

Hope's Promise Kenya Short Term Mission
March 28-April 10
Travel Journal

Part 2: Three Children in Kenya

A child's muffled screams fade beyond frantic clawing at relentless dirt. Several hours later, the would-be rescuer seeks solace at Mathare Worship Centre. Distraught, she weeps over the child she could not save. From the church rooftop, American team members overlook remnants of the disaster. Last night's heavy rains released torrents of mud over early morning sleepers. Like a busy anthill, people still surge collapsed cliffs of mud and rock across the Valley: fifteen tin shacks flattened, half a dozen dead, many others injured. Certainly precariously-balanced rocks foreshadowed the trauma, but imminent danger yields lower rent rates. Lack of equipment, poor access to the area, and roiling angry crowds hinder rescue operations. We never learn the name of the child who died. News reports simply note that "a child" was among those who perished.



My friend, Brian Lee, always chokes up when he tries to comprehend that children in Mathare Valley really think the world smells like this.

.....

He waits, motley member of a self-appointed greeting committee, as we disembark from the bus in Mathare Valley. Glue clutched in grubby hand, reddened eyes, he crowds too close, jostling his friends with a crazy grin. Pre-teen, he is the same age as two of my own sons, safely tucked away at home in Colorado. Sniffing cheap glue fumes is the boy's passport to another world beyond the pain and deprivation of this

one. The bus pulls away, carrying other team members to Mother Teresa's Home for Abandoned Children. The gang vaults onto the roof, hanging over the edges to bang on windows. The driver pulls aside out of heavy traffic and hollers at them to get off so they won't get hurt. A nearby shopkeeper barks a sharp warning. Gleefully, they leap to another vehicle. When the bus pulls back into snaking lines of cars and grinds to a halt again, its unwanted passengers boomerang back. Off and on, weaving through traffic, they jump from vehicle to vehicle. Though their faces jeer inches from team members, just on the other side of a thin pane of glass, we never learn their names. Does anyone know their names?

.....

The other children jump rope, hit baseballs, and toss frisbees. The boy's father, Pastor Karau, kicks a soccer ball. The boy's mother, Mama Karau, rests in the shade under a pile of sisters. Laughter and brilliant sunshine flood the field. He gathers a rainbow-colored mini parachute and spontaneously tosses it over his shoulders. He runs. Like a super cape, the colors flow behind his churning legs. Carefree, he is a child simply being a child. It wasn't always this way. His mother died in 2003 when he was only three years old. He joined a throng of hungry orphaned cousins crowding his grandmother's Mathare Valley shanty. He could have been buried in a mudslide. He could have been sucked into a gang of glue-sniffers. But he came home to Sanctuary of Hope six years ago.

His name is Geoffrey.



STM member Bonnie Wellensiek reflects on what she learned about the lives of Kenyan orphans: “There is no safety net, and being an orphan goes bone and soul deep.”

Anne Romero concludes, “They are just like children in the US and they have similar qualities to my daughter. They need love, care, and help for their future.”