



Bringing hope to Africa's largest slum

Women For Women In Africa works with the women and children of Kibera, Africa's largest slum, by providing education and resources to enable them to live a life of dignity, happiness and hope for the future.

My Visit to Kibera, July 2016 with, Nikita, my daughter.... Dr. Sheree Krass

Sheree is a Member of the WFWIA Functions Committee and has been sponsoring children for the past 5 years. Sheree was the Guest Speaker at a WFWIA Brunch in September. This is part of her talk on her experiences in Nairobi. Her talk was based on these notes.

My purpose is not to shock you but to provide you with the setting from which the children come. Why we do what we do.

There are 2.5 million slum dwellers in 200 settlements in Nairobi. 60 % population lives on 6% of the land. Kibera is the largest – figures vary between 300,000 to 1.5 million inhabitants. There is no formal recording. It is one of the largest urban slums in the world. The Kenyan government owns the land but doesn't acknowledge its existence. It is located 5 kms from the CBD but is not found on maps.

The average sized shack is 12ftx12ft, with a dirt floor. One of the sponsored students that I spoke to has 10 siblings and space is so tight that they cannot all lie down to sleep.

There are no basic services, running water, sewerage, garbage collection, drainage and schools, medical clinics are rare and not government owned

Any services that are there are provided by private owners and charitable organisations One tap needs to provide water for 50 people or more and is usually privately owned so money has to be paid for a bucket of water.

Because there are no toilets, residents use plastic bags and fling them into the streets. There is no vegetation, just dirt, rubbish and plastic bags. So when it rains, it is described by Leonida, Director of Wanawake kwa Wanawake, "as hell on earth. It is "unspeakable", and she shook her head. Earlier this year, with heavy rains, a landslide killed over 30 people.



There is wide availability of very cheap, very strong alcohol 50% proof and illicit drugs. Unemployment is common and so there are very high rates of addiction. The result is high crime rates, violence, sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies. Because of the extremely close living quarters, children are exposed to sex, violence and a combination of the two from a very young age. At any one time 50% of girls 16-25yo are pregnant. Once you are pregnant, there is little hope of getting out of the slum. Education is one of the few ways out.

I first heard about WFWIA several years ago when Marguerite spoke at a women's group. I was impressed by her and her passion and her work and so since then we have sponsored 2 children. Our present children (have since also taken on another) are a boy, Peter, doing secondary schooling and Mercy, who we sponsored in secondary school and now, for her tertiary studies in hospitality. They write regularly and Mercy has repeatedly told us that she prays that we would have the money to be able to visit her.

I have always felt very ambivalent about “volunteer tourism” The money that I could spend travelling would support another student. However when our daughter, Nikita was selected to do nursing placement in Uganda, and wanted to meet with me in Africa to travel together, I felt that fate was giving me the opportunity to meet Peter and Mercy. It was an opportunity that I couldn't turn down. I was aware that Nairobi is a dangerous place and so my sole purpose was to be of service in whatever way I could for WWIA. I wanted my trip to matter.

I had been in contact with Leonida through Marguerite, and she felt that she could keep me busy for a week. My other time would be a short trip with Nikita to the Massa Mara and surrounds. I also felt it was important for Nikita to visit the Centre and meet the students we support.

WWIA is a charitable organisation run by volunteers in Australia. At the Wanwake kwa Wanwake Centre in Nairobi, are 5 paid staff, all Kenyans. Unemployment is huge in Kenya, so this is another gift.

The Centre is also supported by students who, are awaiting placement in post-secondary studies and want to give their waiting time to help the Staff – they do reception duties, catering, help with the teaching and take on any and many other duties.

Students are also return to the Centre to volunteer after graduation, and give invaluable support to the young people in the program.

Students also spend time, mostly studying, at the Centre during school holidays. They are drawn there rather than spending time in Kibera.

I also had lunches with Ben and Jeremiah at the centre, which provides cooked meals to students and staff. So I had the opportunity to get to know them as well. Lunch may have been beans, or rice and lentils. It was a privilege.

I met Mercy and her mum who laughs all the time. She has had tough life. Married young into an abusive relationship, she had 2 girls and left. Her second husband left her with 8 children for his other wives. To provide for her family she buys used underwear, washes it and sells it. Mercy is the oldest and is at college. Mercy's second sister has an intellectual disability; her third sister was sponsored and is now pregnant, due in October. Her studies are over. So the financial responsibility falls on Mercy. She worries a lot and feels very responsible. She gives her money to her mother and goes without. When I asked if I could help her mum, she just cried and cried and cried. She is my daughter too

Clothes for the two families and a soccer ball for Peter were very gratefully received.

Peter's mother wouldn't let go of me, hugging and hugging, saying over and over again “thank you, thank you, thank you”

In the following days I had sessions with the students. I was asked to speak to them about health and looking after their bodies. In this session I asked them about their goals. I was profoundly touched and humbled by their replies.

