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29/04/2009 ~ 13/07/2009

Mesics Foundation ~ Meru, Kenya

Meru Children's Home, Nkabune (29/04/09-01/06/09)

When I first arrived at the orphanage in Nkabune I was a little overwhelmed. Over fifty children between nine months and fifteen years old, living in one compound. They all have the same need for attention and I only have two hands to give it to them. Luckily I learned fast and found that I adjusted quite quickly to the daily life at the Home.



Throughout the day I found myself busy enough changing, feeding and putting to sleep the little ones as well as entertaining the toddlers that were not in school yet. When school finished, the compound was full of noise once again: children playing, laughing, crying. Having no parents who take care of them they treat each other loving and caring, yet also fight like brothers and sisters. They live like an enormous family without any loving parents to raise them. That is why I liked spending time with the children. Luckily child communication is universal, so I was able to understand what they wanted (most of the time), solve quarrels, teach them games and so on.

During my stay at Nkabune I visited the Ndekero Primary School and attended some of their classes. I also taught the students of the Bessone Primary School and spent time with the teaching staff. The teaching was quite enjoyable, as the children took great interest in learning more (not only about their English books, but also about Europe and the Netherlands in particular!). Sports lessons, especially tireless running, were also one of the favorites at both Ndekero and Bessone.



At the beginning of my stay, the Nazareth Sisters' headquarters burnt down in Meru town. Despite this shock, Sister Gemma arranged for me to go to Mutuati and stay with Father Mathew after my stay at the Children's Home. I was also invited to brief the Bishop of Meru on my work in the orphanage. This resulted in a very open and hopefully useful exchange concerning the well being of the children in Meru Children's Home.

Mutuati Parish/Mfariji Girls, Mutuati (02/06/09-26/06/09)

From the first minute I set foot in this place I felt at home. The sisters that provided me with a place to sleep, the fathers with whom I had my meals, the children from school and the people living on the compound; everybody made me feel welcome immediately.

During the day, I either went around the compound or I joined Father Mathew on a mission. On the compound, I talked to whoever had time to talk, or helped where ever help was needed. I liked to go around the compound and pay everybody a visit (the sisters at school or at the dispensary, the people working on the compound). Sometimes the students, from primary or secondary, asked me to come to their class and "advise" them. Advising meant answering many questions regarding culture, life, religion, sexuality and so on. I enjoyed these gatherings a lot, as they also made me reflect on the way things are done in my country.



I also assisted in the computer class. The students enjoy this class a lot, whenever the power allows them to have it. Also, the new school bus (which caused great excitement amongst the students) now enables them to go on trips. I was even invited to join them on a visit to the historical museum in Meru town. Other activities with the students included dancing, singing, hair brushing and many more..!

Whenever possible, Father Mathew invited me to come along when he went on a mission. His role in the Mutuati community goes beyond the role of a priest as we understand it in the Netherlands nowadays. Whether it regards a social, legal or any other problem, Father Mathew has a very positive influence on the people in his community. That is why it was so interesting for me to tag along in his daily life. Not only watching the way he works, but also the long conversations about our different cultures have enriched my vision immensely. I learned a lot about the struggles that exist in Kenya, but also about Father Mathew's optimism that things are changing, slowly yet surely.



After my stay at the Meru Children's Home and Mutuati Parish I still had some time to travel. In this period, both Sister Gemma and Father Mathew went out of their way to make sure that me and my guest from Holland didn't fall short of anything. The hospitality of the local people that we were introduced to was endless and gave us the opportunity to see a side of Kenya that we will not forget. In short, Mesics has given me the chance for the experience of a lifetime in Kenya.