



Meeting Point International

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# MEETING POINT INTERNATIONAL

(MPI)

## ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2020





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## **What is Meeting Point International?**

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 belonging with; MPI has grown to be 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.

## **Why Meeting Point?**

MPI operates as a presence, a companionship, a point of reference that anyone can meet and involve him/herself with. The methodology adopted by MPI is, in fact, qualified by the offering of an effective friendship in which people are not "reduced" to their problems or sickness; they are looked at and embraced for the infinite value and dignity for their humanity. The services and the activities provided are important means for an experience that promotes the awareness of one's own value and thus enhances responsibility in facing reality as a protagonist and contributes to recreate a communitarian sociality.

## **Why International?**

Those visiting the places where MPI is present are struck by the peculiarity of the experience lived there. For this reason, even people of different nationalities have been personally involved as volunteers or supporters of the activities of MPI; this explains the choice of "International" as part of our name.

### **1.1 Our Vision**

Our Vision is to offer a friendship where persons are looked at and embraced for their infinite value and they are not reduced to their sickness or limitations.

### **1.2 Our Mission**

Meeting Point International, in adherence to the social teachings of the Catholic Church, aims at supporting the most disadvantaged persons and communities of Uganda, with a particular focus on Women and Children, in their struggle for better life and development having as priorities to assist the suffering victims of HIV/AIDS, to promote education at all levels and to commit in poverty alleviation.

This aim is specified into the following objectives;

- Assistance to the suffering victims of HIV/AIDs
- Commitment in poverty alleviation
- Promotion of Education at all levels



### 1.3 Rose Busingye's Profile

Rose Busingye was born in 1968 in Nsambya, Kampala. From 1971 to 1986, she attended elementary and middle school in Kampala and high school in Sacred Heart Senior Secondary in the north of Uganda in Gulu.

After senior six, a civil war broke out and communication between the Northern Uganda and Kampala was interrupted and she, therefore, stayed there for six months. During that time, she witnessed deadly effects of the war; men, women, children suffering and wounded with no one to help them. She desired to assist the people and was frustrated and sorrowful at her inability to do so due to her lack of medical training.

In 1988, she decided to go to Nsambya Hospital to the nursing school. She took a course of General Nursing and Midwifery and after completion, she graduated as a nursing officer. Between 1990 and 1991 she got a scholarship of two years in Italy to specialize in infectious diseases in the Regional Hospital of Varese.

In 1992, in Uganda, she was trained to become a certified health counsellor by TASO, a Ugandan organization that specializes in this field in order to assist patients with HIV/AIDS, orphans, depressed and terminally ill patients. Again, from June to December 1996, she was in Milan-Italy attending a course for the mentally ill.

In 1992 she began volunteer work with patients suffering from HIV/AIDS in Kampala in Nsambya Hospital. In the same year, together with several other concerned friends, she founded Meeting Point Kampala in order to help each person discover the beauty and value of life and to counsel and give medical care to those who were suffering from infectious diseases.

She was elected chairperson of the organization until early 2000. In 2000 she started the collaboration with AVSI up to date.



In 2002, she founded a new organization: Meeting Point International (MPI), which was recognized as a Community Based Organization in the same year and as a Non- Government Organization in 2003, operating in poor areas of Kampala (mostly Naguru, Kireka, and Acholi Quarters) with the aim of offering HIV infected and vulnerable people a simple environment where each person could find love.

In 2008, she started the Luigi Giussani Primary and Pre-primary school in Kireka (Acholi Quarters) and completed the construction of the building that houses seven grades in 2010. In the same year, she became a co-founder of Luigi Giussani High School and completed its construction along Kamuli Road in Kireka. She is the chairperson of the board of Directors of both schools.

In January 2009, she became a co-founder and chairperson of the board of directors of Luigi Giussani

Institute of Higher Education ([www.lgihe.org](http://www.lgihe.org)). This was to help learners and educators, discover their value and dignity. To date, she is very active in the activities of the MPI where she spends most of her time accompanying and educating the patients such that they can discover their value.

Every year Rose has been requested to attend international meetings to speak about her work and her story. She was speaker at various events in 2017 and 2018. These events include; RIO ENCONTROS (Money, Children, Work, Health, everything is serious. And the life?), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), THE LONDON ENCOUNTER 2017 ("The Adventure of the Unexpected") in London (United Kingdom), New York Encounter 2018 ("An Impossible Unity") in New York (USA), and in Florence, Italy at the event "At the Origin of Gratuitousness" where she received the keys to the city as



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well as an honor in December 2018. During this year (2019), she has also managed to travel to various parts of the country and receives also quite a number of awards

### 1.4 MPIs location

Uganda is an East African Country whose capital city, Kampala occupies a series of hills at 1,190 meters above sea level. This is where Meeting Point International (MPI) operates within the different towns below.



