

MES – Changing the heart of the City

MES is a Christian integrated social development organisation that has been changing the heart of the city since 1986 and has been actively working towards providing sustainable solutions to pervasive poverty in the inner cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Kempton Park in South Africa.

In South Africa the gap between the wealthy haves and the poor have nots is worryingly growing wider and wider. People struggling to make ends meet generally move to cities, especially to the inner-city, to find employment, but they often find themselves stranded, alone and helpless. This continued migration of desperation is keenly felt on the African continent. Established systems providing housing, employment, education, healthcare and psycho-social support have long since become unable to deal with this influx of unemployed, often unemployable job seekers.

The initial vision for MES was born in 1986 when the Johannesburg East Dutch Reformed Church started with an outreach programme that handed out food parcels to the homeless and unemployed community of Hillbrow in Johannesburg inner city. In 1989 the project registered as a Section 21 company with an independent Board of Directors. Currently the organisation is a registered Not for Profit Company, NPO, Public Benefit Organisation and has Section 18 A (tax benefit) status for South-African donors.

MES developed a holistic service model that guides beneficiaries to a sustainable exit. During 2018 MES did a repositioning exercise to improve integration and deepen impact delivery to our beneficiaries. MES now has a focus group approach instead of a programme approach. This enables us to offer age specific specialised services. In addition to that multi-disciplinary social support services are offered to each group. This includes social work services, nutrition, health care services and community engagement.

Below are the different services that we offer to the four focus groups.

1. Pre-schoolers: Crèches, parenting support, statutory and supportive social services

More than 40% of the children in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Kempton Park and Port Elizabeth of ages 0-6 years come from impoverished households with neither access to early learning programmes nor means of affording the learning. Our pathways of responding to this social problem is by increasing access to quality ECD services for 0-6-year-old children and providing affordable education, nutrition, statutory social work services and social support services.

2. Learners: After school programmes, camps, dancing, mentoring, statutory and supportive social services

Students need more than a strong curriculum, good teachers and time in the classroom to succeed. Our Theory of change illustrates how we put effort in solving that problem. A key activity is the afterschool programmes, which help students turn the aimless hours after school into productive learning time. In addition to this holiday programmes, camps and recreation programmes are offered. Dance4APurpose is a central activity where dance is utilised to engage with the inner city children. The annual highlight is the musical production. Social support services are offered through nutrition enhancement, social work services and community engagement which help children build self-confidence, improve intellectual stimulation and making them physically and socially competent.

3. Youth: Skills training, Joshua Youth Volunteers and supportive social services

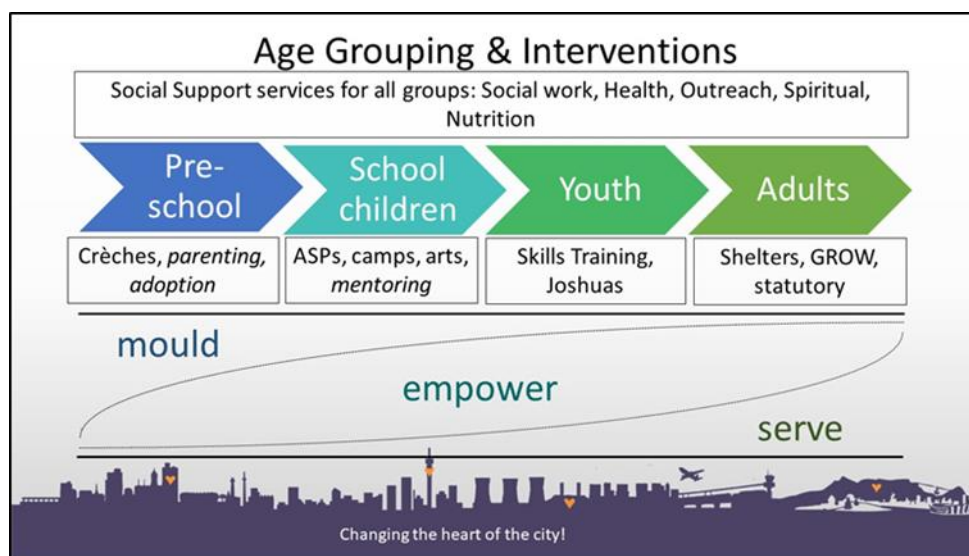
The services are two-folded. Firstly, MES addresses the needs of the NEET group, which is the Youth that are Not in Education, Employment or Training. Intervention is offered through free or subsidised accredited courses and skills training, job placements, job creation and social support services. Secondly, a Joshua Youth Volunteer programme is offered annually to grade 12 graduates. The enrol for a 12 month programme where the spirit of volunteerism is cultivated whilst they receive training and career guidance towards their sustainable exit.

4. Adults: Shelters, GROW and supportive social services

Our Theory of change illustrates how we address the problems of homelessness, unemployment, lack of skills, psychosocial, spiritual & health challenges. MES intervenes to solve these social quagmires by providing overnight accommodation, job rehabilitation through our GROW programme and skills training through our training centre. Their health, psychosocial and spiritual needs are addressed through our social support services.

We are integrating our services to offer age-specific service to each age group:

- pre-schoolers are moulded through crèches;
- school learners are empowered through after school programmes, youth groups and camps;
- young adults (youth) are empowered through skills training and the Joshua service year; and,
- adults and elderly are served through shelters and work rehabilitation.



In support of these age specific interventions we offer a range of social support services ranging from feeding/nutrition programmes through pastoral care and community engagement to medical health outreaches and social work services and statutory intervention.

MES truly believes that our clients will gain the most and will get more focused attention through our new approach. MES continue to serve inner city communities and our focus remains to Change hearts in our cities through the Grace of God. For more information you can visit our website:

www.mes.org.za or follow us on our social media pages. You can also email to engage@mes.org.za or donate@mes.org.za.