

A Fire that Spreads (Part 3)

"A Christian can never turn a blind eye to a neighbour's needs. ...Not only should we be acutely conscious personally of our neighbour's material needs, but we also try to get others to be equally concerned, so that they don't act selfishly and turn their backs on sorrow, loneliness and misfortune." (Don Alvaro del Portillo, 9th January 1993)

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The Christian fire of concern for those in need naturally spreads from one to another. St. Josemaria himself visited hospitals, looked after sick people, cleaned and bathed them for many years with those first university students and young professional men who gathered around him at the very beginning.

Inspired by his life and teaching, Midtown Centre was begun in 1965 with a few members of Opus Dei and cooperators in Chicago who recognised the need to help at-risk boys escape the problems of the inner city.

In 2012 Macheo begun when a small group of staff from Strathmore University recognised that they could do something to help the boys and girls from the nearby informal settlements improve in their academics and in their character.

In 2024 Strathmore School began Mawio to empower primary school students from greatly challenging backgrounds in their Westlands sub-county by providing them with the necessary tools and guidance to enhance their educational journey.

In 2025 Regis Runda Academy began *Sulwe*. We caught up with the Principal of Regis, Mr. Clifford Oluoch, to share *Sulwe's* story. And share he did!

Sulwe, he says, was inspired by *Macheo*. "...I thought what if we trickled it down to the lower classes? Also Regis is perfectly located next to Githogoro slums with almost 15 schools to impact. Add to that the big number of private and international schools that are capable of doing much. I saw an opportunity to connect the private and slums schools."

Across many of these initiatives, there are the recurring features of many good-willed people, some with good ideas, but very few with the umph to get things going. From other personal initiatives such as the Homeless of Nairobi, Cliff has built a bit of that umph to get things going. He shared that in Regis, "The teachers are touched that someone is doing something. I discovered that many have great ideas and greater intentions but never get the guts to take the first step." But once they see someone doing something, someone trying out an idea they had flirted with, they quickly jump in, roll up their sleeves and help where they can. And the receptivity doesn't end just with the teachers - even the parents are beginning to catch the fire. "The Regis parents also feel that there is more (service) the school can do and is not doing, hence they [too] are receptive." In fact, he adds, some of the choicest memories have been

home visits to students of Regis and to witness the gratitude of parents whose children are involved as volunteers in *Sulwe*.

And for anyone who may have had this fire kindled in them... Had ideas... intentions but hasn't found the umph yet... Cliff advises that the one simple thing that has given *Sulwe* the most mileage was "...making it cost free. [That] has taken the financial burden out of the whole program. Volunteering teachers and students, catering, transport... Usually people fret more on finances rather than the impact."

(From the 1st to the 3rd of October, individuals from around the world like Clifford, involved in such projects as *Sulwe will be sharing insights, ideas and experiences at the BeDoCare Conference to be held in Strathmore University. You can learn*

*more about the Conference and
register your attendance here.)*

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