**1. Kitintale** The administrative headquarters of Meeting Point International 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.

**2. Naguru.** The Naguru offices of Meeting Point International building are located in Katala zone three, Katala drive before the Naguru go down market, Nakawa division. This is where meetings, dances, health education and adult literacy classes are held every Monday and Wednesday.

In Naguru as clients come in and out 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.

### 3. 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.

## 1. Activities implemented.

### 2.1 Educational support activities.

#### A. Payment of School fees.

In collaboration with AVSI Foundation, Support International and Insieme Si Puo', Meeting Point International provided school fees and other scholastic support to 511 nursery and primary pupils, 369 secondary school students and 59 students in Tertiary institutions and university



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## B. Distribution of learning materials to children by MPI.



MPI in collaboration with Luigi Giussani High School (LGHS) and Luigi Giussani Pre-Primary and Primary School (LGPPS), has been distributing self-study materials to our students who are both part and not part of their schools. These materials have been in form of notes and take-home tests which have helped the students to study from home during the lock down period. This was an opportunity for both the teachers and social workers to interact with them and find out how they were doing. It was also interesting to see how the teachers of LGHS and LGPPS interacted with these students who don't belong to their school. However, on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, schools reopened but only candidate classes are allowed (Primary seven, Senior four, Senior six and Finalists from

Universities and institutes). This means that most of our students were still at home and we continued giving them printed self-study materials. A total of 793 students, that is, 502 high school students and 291 primary and nursery students were facilitated through delivery of learning materials.

The teachers of both LGHS and LGPPS were involved in various trainings aimed at improving the quality of teaching during the COVID 19 lockdown.

### 2.2 Home Visits

Due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus and the Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) set by the ministry of health, all our social workers were currently discouraged from conducting the usual home visits to the family's homes. In order to continue working with our clients, MPI made sure that each social worker invited 2 clients in a day depending on the



time at the different cultural centers and clinics (Naguru and Kireka) to have a dialogue as a way of doing close follow-up of the beneficiaries. Through this activity, we understood how the families were doing, the challenges they were facing, how they were facing them and through this dialogue, we were able to also check for the real needs and constraints taking the safe distance and also offer psychosocial support to our Women. As quoted from one of the social workers, she said *"given the fact that we have taken quite a long time without meeting our clients, we are using this opportunity once again to remind them about MPI, a place where they can belong and they are not reduced to their problems or sickness but looked at with an infinite value"*. However once the situation stabilizes, we hope to resume with the normal home visits.

**2.3 Treatment and Medical Care.** The impact of the corona virus has been felt by everyone in MPI through all its three cultural centers and clinics (Kireka, Naguru and Kitintale). Since the beginning of the pandemic, we had the responsibility to keep essential medical services existing and running for the hundreds of thousands of patients who rely on us from the different slums, and also respond to the spread of the virus itself and its negative consequences like difficulty in accessing medical facilities due to the lockdown and strict standard operating procedures put up by the Ministry of Health to combat the spread of the deadly virus.



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Amidst this challenging time, we opened all our clinics to cater for the medical needs of all our beneficiaries in the different slums where we are operating (Kireka and Naguru). The nurses and a doctor were also closely following up some of the clients who needed close medical monitoring and medical attention, for example those with High Blood pressure, Diabetes, HIV/AIDS etc. In case of critical cases that our nurses and a doctor could not manage, referrals to bigger hospitals like SAS, Nsambya hospitals and St benedict hospital where MPI has agreements to treat its clients, were made. During this period, we have supported 704 women and children on

Anti-Retroviral Treatment and 35 referrals for those in critical conditions.

### 2.4 Anti-retroviral Treatment

We continued to offer support, qualified help and an all-embracing companionship through guidance and counselling for our clients on Anti-Retroviral Treatment and journeyed together in order not to leave the sick person alone in front of the fear of suffering and death. The groups Meeting Point International worked with to deliver the above services included Nsambya Hospital, St Benedict Hospital, and SAS clinic. Unlike many patients on ARV medication who fail to follow their treatment regimens, clients of Meeting Point International were educated and monitored to make sure that they took their medicines properly and continually. As a result, patients have achieved and maintained good health without stop. We continue to journey with our patients through a friendship that offers them a belonging and makes them free.

