

DISABLED THERAPY PROGRAMME

Through this programme, children with disabilities are provided with personalized centre-based or home care therapy.

In partnership with licensed therapists and therapy volunteers, children with disabilities, such as cerebral palsy and autism, are identified and enrolled for free centre-based or home care therapy. These children have a therapist assigned to them who provides the love, care, and therapy relevant to their specific need, such as massage to stimulate muscle development. This programme is an important service to the community, as poor families who have children with disabilities cannot afford to send their children to a private institution.

Our centre-based therapy is in partnership with REACH Foundation and the Mandaluyong City Government. Therapy takes place at our Blk. 38 Welfareville centre and at the Blk. 22 Welfareville *Lingap Kalinga Centre*. Our staff act as volunteer therapists and are supervised by licensed therapists from REACH Foundation. Hands of Mercy is one of the committee members of Project TEACH (Therapy, Education and Assimilation of Children with Handicap), which aims to provide an integrated, holistic and community-based approach for the education and rehabilitation of children with special needs, which will ultimately prepare them to become integrated and productive members of society.

Our home care therapy is also administered by Hands of Mercy staff and supervised by REACH Foundation. Our staff act as volunteer therapists for children unable to attend centre-based therapy and are assigned to one or more patients who are treated at home.

HOME IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Through this programme, families are given the necessary help and resources to repair their dilapidated 'shanty' homes.

Needy families are identified and offered help with their house repairs. In a typical urban poor community in Mandaluyong, as in most urban centers in the Philippines, you will find hundreds and sometimes thousands of people squatting side-by-side on a deserted portion of land in haphazardly constructed 'shanty' homes made from scrap wood, corrugated iron and plastic. These shanty homes usually consist of one or two small rooms and house on average seven (7) family members. Some structures, however, are little more than a dirty wooden box balanced precariously on the sidewalk. Usually people's homes have been hastily erected with very little planning and with materials, which have been salvaged from around the community. Because of holes and cracks in the materials, many homes are unstable and prone to leaks and flooding. These urban poor settlements are often located in high risk or danger areas – riverbanks, dumpsites, low-lying areas susceptible to flooding, under bridges, relocation sites lacking amenities and tenurial security, and areas under threat of eviction. So far, projects have included concreting floors, extending homes, and replacing unstable structures, such as roofs and walls with more durable materials.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE PROGRAMME

Through this programme, families are given financial assistance to purchase prescription medicines, which they could not otherwise afford.

Needy individuals can apply for financial assistance to purchase prescription medicines for themselves or for a family member. Although the majority of people have access to free medical consultations at a local Government hospital, many do not avail themselves of this service because of the inability to afford prescribed medication. As a result many adults and children have no choice but to endure their physical suffering instead of getting the help they need. So far over 200 people have been given help to purchase medicines, which they wouldn't have otherwise been able to afford.

SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROGRAMME

Through this programme, undernourished children are served specially designed meals through regular feedings to combat all levels of malnutrition.

Children living in poverty who are either underweight or malnourished are identified and enrolled at one of our community-based feeding centres. Hands of Mercy currently operate 10 feeding centres and serve over 5,000 meals monthly to approx. 600 needy children. Each of our feeding centres has approx. 60 beneficiaries. Meals are served at lunchtime either in one of our community centres or at a location elsewhere in the community. Each feeding site is in easy reach of the beneficiaries. The food is prepared by our dedicated staff, which is then brought to the feeding site in large serving pots. The children bring their own plates and queue up for the food to be served. The meals are specially designed so they are nutritionally balanced and consist of rice, meat, vegetables and a piece of fruit. We have a number of menu options from which the cooks choose.

SURGICAL TREATMENT PROGRAMME

Through this programme, children and adults with physical needs are given the necessary help and resources to undergo corrective surgery.

Children and adults living in poverty who have physical needs are identified and offered assistance with their surgical needs. Although most people have access to free medical consultations at a local Government hospital, the cost of any treatment (even at a Government hospital) and especially a surgical operation is far beyond their reach. Hands of Mercy work in partnership with local hospitals and specialist consultants to perform the necessary operations. Children with cleft lip and palate defects, leg defects, heart ailments and hearing problems have already been successfully operated on. As part of the Hands of Mercy family planning initiative, surgical sterilization (Tubal Ligation) is offered to urban poor women.