have to

practice social distancing and deal with restricted movement, mainly curfews, there is no food security, no source of income and many other problems creating antagonism within families. Mental health is affected due to the stressful situation. Cultural practices that are heavily influenced by a Patriarchal and male chauvinism mentality only worsen the situation.

When GBV occurs, unfortunately, victims find themselves having to stay within the danger zones. During these curfew days, they find themselves having to stay in the same house or environment with the abuser. It is important to note that most GBV perpetrators are people who are very close to the victim, whether relative or neighbour, friend etc.

When Gender Based Violence occurs, several things may happen, such as the victim being stigmatized. This may bring shame and self-condemnation, cause stress/depression, bring conflict and even more violence and a vicious cycle may follow. Many times the victim or family may not know how to respond to the tragic event which could be rape, defilement and battering, psychological or even emotional abuse.

The legal mechanisms and structures in Kenya are clear and have enough representation in terms of legislations. The Constitution is clear on the issues of Gender violence, the penal code, the justice process and protection e.g.

Children's Act. However, it is good to create awareness on how and where to receive essential services should GBV ever happen to anybody. An important disclaimer is that Silence should never be the way to go where violence is experienced or witnessed.

Some of the services a victim would require are such as immediate medical attendance, reporting to the police or other authority within the area of occurrence, counseling services and legal representation. There are also organizations that are specifically inclined towards gender based violence response. Fortunately, in this Covid-19 situation and with the rising cases of violence, many toll free helplines have been set up to assist in bringing on justice and help to the victims.

Below are some of the current and existing helplines that may be used to report Gender Based Violence occurrences.

1. Childline **Kenya**, a nationwide helpline service dedicated to children that runs 24 hours - Dial **116**
2. FIDA-Kenya Toll free - Dial **0800720501**
3. National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) - Dial **0800720187**
4. LVCT Health - **1190** (both Calls/SMS)
5. Directorate of Community Policing, Gender & Child Protection - **0800730999**



# A CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS TOO

By Dominic Kamau

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought attention to several mental health related issues. A lot of necessary discussion has been taking place on a variety of media platforms with mental issues ranging from anxiety to depression to paranoia. Most of these discussions however, have focused on adults. There is an underlying assumption that young children do not experience depression and stress and this could not be farther from the truth. Even the discussion around opening of schools often centers around their education and on how to prevent the children from contracting the novel virus but not around the latter's effect on their mental health.

Children are experts at picking emotional cues from their primary caregivers. The stress, depression and anxiety that their caregivers are going through does affect them. It is important, therefore, for parents to talk to their children about the virus: what it is and how it spreads; that the governments and Biomedics are doing the best they can to get a vaccine; how to protect themselves and to know that if they take precautions, they will not get sick and if they do, they can get better.

The traumatic effect of the Covid-19 will not be felt mostly on their lack of education and schooling but it will be felt in their being isolated from their friends. A child's personality is still growing and their capacity to process such difficult situations is largely undeveloped. The important skills they need to learn in order to thrive in the world happens on the playground. It is there that they learn how to cooperate, compete and compromise.

It is in the interaction with their friends that they learn to be self-confident and develop a personal identity. The school environment teaches them self-discipline, how to negotiate with friends and other important social skills. In the place of these skills, children might

experience hopelessness, isolation and desperation. This impact will be felt if especially schools are opened and the children are not permitted to play together. The solution might indeed be worse than the problem.

Even though children may not understand the global impact of covid-19, the effect of the pandemic will be mostly felt vicariously. Children develop somatic illnesses like sores when they undergo stress. This is because they do not express their emotional state verbally but physically. Parents and caregivers might be struggling to treat a physical illness which is largely psychological.

Bored children tend to focus on their stress. They might end up struggling to go to bed, waking up at night and needing more assurance that they will be okay especially in the evenings. A child who has trouble sleeping even after all other check-ups have been done may be exhibiting stress. Other behavioral

symptoms include withdrawal shown by a lack of emotion. It is important therefore that children have a regular sleeping and waking schedule with physical activities during the day. Their sleep length should be at least 8-9 hours.

