

“A Day Out in the Slums”, By Fr Dunstan Epaalat.

Kenya Mission Update, January 2011

I recently received, via Tim Law, a gift from one Christian at Holy Rosary. The donor wished that it be distributed to poor people, especially in the slums of Nairobi, to assist them buy food and other family basic necessities. I had the gift (in cash) distributed to various families in the two large slums of Kibera and Mathare. In total 21 cases (needy families and individuals) got assisted.

While food was a serious issue for many of these families, a little cash to get their children back to the new school term seemed to hold the greatest urgency. And for many others, any little help would go into boosting their tiny slum business ventures like selling donuts or vegetables in the alleys. Below are some of the pictures and stories I managed to gather and compile in the course my recent two-day visit to those slums of Kibera and Mathare.



Crispin and wife Carole; Ruth at her fish shop; Millicent (Ruth’s daughter); Celestine and her bedridden brother Tony

Nine years ago in the 2002 election campaigns, Crispin (above left) was badly beaten up by political thugs while coming from work. He survived but was never able to get back to work because of the multiple fractures he had suffered. Ruth, a widow with six children feeds and educates her family from her small fried-fish business.

Millicent (Ruth’s firstborn, 3rd right), suffered abuse during the political violence of 2007. One of the people who recently visited from Seattle is currently supporting her for a six-month hair-styling course. Celestine (first right above), temporarily out of high school for lack of fees, helps care for her bed-ridden brother Tony whose strange medical condition forced him out of school 5 years ago.



Saida making donuts for sale; her smiling crippled son Suleiman; Gladys at her grocery; Maxi with Ashley and Sinaida

Saida, a Moslem widow (above left) prepares donuts which she sells to sustain and educate her family. One of her sons, Suleiman (center) is permanently bedridden. Gladys (a widow, 3rd right) supports her family by selling fruits and vegetables in the slum alleys. Maxi (4th right) is my guide at the Kibera slum. She is a widow with six children, currently having serious challenges getting them through school. Even with her own many family challenges, Maxi still volunteers to provide support for many slum families.

Sinaida (seated right of Maxi), whose beautiful story was recently reported (in Seattle) by Tim Law, almost single-handedly takes care of her siblings, including Ashley (on Maxi's Lap) who suffered serious body burns when their house burned about a year ago.



Tom (above right), a volunteer catechist, was my guide at the Mathare slum, has a family of four children for whom he has a big struggle feeding, educating and finding health-care in the slum situation. Mary and Jane (2nd above) are neighbors and residents of the much poorer part of Kibera. Monica (3rd picture above, with her daughter Lucy) is wife to Jane's son who has to support the family by washing cars in their part of the slum. Fourth right is Maureen and her sibling; their father died only a few months ago.



John and Mike coordinate the photocopying of learning materials for fellow seminarians at Thomas Aquinas seminary where I teach. Most seminarians come from very poor families who cannot afford to buy text books. A little part of the gift went into helping them do some photocopying.

Victoria (2nd picture above) is a recently orphaned daughter to a single mother. She is in final year of high school. Velma (3rd picture above) makes her little daily earnings from doing laundry for some people in the slum. The picture to the far right is back at my village home: my mother Willy with her two daughters-in-law, in fabric from a donor at Holy Rosary. Next to her are some of her grandchildren.

I am most grateful to the Lord for your great support in helping me minister to some of the very poor people in the places am able to reach out to here in Kenya. As you can see, these pictures are images of great joy and gratitude for the support they received from kind donors, in their situation whose challenges only the pictures themselves can describe.

Your continued support is greatly valued. There are projects I had indicated while in Seattle, like, constructing classrooms, a library and a science laboratory for the new school at my home village, and purchasing a tractor and small pick-up truck to help improve the farming situation in that poor village. I am sure the village community of St Francis of Assisi Lupida will greatly appreciate and benefit from any continued contributions to those most urgent causes for them.

I am happy to report that through your very kind contributions from we have been able to recruit some three untrained teachers for St Francis of Assisi Secondary school, the new high school at my home village. We are still looking around for a graduate teacher willing to work in such a poor new village school. The Principal just assured me that he is hopeful he will find one. I am sure with your continued support we shall be able to hire the extra teacher and sustain him and the other three.

Also, with the help of your contributions I was able to complete the little house at the village which will greatly serve in hosting visitors with an interest to offer support to the faith community of St Francis of Assisi Lupida village.



The first group to be housed included the team of Fr John, Tim Law, Dennis Alquist and Sue Stiller (among others). They had their experience of our local faith community and they made their personal contributions to various projects: the school, the parish orphanage, village churches under construction, small Christian community (SCC) projects, etc.

At the start of March am expecting another group from Seattle who will also visit at the village for a few days. I believe, just like in the case of the first group, their presence will be of value both to themselves and to the faith community of my village.

On behalf of all those who have received help of any kind from all you there in Seattle, I say thank you very much and may the Lord fill you all with His abundant blessings and support.

Fr Dunstan Epaalat.