

Children's Centre and Mukuru Slum, Nairobi, Kenya



Sometimes our world realities can be so great that we tend to forget how our own area may be in great need. One of the JPIC outreach opportunities during the time of tertianship in Kenya is to have an experience in one of the slums of Nairobi. Our tertians were able to minister for about ten days in the Mukuru Slum and at the Songa Mbele na Masomo Children's Centre with poor and marginalized young people.

The tertians were led to be a Jesus presence and witness to the children and families in the centre and the Mukuru Slum. Each sister had an opportunity to work with children who have physical and mental handicaps, and some worked with school dropouts. The tertians soon realized that along with intellectual and physical disabilities come the social and emotional dimensions that result from living in extreme poverty.

Accompanying the social worker to the slum gave the tertians even more insights as to where the children come from and how the people live. Life is very hard in the slum, and the commitment to help the children grow and learn to be effective, contributing members of society is very challenging. If any child did not appear at the centre, the social worker took one of the tertians and visited the place where the child was living, often having to climb high, steep, unsafe wooden steps to reach a make shift iron-sheet dwelling that is called home. This experience gave all a better understanding of life in the slum. Educating the children is essential to their growth and development, and this outreach opportunity gave all participants a broader perspective of living on the margins.