### 2.5 Psychosocial Support.



MPI social workers conducted a number of activities that helped both the students and their mothers to face the challenging period of the Pandemic, that is, Guidance and counselling, psycho-socio support and community dialogues. We also conducted health education which is one of the critical means for women empowerment in health. This was to increase health knowledge among women and reduce risky behaviours by helping them make informed decisions about their health. The Executive Director of MPI, Rose Busingye (Aunt Rose), as well as a professional nurses continued to meet the women of MPI in small groups of around 10 persons under the COVID 19 prevention measures to educate them about this important topic. During these meetings, it was found out that most of the women were using the drugs wrongly and some had been skipping to take their

medicine because many of them need proper care and following like children. This is because, according to the meetings, when one was on medication and felt better, they stopped taking the drugs and kept them for another time, in order not to spend money. This meant that they could be affected by the side effects of the medicine if expired or taken without the doctor's prescription. Given the fact that some of our clients are on lifetime medication like diabetic, pressure and HIV/AIDS clients, Rose Busingye decided to implement this activity to help them through counselling and guidance and other activities as a means of educating them about their health.

### 2.6 Sports activities with Real Madrid Foundation.



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This made the fourth year (2020) Luigi Giussani High School has been aided by Real Madrid Foundation, in funding their different Sports program at the school premises. 191 students between the ages of 13-17 years, that is, 95 boys and 96 girls, have had football and Basketball training sessions and acquired skills in dribbling, shooting, ball control and passing and heading with the sports coaches. The training sessions were scheduled for 2 hours every week from the 17th February – 13th March 2020. From March 20, 2020 the school was forced to stop any activity and intervention with our students due to the COVID 19 pandemic. On 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 schools were reopened for candidate classes.

### 2.7 Adult literacy



Adult education 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 (so that they become able to count, add, subtract and divide any figure).

Acquiring new knowledge and skills gives confidence, improves self-esteem and enables the women to carry on with their daily work with pride, communication has also been easy when visitors come to visit in Uganda.

During the COVID 19 lockdown, it was practically impossible for the teacher to meet with the women. Therefore, MPI started a new activity of distributing self-study materials and delivered about 4 sets of work to approximately 80 women. Following the relaxing of the lockdown and COVID 19 measures by the government, the teacher started to meet with a few students of different classes from Naguru and Kireka in shifts and with strict observance of the ministry of Health SOPs. This enabled him to do corrections for the assignments he had been sending to them during total lockdown and also to interact with his students to know how each one of them was doing.

### 2.8 Apprenticeship program



Together with AVSI Foundation, MPI continued support the unemployed, vulnerable youths and those dropped out of school for different reasons, to acquire different practical skills and knowledge in the work environment and utilize their free time profitably. For 2020 MPI identified two male youths, that is, Mahoro Leone Fidele trained to a welding course and Otim John Bosco trained to do Electrical installation course. MPI also took the initiative to follow up and monitor them under this program and made sure they were performing well.

### 2.9 Construction work at MPI Kitintale premises.

#### a) Construction of a skylight shade.



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This was aimed at creating a more comfortable space for meetings between MPI staff and its clients, as well as more waiting space for the clients. This has prevented the interruption caused rain and too much sunshine and also made it possible to observe the COVID 19 standard operating procedures like social distancing.



### **Construction of a ramp and renovation of old toilets for the elderly and persons with disability.**

We managed to construct wheelchair ramps to improve accessibility by enabling the elderly and persons with disabilities to enter and exit MPI premises in Kitintale smoothly. Their toilets have also been renovated.

### **b) Construction of new toilets, a bathroom and stores.**

In attempt to strengthen and promote sanitation among the big number of clients who come to our main office premises, we constructed new toilets and a bathroom. We constructed more stores to keep our products like farm produce from Ssonde farm safely.

## **3.0 Distribution of food parcels**

As part of COVID 19 response strategy, MPI distributed food parcels and other materials like maize flour, sugar, soap, salt, beans, cooking oil and rice to 150 House-holds consisting of 1189 beneficiaries that were badly affected in this period especially due to total Lockdown.



**3.1 Crafts production.** The women have been producing different forms of handcrafts crafts such as Necklaces, earrings, Giraffes, Elephants, bags, table cloths, bed covers and many others. We managed to still support them by providing them with market. For instance, for 2020 we bought bracelets, necklaces, bags, facemasks, earrings and giraffes from over 6 women which improved their household income during the COVID 19 situation

## **3.2 Child protection at the Welcoming House**

A number of activities took place at the Welcoming House where MPI takes care of the vulnerable children.

