

Annual Report **One Heart** 2016







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Meeting Point International

Kampala, Uganda



Meeting Point International (MPI) is a non-governmental organization registered with the Uganda NGO board. Active since October 1992, we work primarily in the Nakawa Division of Kampala. Our administrative offices are based in Kitintale. Working here in Uganda we have become a part of the experiences that are lived, like a dear friend to whom one would find solace and a belonging with; MPI has grown to an integral part in the lives of thousands of families.

MPI has become known for its unique approach to HIV/AIDS which places a person's value as being of greater importance than any of his/her circumstances. We have found that acceptance of disease has become a key to our success. The knowledge that the virus that causes HIV/AIDS is harmful to more than an individual's physical wellbeing has helped us build an approach that goes far beyond physical support. We strive to end the stigma associated with disclosure by accepting everybody as they are and encouraging open and honest discussions about the disease.

Through the peer based approach, our staff utilizes home visits, community talks, drama performances and songs to reach out to the sick. Patients who may have felt alone, ashamed, guilty or scared are given an opportunity to feel supported, loved, and feel like they are truly a part of other people's lives.

By providing a living example to their peers, the clients of MPI offer an encouragement whose strength goes far deeper than a solely technical intervention could. MPI invests in education as an avenue for self-discovery: it is a way for individuals to find their own worth and pride. Education gives hope for those who find themselves in time of great need, but, most of all, education for us is the greatest need of man that when responded to can result into the development of a mature mentality that can last a lifetime.

The reason for our work is not merely to alleviate suffering, but to create dignity and lasting relationships that foster happiness and good health.

“Belonging to a design that is not yours, knowing who you are, knowing that you belong to someone - that is having a link with which you become free. You can face everything without fear because you know to whom you belong.”





“The reason for our work is not merely to alleviate suffering, but to create dignity and build lasting relationships that gaze at the fullness of the human person.”

Rose Busingye

A Message from Rose

Rose Busingye has been given the Servant of Peace Prize by the Holy See Mission of the UN, the Woman of the Year Prize in Valdaosta, Italy, and the International Award for Peace and Solidarity in Pistoia, Italy.

"The greatest need of a human being is the need of belonging, which gives stability and certainty in all aspects of life. Meeting Point International has discovered that with a belonging you can approach others while taking into account their reality and you can be able to truly embrace him/her which-ever are the differences that separate you. MPI creates simple environments where each person can find it easier to belong, and experience love.

In an environment where this belonging ceases to exist, where external circumstances deny this or are not clear, there is a possibility of violence and war in all aspects. MPI avails conditions where adults, youth and children can feel loved and have a link to someone, a relationship, a bond that they can turn to. The secret of everything is this belonging. Inside this, one can discover his/her value and dignity that helps him/her face any kind of challenging situations in life.

The value of the person is only possible when paying attention to something greater. The support we give is an instrument to tell these people that they have a value and that they are responsible for it.

MPI did not invent this method but even scientific studies have proved

this method of ours works. Depriving a person of love and belonging causes physical and functional harm. Specifically the results can be reduction of the size of the hippocampus a fundamental cerebral structure that regulates the body's response to stress and the evolution of logical thinking and the capacity of reflection!

We have come to learn that the experience of abandonment comes with far-reaching psychological damage and therefore we always strive to meet the total needs of the children we care for. A key lesson we have learnt through the years has been the importance of introducing a person to whom the children and their parents can refer to; someone who loves them and is present for them more than just plainly implementing a project that doesn't touch the very depth of hearts.

In brief, the situation is not only for the poor and sick people but for everybody who lacks a link to someone.

This belonging may end up having lasting consequences that shape ones destiny.

Having this in mind, my work in MPI is to create or try to create original structures of the values and meaning where each one can develop and dis-

