



SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER

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A NEW HOME FOR ALICE

MILKA WACHIRA serves as the Kenyan director of the CRCA. She lives on the grounds of the safehouse along with her mother-in-law Dorcas, her husband Ben, and their two children Jeremy and Jasmine. Her vision and day-to-day care have helped make the safehouse a home for the children in Karai. Milka shares Alice’s story here.



ALICE WAWERU, 57, is a widow, mother, and grandmother who comes from a very humble background. She has eight children of her own—four still at home—along with five grandchildren, whose mother passed away in 2013. She owns a small shamba (garden) surrounding her home, and she tills other people’s land to earn \$2 or \$3 dollars a day.

Word came to us that this widow was seeking help to raise her grandchildren due to the struggles she was facing. Our Kenyan team visited the family at home one recent cold rainy day, where after a short introduction, we were ushered into the house.

The mud house seemed to have been erected many decades ago, with pieces of cloth and paper peeping from the walls, which we realized were plugged in to cover the holes and cracks in the mud walls! Around the interior were buckets and jars strategically placed in a row, holding water.

I looked more closely to try and understand this. As we sat in the dark room, we also noticed a pool of water sitting at a corner, and then I knew....

the containers were there to collect water leaking from the worn-out roof. My heart sank to realize that the covering of plastic and paper on the roof were not enough to control the unwanted “waterfall.” And as if that was not enough, grass grew in a corner of the house because of the generous amount of water that faithfully falls in.

To lessen Alice’s burden, we committed to take two children at the Safehouse (filling our only two empty beds). But the state of this home remains in such a pitiable condition, I personally lost concentration on what had brought us....it is difficult knowing Alice, her kids, and her grandkids will have to continue living here.



For \$3,500 we can help create a livable space for Alice, her children, and her grandchildren.

A NOTE FROM RANDY, OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Milka has stayed in contact with Alice, and has helped find another relative to care for two more children. But when it rains, water still streams down the walls and across the floor. On behalf of the board of directors, I invite you to contribute to a special fund we have established to help rebuild Alice’s home. Milka has secured bids for a simple process to plaster the walls and add a metal roof.

To donate directly to Alice’s new home project, simply designate “Alice’s Home” on your check. Or donate online by going to our website kenyamatters.com and clicking the ‘Donate Here’ button.

A KENYAN PERSPECTIVE ON BLACK LIVES IN AMERICA

LEVI MOLENJE is a Kenya Matters board member. Originally from Kenya, he and his family now make their home in West Michigan. We’re profoundly grateful for the way his insights and experience contribute to our shared work of making a home for children in Karai. Here, he shares his reflections on his experience of being Black in America.

Imagine being forced against your will to prepare food and other necessities for a feast that you’re not welcome to. After the feast has started, the guests decide to let you join them at the table.

However, when you get to the table, you find that most of the seats are already claimed, so you’re forced to contend with a peripheral one at the corner of the table. Moreover, most of the food has also been claimed, leaving you to settle for a few crumbs and some bare bones.

As these guests continue to dine and wine, you let them know that you need some food, but they counter by saying everyone needs food. When you make some noise and disrupt the table a little bit, they tell you that you’re a nuisance, disrespectful, and liken you to a dog. They say you should be grateful that you have a seat at this wonderful table and appreciate the greatness of the feast.

Furthermore, they say, you can go back and join your original group if you’re so dissatisfied. Yet the problem is that you left (actually they yanked you out of) your original group a long time ago such that you no longer have any claim of a seat at their tables, nor would you even know which table your original group occupies.

For reference, your original group is one of several groups seated at various tables in a separate room. For food, they have some rice and a small serving of beans, plus they may get a glass (maybe two) of water.

A lot of black people in this country feel this way. Whether this is an accurate representation of the situation is a different case, but I think it is important that it be recognized.

In fact, a couple of friends have previously expressed how envious they are of us (black immigrants) because we have another place we call home and can go back there if we so choose.

Indeed, black immigrants like myself know that we have that option of homes in our native countries. Yet, we also know what brought us here and what we left behind. It should therefore not be surprising that the way we respond to societal forces may differ slightly from our American born counterparts.

Even though it may not be fair, it does make sense for example, for someone to tell me, “You can go back to Africa.” Likewise, I may be inclined to downplay certain experiences because they may not seem as serious to me as some other experiences I have faced in my native country.

Furthermore, I’m not as conversant with the history of race dynamics as well as those whose families have lived it for hundreds of years. For instance, I didn’t know much of the history behind most of the confederate monuments that have dominated public debate in recent days.

Systemic racism is hard to fix because the majority of people who would be in a position to help fix it do not see what is wrong, and so they wouldn’t know what to fix.



AT HOME IN KENYA



STEPHAN LUTZ serves as a board member for Kenya Matters and works with World Renew Kenya. He has lived in Nairobi for the past 20 years. He is married to Alicia, and their two sons identify as Kenyans.

Here Stephan shares about the experience of the pandemic from his home in Nairobi.

Kenya as a country has gone through quite a lot in the past 4 months. It hit everyone unexpectedly and once the President announced curfew in the evening and travel restrictions throughout the country, people started realizing that this is real and we need to face a huge unknown and uncertain future.

For economies in the North like Europe and North America, many people save money for rainy days, but here in Kenya, a lot of people live from literally daily wages and buy food on a daily basis on what they can afford.

With many businesses shutting down, especially transport and the tourism/hospitality sector that hires many Kenyans, many became unemployed overnight. Therefore on top of the fear and anxiety of COVID-9 from a health perspective, people's anxiety has risen from a financial survival perspective as well, a double whammy.

Fortunately, COVID-19 did not wreak havoc and kill as many people in Kenya and Africa as was feared and predicted, but the impact on the economy and people's wellbeing in every way was huge. **As of today, August 4, over 23,000 people have been infected with COVID-19 in Kenya, over 8700 have recovered, and 382 have died.**

However, we don't have numbers on how many people have indirectly suffered and died because of COVID-19. These would include malnourished children and adults due to scarcity and diversity of food, mothers not being able to deliver babies at health facilities in evening because of curfew, mental health illnesses due to stress, fear and anxiety, lack of support to disabled people, teenage girls' higher rate of pregnancy due to curfew and staying at home, including increased physical and sexual abuse, etc. It's a grim picture.



COVID-19 has been quite a journey for me. I started in fear and in disbelief and am now trending towards hope and great opportunity to do things differently. COVID-19 has taught me that we are not in control and need to let go of things, that everything is connected in life, that we need to put more emphasis on creation and environmental care, and that economic growth or well being will not necessarily save this planet, and last but not least, to not fear but trust God deeply that He holds everything together and that this time—as hard and painful as it was for us all to some degree or another—we will prevail and come out stronger, more loving, more caring and less selfish and have much more understanding, respect and awe for life and the Giver of life.



THANK YOU!

As we are spending more time at home than we anticipated this year, we recognize how valuable our homes are for safety and security. For some, home is not safe or secure.

For Alice's family, there is urgency to improve her home. With your help, if you are able, we plan to assist her in the months ahead.

2020 has proven to be stressful, on so many levels, and we want to sincerely THANK YOU! for being part of our Kenya Matters family. We know incomes have changed for some and want you to know we appreciate you whether you can donate this year or not. Our focus has consistently been to provide our Kenyan kids with basic needs as our top priority, and we will continue to do so.

We will keep you informed on the health and safety of our Kenya kids and staff and pray each of your families stay safe and healthy.

Heidi Swieringa—Board Chair