

# Migori County Assembly Is Giving Back To Society.



By Charles Alao

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word 'festivities' as the parties, meals and other social activities with which people celebrate a special occasion. An aggregation of elements contained in this term inspired Migori County Assembly staff to form a charitable movement christened: "Putting a Smile on a Child's Face", which aims to reach the orphaned and vulnerable children during every Christmas season.

The movement was founded one morning in 2014 during a morning devotion session and has been touching the hearts of orphans in the Children's Homes in Migori every Christmas since then. So far, about five care centers, have benefitted from activities of the group in the ten years it has been in existence.

"It's an activity we have been undertaking since we joined this Assembly. We identify an orphanage in any of our eight sub-counties and share our gifts with the orphans." says Ms. Vincencia Kionge, the Clerk of the Assembly.



A visit to any of the care centers begins at the social services office where, at least, three of any registered children's homes are randomly picked. A pre-visit to all these three is conducted by the group's Executive

to assess the level of need in all of them before picking the most needy.

"Whenever we conduct the pre-visits we often observe the surrounding and engage

the operators to get the clearest picture before we settle on one," informs Ms. Nancy Kijana, the group's coordinator and the Assembly's Public Relations Officer.

The pre-visits have been relied upon heavily, not just as means of building perspective and launching outrightly, but also safeguarding against competing interests. Last year witnessed the highest collection since inception of the program. This demonstrates a high level of acceptance among the staff in resonating with community needs.

"We collected Ksh250, 000, which was the highest amount since we started the program," discloses Ms. Kijana.

The amount collected is used to buy cereals, toiletries, beddings, clothing, groceries and, often, a portion of it is given to the operators for other uses.

### **So how does the executive deal with interest from all groups involved in this?**

"We simply go through the steps involved in assessing need and after identifying a charitable institution we inform the MCA of the area," reveals Ms. Kijana, adding, "This is the way we also deal with staff members. Other than the competing internal interests, it emerged that even some of those running the beneficial institutions sometimes do not give accurate information. Ms. Kijana reports that in some cases the charitable institutions recall children reintegrated into the community during the festivities. To curb against this malpractice, she further



explains that they have had to guard against issuing early notice of intended pre-visit to operators so that they are not treated to a façade.

There are twenty charitable institutions spread across the eight sub-counties of

Migori County with 1,196 orphaned and vulnerable groups, according to 2023 records at the Social Services Department.

The movement would have covered nearly half the number of institutions had it continued uninterrupted by Covid 19 and the imminent transitions occasioned by electoral cycles.

Other than competing interests, limited budget and commitment from all staff have equally slowed activities of the group in the past.

But the emotional effect the visits have on staff has proven to be a strong influence that keeps the fire burning. The Clerk explains that in one of the missions, a small child with some unknown skin condition really touched the hearts of staff to the point the Assembly offered to link the care center with medical officers from the County.

The movement hopes to increase their efforts to give back to the orphaned groups at least twice every year.



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