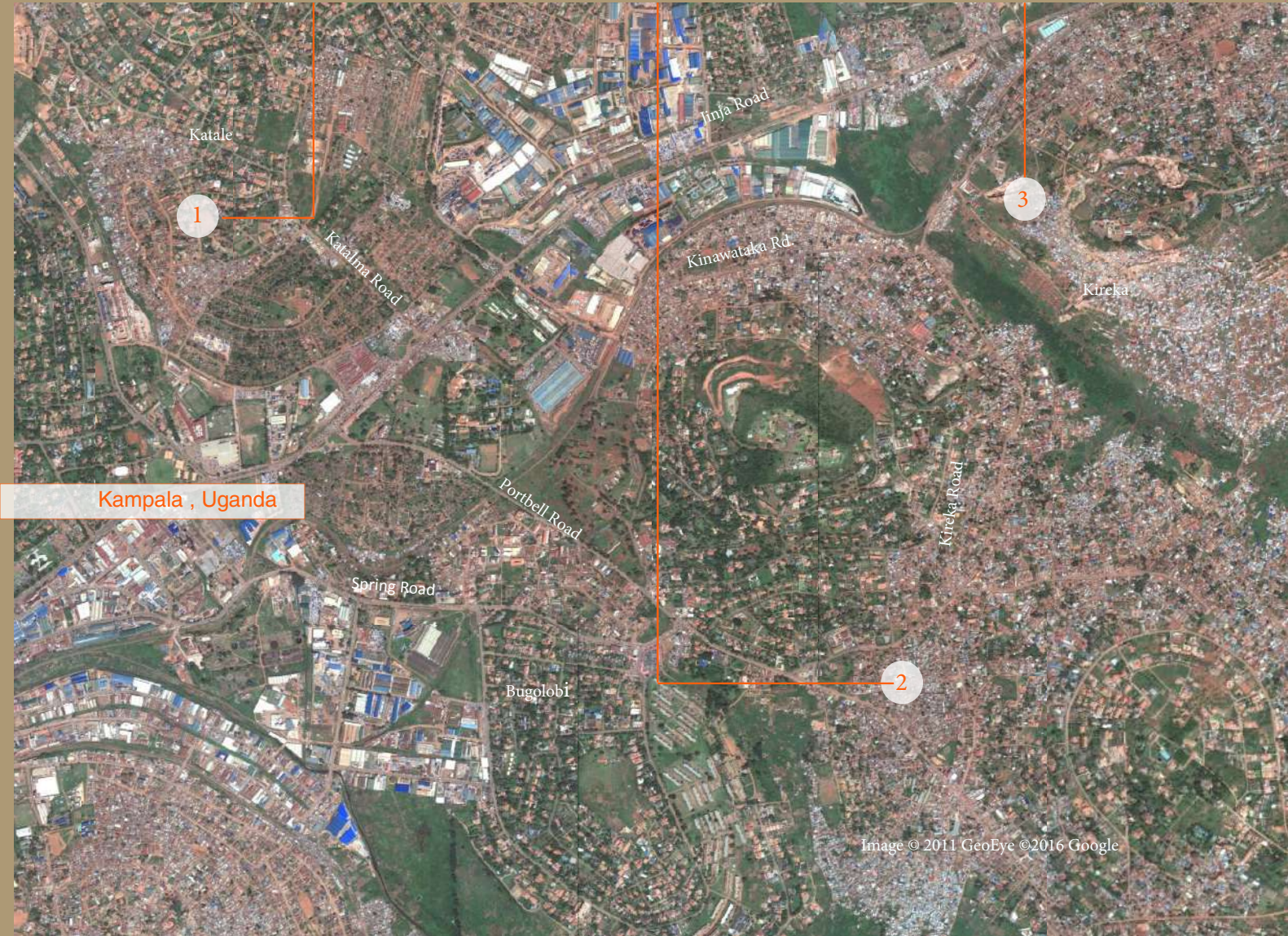
cover himself. We have groups where adults and children are introduced to this meaning and sense of things that surround them. For us it has been a marvelous eruption of discoveries of the wonderful consequences of steps which become a chain of education. It becomes a place where each can be himself, where an individual can express himself freely and live a constant comparison with his own humanity.

The person who belongs becomes protagonist because he receives a face, and receives a consciousness that unites him with the reality, he becomes the lord of the reality not because he posses it himself, but because he discovers the belonging to someone else.

Belonging to a design that is not yours, that is to say belonging to somebody else, you become free."



Rose Busingye,
MPI Director



Katale

1

Katalma Road

Jinja Road

3

Kinawataka Rd

Kireka

Kireka Road

Kampala , Uganda

Portbell Road

2

Spring Road

Bugolobi

Image © 2011 GeoEye ©2016 Google



Kireka

Kireka is constantly evolving. The continuous flow of migrants from northern Uganda, mostly of Acholi descent, has given this area its' nick-name of "The Acholi Quarter." In their songs, the women of MPI affectionately call it "New York City".

The Acholi Quarter's colorful residents have created a tightly knit community, unified in many ways by the bright blue and white structure built by Meeting Point International. Women gather there during the day to make necklaces and dance; while other men and women come for literacy classes.

