



RUBEN HEALTH CENTRE

Commissioned By His Excellency Mzee Mwangi Sogoru Njoroge, City County Governor June 21st 2019

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Ruben Centre LEADERSHIP

Nicholas Makau is the new Director of the Ruben Centre, Mukuru Slum, Nairobi. He has worked more than 20 years in leadership of community development organisations including the Lea Toto Program for people living with HIV/AIDS and for an innovative program, Nyumbani, which aims to bridge the generational gap between children orphaned as a result of HIV and their grandparents.

How did you become involved in the Edmund Rice network?

In the course of my work at Lea Toto, I met former Ruben Centre Director Brother Barry who agreed to host a Lea Toto field centre at Ruben. Later, in collaboration with Brother Frank, Lea Toto activities were integrated in Ruben Centre's strategic plan and operations. During that collaboration, I learnt of the works of the Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice Foundation Australia.

What drives you?

In everything I do, I am driven by the desire to make a difference in people's lives. Working with HIV infected children, my motivation was to reduce morbidity and mortality among infected children. In early 2000, we had 12 to 16 deaths

a month. That was heartbreaking for the team but eventually, although not initially popular, we had most children on treatment and reduced deaths to almost zero. I've worked to implement income generation and youth empowerment programs which have had remarkable returns in terms of people's self-reliance. Working with youth to lead advocacy for policy change is another passion and seeing the results makes challenging work worthwhile.

What else are you involved in?

I am involved in various humanitarian initiatives especially those that focus on development works and easing human suffering. I have been a member of the Executive Board of Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children's Rights and I'm involved in community associations to promote economic empowerment of disadvantaged people and rural youth.

What are your initial insights on the role of Ruben Centre?

Through my interactions with Ruben Centre beneficiaries, the Mukuru community, program staff, the Christian Brothers, program partners and friends, I have come to understand the unique position that Ruben Centre has, not only

in Mukuru but also in Kenya and beyond. Ruben Centre is an opportunity to change lives in a sustainable way, to learn and to share experiences. Looking at the challenges faced in Mukuru's informal settlements, we are purposed to act and change the status quo to ensure fairer and just communities. That is what Edmund Rice did when he stepped out of his comfort zone and acted. Now is our time to replicate this. I am honoured to have this opportunity to lead the team in the next part of the journey and look forward to embracing the challenges and opportunities working with the residents of Mukuru and the Edmund Rice community ■