To give back to their communities

To have a good job

To look after their families

To succeed in their studies

To make a difference

To help others

Each student had what I saw as, an admirable goal.

Nikita and I had also travelled to the Game many wonderful animals and places. But what remains with me, what nourishes me and warms my heart and makes me smile, is the children, mothers and teachers that we spent time with.

They all thanked me for my generosity.....butI got back so very much more than I gave.

We all have limited amounts that we can give to charity and we all want it to be worthwhile and make a difference. I am happy knowing that what we give to WWIA does benefit the children and families that we are contributing too...they become part of our family.

How to make sense of the incongruity of this world, the inequality???

Who is lucky enough to be born into privileged families like ours or perhaps to a couple of ice addicts, or into a family in Kibera. For me, the way to make sense of it is to use some of what we have to make a difference, to reduce suffering. To give people with less than us choice, empowerment, hope, opportunity. Realistically there is no guarantee that we can get the children we sponsor out of the slum and into a job that satisfies them. But we can give them an opportunity, we can give them hope. I've seen it.

I know it, deeply...



“Each student had what I saw as, an admirable goal.”

Education, giving children the chance to go to school – the primary aim of Women for Women in Africa Foundation.

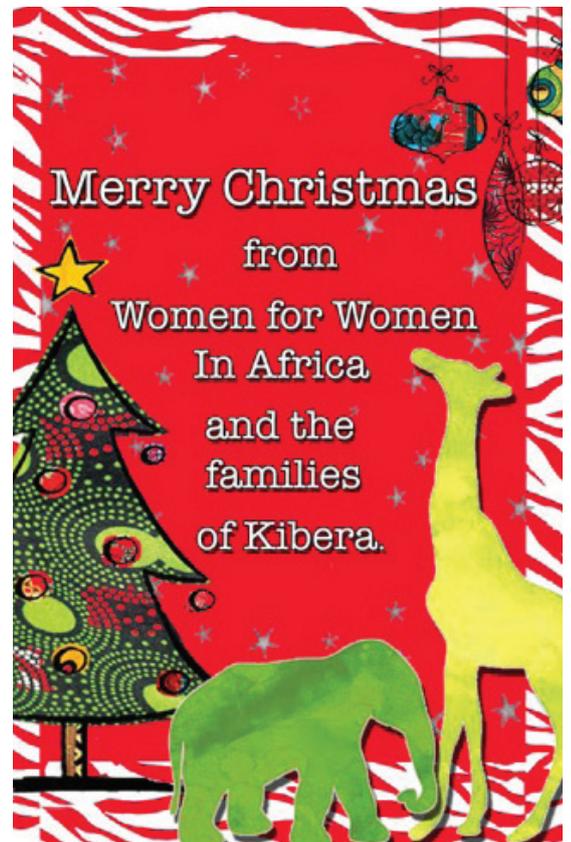
Please look at our new website-
www.womenforwomenin africa.org.au

As the year draws to an end Women for Women in Africa would like to thank all our supporters and friends.

During 2016, 76 primary children, 123 secondary students and 57 young people have been able to extend their education to tertiary courses. There has been a steady number of students attending the Frank Chappell Informal School and the Women's Skill Training Group has become more formalised. About 28 women have also been able to access the Micro Economic Scheme meeting every Friday.

This could not happen without the wonderful support given by the donors in Australia.

On behalf of Women for Women in Africa, Wanawake kwa Wanawake and the families of the Kibera Slum – **THANK YOU.**



Women For Women In Africa Foundation

PO Box 2184
Wattletree Road PO
Victoria 3145

Marguerite Ryan

0438 747 101
marguerite@womenforwomenin africa.org.au





CHRISTMAS GIVING

All around the world people celebrate Christmas as a time for gratitude, togetherness and generosity. Life in Kibera is a daily struggle with no electricity, running water or toilets. Help make it a special day for our families in Kibera by providing them with a 'Present'.

\$5

Will buy a book for a child to own.

\$15

Will buy a new pair of shoes, shirt or dress.

\$20

Will give a Christmas lunch to a family of 10

\$50

Will provide basic food (rice, flour & beans) for 2 months for a family.

\$100

Will provide basic health cover for a family for a year.

\$1250

Will educate a student in boarding school for a year.

This year please purchase 1 more present and send it to a family in Kibera so they can be touched by the Spirit of Christmas.

Please make donations payable to Women for Women In Africa
BSB 033 059 Account No. 660 872 Reference 'Christmas Giving'

For more information contact

Marguerite Ryan @ info@womenforwomenin africa.org.au



Women for Women
in africa

www.womenforwomenin africa.org.au

info@womenforwomenin africa.org.au