

CHinK – CHildren in Kenya



I have read, with interest over the last three years or more, of the travels and experiences whilst visiting Kenya, of Georgina and Roy Frost. When I was asked to go with them I quickly said yes. I had seen pictures and heard stories from their past trips and thought it sounded like something that I would really enjoy. What I didn't realize was that no amount of pictures I had seen or stories I had heard could have prepared me for the experience I would have.

I experienced a whirlwind of emotions on the trip. It broke my heart to walk hand in hand with the orphans, say so many times 'Jambo' (hello) then watch them leave the small school, see them disappear into the cornfields knowing that they were going home to a lonely house with no parents. Some had one parent, and some were living with an elder of the village. One small boy James Kasim, because of the exceptionally bad rains in May had lost his home completely.



I took hundreds of photos, hoping to capture a small part of my experience and to give a glimpse into the world of those I met. A photograph is supposed to be worth a thousand words, but I don't believe these pictures will come close to justifying the beauty of the Kenyan countryside, the poverty of the people or the innocence of the children's' laughter. I could try for days and days to describe what I have seen and felt during those two weeks, to my family and friends but I think it is something one truly has to experience to understand. I am therefore so grateful to have been on this 'holiday'. It has been, for the most part, an influential and eye-opening journey of my life and I hope that I will be lucky enough to return for many years to come.

I still don't think the realisation of the trip has sunk in yet. I loved the beauty and all the many differences that Kenyan culture brings. This place, Kenya, is so rich with spirit and warmth that I never felt uncomfortable at any moment on the trip. It broke my heart knowing that there is so much more we as humans can be doing for our fellow humans, I value the time and friends that I made and the insight into a culture, I cannot describe nor could ever have imagined had I not been part of this trip.

A holiday in the true sense of the word it was not. Within 3 hours of arriving at the hotel in Mtwapa, we were off on our mission. Within a day of visiting Karibuni Nursery School and witnessing the state of the kitchen (3 broken branches from a nearby tree, supporting a corrugated tin roof) we had ordered bricks, cement etc to start the new kitchen build. By the time our two weeks were over, we had achieved so much. Pots, pans, plates, dishes and food was bought, 60 uniforms for the children, swings for them to play on. 11 desks ordered and made and an almost completed new kitchen.



"The whole time I was in Kenya I never saw any TOYS!! Lots and lots of children, but no toys"

Our small school and the children attending, needs help. £7 a month will sponsor a child and provide 2 meals a day, education and assist with health expenses. (Not quite the cost of a Nintendo DS!!!). £15 will buy a desk. Any donation however small, will help. Every penny raised goes to the children; there are no overhead expenses or administration costs. The school building is rented from Karibuni Baptist Church, but there is a plot of land for sale adjacent to the church. As well as finding sponsors for 40 children aged between 3 and 8, we would like to concentrate on buying this plot of land and building a new school.

Leaving the small school in Karibuni, the teachers Grace, Grace and Combi and of course the ever-smiling children, was heart wrenching, reminiscent of leaving family behind. We were all overwhelmed and brought to tears by the beauty of the voices of the Kenyan children as they sang for us, thanking us helpers and 'Mama Georgina'.

The trip to Kenya is something that I'll never forget. Going there, meeting the people, witnessing their generosity, and doing something, no matter how small, was such an amazing experience. The harsh reality that the people must face is something that I'd never had to contemplate before. It was a very humbling experience and affected everyone on the trip. None of us could really put into words our reactions at seeing the children and the generosity that the people of Kenya had shown us. My overall feelings are mixed with joy and sadness.

Chris Cook