

Centre for Social and Rural Development Inc.
Background

Mathare Slum is one of the oldest and the worst slums in Africa. Situated three miles east of Nairobi city's central business district, Mathare slum is home to over 700,000 people occupying an area of two miles long by one mile wide. Because of congestion, survival is a daily battle for the resident's against the backdrop of diseases, crime, prostitution and lawlessness.

Life in Mathare slums is pathetic and unbearable for everyone who resides and visits the slums. Most residents are engaged in small-scale petty businesses either in their 6 X 8' makeshift housing structures or on narrow open raw sewer filled alley ways, it would take a miracle for these hand-to-mouth investments to blossom into big-time business. However the manner in which these slum dwellers carry on with life is owe-inspiring and remarkable.

Apart from having no access to basic amenities like clean water, food, clothing, shelter and healthcare, the close to 1 million residents also suffer the misfortune of having no roads that can allow for any emergency services like fire outbreak. The makeshift housing structures are either made out of mud or metal. There is absolutely no government security inside the slums leaving the residents at the mercies of lawless tribal gangs.

A closer look of the slums reveals a depressing way of life for all. The environment is unhealthy, there are very few filthy public bathrooms but payment is demanded before one can use them, there is no garbage collection system, leaving open sewers to run the fronts of the shanties. A walk through what is called "the main road" is a poor lesson in a waste disposal. Numerous examples abound and they paint a depressing picture of the area. The most disheartening of all is to learn that children who would be in school run about in tattered clothes hassling for something to eat and looking for any open space to play. These children have nothing except their life and age in common with the children in better placed city localities.

The children and youth in Mathare slums live under pathetic conditions. Most of the children come from single parented homes, while others come from very poor families since their parents are sick, unemployed or underemployed. Orphans who are helpless after both or one of their parents die of HIV-Aids or other causes are forced to face the harsh reality of unbearable slum life. These children and youth have no one to care for them in this dangerous slum.

The situation is worsened when orphaned children and those from poor families turn to fend for themselves in the alley way, the young girls live under the fear of being raped, some turn to prostitution to earn a living, leading to the rise of teen pregnancies and abortion cases which further damages their emotional well-being. Looking for money to support their drug and alcohol habits and a sense of belonging, the young boys join gangs in the slums to rob and mug people in and outside Mathare slums leading to insecurity in Mathare slums, the city of Nairobi and the whole country of Kenya. Apart from robbery, use of drugs and alcohol, these young boys are often recruited by powerful drug cartels to peddle drugs which lead to other forms of criminality.

Despite the gloomy outlook in Mathare slums and other marginalized areas in Africa. At the Center for Social and Rural Development Inc. we believe that offering education opportunities, mentorship and entrepreneurship support is the only effective way to engage the At-risk young people and help them come out of the vicious cycle poverty. The Center for Social and Rural Development Inc. has seen successes and continues to build on what has worked in alleviating this crippling poverty. We welcome anyone with an interest in serving the poor and oppressed to partner with us as we seek to identify and equip at-Risk young people in Mathare slums and Rural