Other signs that a child may be experiencing stress are bone and muscle pain while still engaging in playtime without significant strain. Abdominal pain in the absence of any other illness could also be a sign. Pediatricians have advised including natural fibers in their diet to help maintain healthy bowel movements and reduce chances of constipation. Regressive behaviours such as clinging to the caregiver, thumb-sucking and wanting to be fed may be other signs that can be countered by the caregiver being more comforting and encouraging to the child.

Adults can and do make an important and positive difference in the mental health of children by offering loving kindness, a predictable environment, comfort, age-appropriate and truthful information, physical safety, encouragement and guidance. Gently asking the child about what makes them happy, worried or scared can be really helpful in guiding them to identify their emotions and developing emotional intelligence.



*"Love through my eyes" this little angel seems to say!*



# SUPPORTING VULNERABLE VALUE CHAINS DURING COVID 19

Timothy Njeru- Food Security, Water and Environment Coordinator

COVID-19 has led to huge disruptions to the milk supply chain preventing dairy farmers from getting their produce to market. This has in-turn led to loss of income to an already vulnerable group. Caritas through Milky project has been supporting farmers in diversifying income at household level and at the same time smoothening the supply chain through direct linkages to buyers. This has led to higher income for farmers through increased sales of milk and diversified incomes. The Milky Project has enabled stable supply of milk to vendors and processors.

Whereas many farmers have suffered from Covid 19 related market effects, farmers supported by Caritas have

enjoyed stable prices of milk same with marketers who have continuously enjoyed stable and safe supply of milk.

The project has fully implemented the government directives on Covid 19 by training farmers on how to deal with the corona virus effects especially through social distancing even when selling milk, wearing of masks and washing hands.

Caritas has been providing masks to all farmers involved in collection and marketing of milk. Hand sanitizers and personal protective gear has also been provided to the team involved with logistics.

Public gatherings have been barred by the government and this means

it's impossible to hold group trainings for our farmers. To respond to this challenge, the Milky Programme has been implementing e-learning. As such, we have been sending weekly sms to farmers on various training topics, and referencing various online livestock training videos for purpose of learning. Artificial insemination and other vet services being an essential services has continued within the households.

The programme has initiated a process of distributing feeds to those who deliver milk. This means farmers have access to quality feeds delivered to their doorstep on a credit basis.

## OUR PARTNERS



# IN THE LIGHT OF RELIEF PROGRAMME | By Jacinta Ng'ang'a

The year 2020 has been quite challenging in Caritas Nairobi. In early this year corona virus pandemic interrupted the planned activities in Caritas Nairobi. However, the Caritas Nairobi Relief programme officer has been offering counselling services the residents of Kariobangi one of the areas where the programme's outstation is located.

Among many other challenges faced by residents of Kariobangi, one of the notable reasons that has driven many to seek counselling is domestic violence arising from the pressure of being unable to provide basic needs for the families. Others have claimed that the curfew time has forced men to arrive home early and more family disputes arise.

Relieving people's problems, is a transformation inspired by the concrete involvement of Jesus Christ in social issues. Jesus talked about liberty for the oppressed and compassion for the

suffering. He called people to share and serve. The role each person ought to play in promoting human and Christian life. This is the basis of social structures so as to transform and restore people's dignity.

It is best done through projects for self-reliance aimed at bringing social-economic transformation, growth and positive change. Through all these we can see that the church in peace building strives to restore the dignity of God's people and make them whole. It is with the values of Jesus Christ; love, Empathy, care and mercy that the Church handles challenging situations and together arrive at human development and transformation for positive change.

As peace builders we commit ourselves to educate people about respect and mutual esteem in order to achieve peaceful coexistence and solidarity

among members of the family; to promote the culture of dialogue so that understanding and trust may develop among individuals and peoples as these are the conditions of authentic peace especially during this covid-19 pandemic. As instruments of peace, let us build on the four pillars of truth, justice, love and freedom.

In this regard, the peace building program has been in the front line maintaining peace in the informal settlements of Kariobangi and Mathare Slums. Peace is a call for everyone. It facilitates the establishment of durable peace by preventing the recurrence of violence and effects of conflict. This is done through reconciliation, institution, and political, as well as economic transformation.



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