### **➤ Gas kitchen construction.**



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There was construction of a gas kitchen and trainings on how to use and manage the gas stoves were carried. This improved on efficiency in providing meals to the children and created an environmentally friend way of cooking.



### ➤ Installation of Storm (rain water) harvesting systems.

In attempt to increase on water supply for the different activities like washing, irrigation of vegetables, and others at the Welcoming, a rain water harvesting system was installed. This has not only solved the problem of on and off national tap water but also reduced on the monthly cost of water bills.



### 3.3 Urban Farming at Ssonde Farm

MPI has 2.45-acre area farmland located in Ssonde that is currently used for cultivating crops, rearing domestic animals and poultry. All the activities carried out at the farm are for the sustainability of the Welcoming House. Children enjoy participating in farming and at the same time learn a lot about agricultural practices and the different procedures/methods of crop growing. They are always encouraged to involve themselves in urban farming practices. The children stay in the WH which is not far away from Ssonde farm but they are taken there by MPI van to carry out activities for example mulching, spraying, crop rotation weeding, and harvesting of the mature crops. Currently, in Uganda, Agriculture is



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becoming one of the most promoted activity by the government and so we hope to encourage the children at the WH to continue with the different activities on the farm.

During this period of COVID-19 that the children are at home (due to closure of the schools) only a small number of them has been engaged in carrying out different agricultural activities at the farm, for example, tilling the land, mulching and harvesting. Some of the food staffs i.e. (Vegetables, banana, sugar cans, jackfruits, etc.) harvested from the farm have been of great help to improve the diet of the children during this lockdown.

### 3.4 Income Generating Activities.

The outbreak of COVID-19 made the lives of many of the women living in Kampala extremely difficult, particularly in the deprived slum areas where MPI works (Kireka and Naguru). Their small hand to mouth businesses had stopped due to COVID 19 measures and lockdown. This made the attaining of basic needs like shelter, and food impossible.

Thanks to the assistance from Support International and AVSI Uganda, MPI has currently offered support to the 8 identified OVC Households with an average of 500,000 Ugandan shillings each to start up small IGAs for example setting up of small stales (selling vegetables, silverfish, onions, fried pan cakes etc.) selling food produce in shops and also setting up a small poultry farm. we have been able to support 9HH and indirectly reached 40 children in these households. Below are some of the IGAs we have supported.



### 3.5 VSLA women groups' activities.

Having formed the women Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups in the slums of Naguru and Kireka, MPI social workers have continued their monthly intervention to assist the members of the VSLA groups in various topics like, debt management, saving management, records keeping, and data collection, such that members are helped to face the daily challenges with in their groups especially in the COVID 19 period which posed serious financial constraints among the members. 7 groups in Naguru with 210 members in total were helped in their respective groups.



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### 3.6 COVID 19 awareness.



Meeting Point International actively participated in COVID 19 prevention through awareness programs, for example Rose Busingye and MPI nurses educated our clients about the COVID 19 preventive measures during daily one on one encounters and Wednesday weekly meetings, and in collaboration with Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education, we distributed about 20,000 leaflets containing community raising awareness messages for the teachers, students and parents about the global pandemic (COVID 19) and how to keep themselves safe in the slums of Naguru and Kireka, Kitintale, and Luigi schools.

### 3.7 Trainings of MPI employees

Meeting Point International held 2 important trainings on themes, “Risk of Education” and “Life Skills” for its 21 employees in the year 2020. This was to awaken the minds of participants on the greatness of their educative roles and give them a foundation through which they can work with the different clients (among the youth and women) from big slums of Kireka and Naguru having in mind that the true nature of their hearts, human dignity and infinite desires are irreducible irrespective of the age, sex, sickness, tribe or religion. The trainings also equipped them with knowledge and skills and a method on how to face the COVID 19 reality together with their clients.



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### 3.8 Our donors and partners

Work to support local vulnerable communities is teamwork which involves stakeholders, from both local government and the private sector. For example; Ministries of gender, Labor and Social Welfare the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education are in close collaboration with Meeting Point International to improve livelihood in the community. MPI works hand in hand with private stakeholders, institutions and individuals who provide social services.

This network of collaborators is a key factor to ensure that vulnerable families and their children have access to services available from private and government sectors.



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Social Media Platforms

Facebook: Meeting Point International

Instagram: [meetingpointinternational](https://www.instagram.com/meetingpointinternational)

Twitter: [@meetingpointso1](https://twitter.com/meetingpointso1)

YouTube: Meeting Point International