Kitintale

The administrative headquarters of Meeting Point International is located in Kitintale. The Kitintale office is responsible for the tracking of children under sponsorship, the repayment of loans, distribution of medicine and allocation of donated funds.

The tasks undertaken in Kitintale, especially those regarding educational sponsorship, are of great consequence in ensuring these activities continue. In a newly remodeled facility with office rooms, and a courtyard for gatherings clients, visitors and volunteers will always find a Meeting Point International employee with a welcoming smile.

Naguru

The Naguru offices of MPI are located in a small primary school. Across the field stands the old Meeting Point International building, where meetings, dances, health education and literacy classes are held every Monday and Wednesday.

In Naguru as clients filter in throughout the day. Everyone who comes into the office is a friend and has a story to tell.

The women here have formed a tightly knit group, but they are open and inviting. New friends are made every day and no one goes home feeling alone.







Home Visits

The unique strength of MPI is apparent with the home visits. Everyone who works at Meeting Point International checks regularly on those who are sick in order to provide supportive care including help to bedridden patients and to provide adherence and compliance counselling at home.

On a typical home visit, our staff walks out into the neighborhood, stopping at each home where they know someone is sick. Usually more than one woman makes the trip, greeting everyone along the way. Inside the patient's homes, conversations remain upbeat.

Serious discussions are punctuated with jokes, gossip and laughter. Receiving visitors gives everyone a sense of honor, reminding them that they are respected and helping them re-discover their value and dignity.

Establishing a relationship with a person is just as important as the physical support provided. Through these relationships, the men and women working for Meeting Point International provide a glue that holds together those with each of their individual needs.

Members of Meeting Point International communities know that if any one they know is sick in any way, they can visit the office. Once there, the staff refers them to the hospital or a center that can provide the treatment they need.

Antiretroviral Treatment

In the early days of Meeting Point International, ARV drugs were expensive, and in short supply. The registration book was filled with patients who came for help and yet couldn't get it because of the then high cost of the medicines. MPI staff watched in dismay as their attempt to treat infections bore no fruit without antiretroviral treatment. As international donations arose though and scientific advances made ARV medications affordable, MPI clients have begun now to fully experience the wonder of life. Today, MPI supports about 2500 patients, 240 of these are on ARV medications also thanks to Abbracci Senza Frontiere.

The men, women and children who receive medicine are generally referred to organizations around Kampala that provide drugs

for free or at reduced costs.

The groups working with Meeting Point International include Nsambya Hospital, The St Benedict Hospital and SAS clinic. Unlike many patients on ARV medication who fail to follow their treatment regimens, clients of Meeting Point International are educated and monitored to make sure that they take their medicines properly and continually. As a result, patients achieve and maintain great health without stop.

Treatment and Medical Care

There are many organizations in Kampala that serve the sick, impoverished, hungry. At Meeting Point International, the focus is not simply on the problem but also on the individual. Each new client is treated with love; MPI focuses on the value and dignity of every individual, ensuring that all needs are cared for while also activating one's ability to feel pride and responsibility. Every new client of MPI spends time chatting with staff and other patients.

Necklaces

For years the women of MPI have been making necklaces. At the beginning it was used as part of handcraft together with making sweaters but later with support of AVSI Distant Support Program (DSP) it has become a way to sustain their families. Using recycled glossy magazines the women create beads which are then used to produce necklaces, bracelets and earrings.

Necklace and bead making has been a wonder for MPI. Many women no longer need to toil breaking stones in the Kireka quarries and women who had no food can now feed their children.

Village Savings Groups

With the support of AVSI Foundation through Sustainable, Comprehensive Responses for vulnerable children and their families (SCORE) Program, MPI helps its clients to organize themselves in groups of 30 people each, in order to save money to begin businesses to generate their own income.

These small businesses enhance the economic capacity of families enhancing their sense of responsibility. With this system of savings and loans men and women are able to build vegetable stands, brick businesses, tailoring shops etc.

Feeling their responsibility, clients take pride in repaying the group when their businesses become successful, hoping that someone else can benefit as they have. This activity reinforces the sense of community and pride. Women gather together to create with each other, sharing ideas and establishing strong bonds.

The therapeutic outcome that results from sitting together and making these necklaces and plan the business they are going to build with the saved money is immeasurable.



Woman at Meeting Point International Kireka making beads.



The Women of Meeting Point International Naguru sharing their Money after saving at the end of the year



Adult Education

Adult education and literacy classes are additional programs provided by Meeting Point International. MPI clients and volunteers are taught basic literacy (how to read, write and speak English) and numeracy (they become able to count, add, subtract and divide any figure). This helps the clients, especially those who are planning to start a business as an income generating activity.

Acquiring new knowledge gives confidence, improves esteem and enables the women to carry on their daily work with pride. English lessons especially help women living in the Naguru and Acholi Quarters, who have often to face problems of language barriers. Students in the adult classes work very hard to make the most out of their education. They are serious about exams and often request tests to make sure they are learning everything they can. It is a remarkable aspect – especially since it is generally rare thing to see students so excited and enthusiastic about their education!

Supported children at school

Meeting Point International through a project with AVSI Foundation, Support International, Cesal, Insieme Si Puo' and other donors, has implemented a program that links Ugandan children with private donors who provide educational and other activities support. This rather unique project is further colored by the exchanges between sponsors (who become friends) and children in Uganda. At least twice a year, sponsors receive letters and photographs from their "supported" children. MPI staff stays in close contact with each child's parents or guardians encouraging and providing support so that each child can reach his or her full potential.

This involvement keeps every one enthusiastic about the children's education. Children send their grades to their sponsors, and each child hopes to impress! Meeting Point International believes that no child should have to go without a good education. Therefore, MPI staff seeks out orphans and other vulnerable children whose parents are struggling so that they ensure a brighter future for each child. At the same time, each sponsor has the satisfaction of putting a smile on a child's

face. In recent years and now to put the value of the person in the center of the intervention demonstrates success.

The women assisted by MPI, taking part of this experience, wanted to give the same education they are receiving from MPI to their own children. Two schools were born from this desire, thanks to AVSI and CESAL: the Luigi Giussani Pre-Primary and Primary School, attended by 450 children, in the district of Kireka, and Luigi Giussani High School, attended by 537 students in Kamuli road.



Child Protection

In places where suffering is common, children are often the first to fall victims of the problems of their community. For these children, Meeting Point International has set up a home called the Welcoming House to rescue orphans and other children who have nowhere to go. Eighty children have found their way to Welcoming House. Some are brought by concerned adults or police, while others are found alone in the streets of Kampala. The staff at the Welcoming House become a family for these children, teaching them self-respect and treating them with all the kindness a parent should.

Though the Welcoming House is a safe haven for these little ones, we continue, with the support of the police, to trace the relatives of these children; if available, a family can offer the best form of care for a child. When placement back in their home fails, some of the children are cared for by families in the community. Amidst all their potential suffering, and lack of means, it's often the women of MPI who volunteer to take responsibility to raise one of these orphans. The openness with which they receive other children who are not even related to them is always a lesson and a sign for us that humanity is indeed powerful!

The construction and maintenance of the Welcoming House was made possible mostly through the help of Support International and CESAL that supported MPI in the effort to provide a safe and beautiful place where the children can grow





NEN ANYIM SAVING GROUP;
AKELLO SANTA, 52 years old woman.

Everyone who visits these women is a friend, this is what I felt for the three hours I spent with them. Last week, the women of Meeting Point International invited me to visit their Savings Group Association in Naguru, a slum area just outside the city Centre of Kampala. Every woman has a story to tell. The women have formed different saving groups to better manage their little finances and try to improve their standard of living. The way these women were staying together in front of the money they saved during this whole year, was something that recalled me to Rose Busingye's words; "This has been an adventure in MPI, a very beautiful adventure in educating the heart not to fall into what it is not made for! To educate the heart to be at its original state." I met AKELLO SANTA, a 52 years old woman. With a beautiful smile she tells me, "I have no words and God is my witness. I thank God for having brought Rose like Angel that brought SCORE [a project implemented by MPI in collaboration with AVSI Uganda] to us. She opened our eyes, we are now seeing what we were not seeing. I am the head of the family – I don't have brothers and I have three sisters. My mother is very old. One time I introduced her to MPI with a broken rib and she was hospitalized, she received treatment and MPI helped me to pay the bills. I have a husband with five children but he is like my first born, he can't help, he cannot do anything. I am the one taking care of my mother and children, I work in the market, selling vegetables in the early hours of the morning. I tried to save with a group of shop keepers in the market, but the group was not serious, sometimes the members would refuse to pay back my money. But when MPI introduced us to the SCORE project, I started saving well in Nen Anyim (Going Forward) Group, without worries and so far the money I managed to save it's over five millions (1,400 usd)! My desire is to build a nice house for my mother in the village even if of only one room, let her die at list when she has seen that her daughter has cared for her."

I am continually learning to be educated by faces of these women and thanks to the women that invited me.

TEACHER; WASSWA YUSUF

I have taken a good number of years teaching Adult Literacy classes in Meeting Point International in Naguru. At the beginning this work was quite complicated since I was used to teaching young primary school pupils. In MPI I begun handling mature people who are comfortable in their deep-rooted habits. The big number of women looked to be tired and unmotivated to classroom work so I could find myself in front of the mature classroom with serious dedication problems.

Everything seemed to be not easy for me because my idea of the school had something to do with giving instructions to pupils that had to be followed. I was totally focused on my thoughts and I was thus getting upset with some women.

One day I got struck when I heard of a life story from one of my student (woman). We had received visitors and the Director Rose told the students (women) share their life experiences. She told the visitors that she was victim of the prolonged rebel activity in the northern region of Uganda where she grew up from, she was abducted and made to feed on human flesh, raped and got infected with HIV and AID many people who listened including me got emotional and started shading tears. When we closed our activities that day I went home, but something was hurting me.

I felt I have been judgmental to my students, I prayed asking Christ to forgive me and to give me the grace change my gaze and to love all my students (women). I also realized that nothing depends on our effort, for this reason, I began to experience a change of attitude because the more I stayed with them, the more I loved my students and the more they opened up to me.

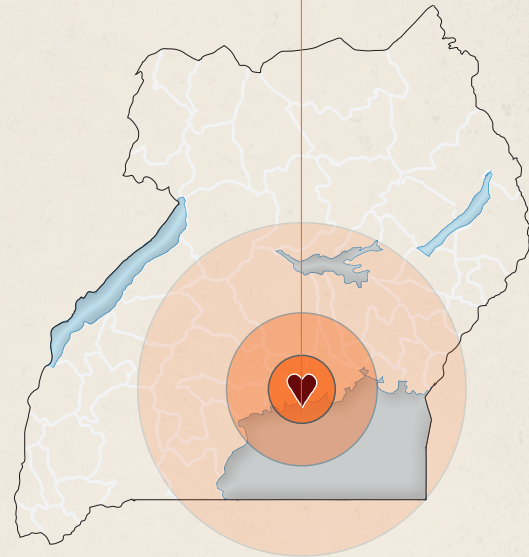
All mentioned happened to me within the first few months... Now it is six years since I started teaching them, we do English language, Mathematics, Health Science and Music Dance and Drama. Six years of teaching the women have been very interesting and adventurous, I have learned a lot from my students (women) and fellow workers. In fact, it has been a journey to discovering my real life and value my humanity which is rooted in the "infinite". We all need a company like this to walk. I cherish my students for providing me the best companionship as I discover my life.

Our Beneficiaries

Women supported	2500
Educational Support Nursery to high	1089
People receiving ARV treatments	950
People receiving sanitary and health care treatment	2500
Women attended saving groups	300
Women attending adult literacy	33
Children and Youth living in Welcoming House	84

Meeting Point International activities are made possible through generous co-operation with the following Donors and partners;

AVSI Foundation
AVSI Foundation USA
Abbracci Senza Frontiere
Associazione Santa Lucia
ACEMA S.p.A
Associazione san Giacomo Bergamo
Benedict Medical Hospital
Communion and Liberation
Cesal
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Luigi Giussani High School
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Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education
Gestione Fiere S.p.A.
Intersinergy
Insieme si Puo'
Support International
SAS Clinic
St.Francis Hospital Nsambya
Banco Alimentare



For further information, please contact Meeting Point International using the form below:

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 Kampala, Uganda
 Phone: +250 (0) 414222698
 Email: info@meetingpoint-int.org
 Web: www.meetingpoint-int.org

Financial Donations can be made by bank transfer directly to MPI using the following account information:

Account Name: Meeting Point International
 Bank Name: KCB BANK UGANDA LTD:
 SWIFT CODE: KCBLUGKA
 Acct No.:
 EUR= 22 90 24 14 82
 USD= 22 90 24 14 90
 UGX =22 90 24 14 74
 Swift Code: KCBLUGKA
 Through: BKTRUS33

A word of thanks to all the people that continually support MEETING POINT INTERNATIONAL.