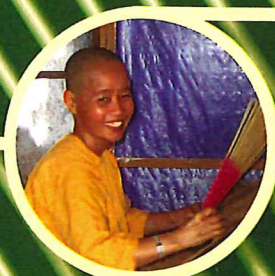
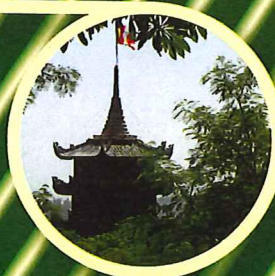
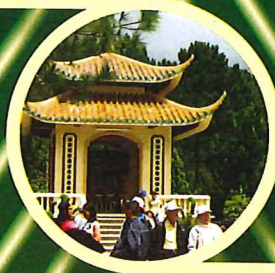


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MAGAZINE

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Global community

Inside Africa the forgotten city

by Michael Bazzo

Thousands upon thousands of corrugated tin roofs reflect dull gray under the overcast skies of Nairobi. The stench rising from this place is a combination of burning rubbish, excrement, and stagnancy that cannot be described. It is also the smell of people; lots of people, amassed together and trying to survive on a daily basis in the largest slum in East Africa, known as the Kibera slum. It can't be found on a tourist map or any other map for that matter, because it's an *illegal* city, a squatter's camp, a city within a city, and nearly 1/3 of the population of Nairobi lives there.

In Kibera, 850,000 people live on 600 acres of land. The government does not provide any water, schools, sanitation removal, hospitals or roads to Kibera. Private dealers pipe in water at a steep profit and security is obtained by way of vigilante groups for a price. AIDS is rampant, and best estimates indicate that some 820 persons a day die from the disease.

Kibera is a forgotten city, yet it has been around for nearly a century. Following successful service during World War I, the British colonial government awarded a wooded hillside outside of Nairobi to a group of Nubian soldiers who eventually settled there. The soldiers built homes and set up businesses, all without any legal rights to the land. Unfortunately, the British never gave title to the land to the Nubians, so the residents of Kibera do not qualify for any government assistance. However, title never stopped the refugees from coming. And come they did, pouring in from not

only the Kenyan countryside as villagers seeking employment, but also from neighboring countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, and the Sudan, searching for asylum from the political unrest, genocide and poverty that has stricken so many of those border nations. They flock to Nairobi, the largest East African center of commerce, with hopes of finding jobs but gripped by one of its worst economic downturns since independence, Nairobi simply has few jobs to offer. Within such a climate, most end up in Kibera with no place else to go.

Most families in Kibera survive on small businesses such as selling vegetables in kiosks or roasting maize on the roadsides. Some pedal water or drugs; some pedal sex. As a result of the extreme poverty, many children in the neighborhood have been forced to drop out of school each year for lack of money. This has created the potential for an enormous future uneducated populace. In fact, if you go to Nairobi, the first thing you will notice is all the kids, everywhere, with nothing to do. It is not for lack of wanting to learn, rather simple economics prohibits it.

All this will hopefully change in the coming years. President Kibaki has just begun his second year in office and already there are noticeable improvements. Streetlights have been added on many boulevards and potholes are slowly being repaired. Beneficial changes to the country's constitution that would lower corruption and spread out the power base are in the works. Possibly most significant of all, President Kibaki fulfilled a campaign promise to provide free public education

through level eight. The challenge of implementing the free primary education policy which the Kenyan government put in place in January of last year has been daunting. An estimated 1.5 million children who were previously out of school turned up in January to attend classes; most of them seeking admission in the first grade, in response to the government's promises.

To address the challenges that have emerged, the government has set up a force, comprising several respected education experts in the country to work out a sustainable approach of implementing policy. The problems have been magnified by lack of sufficient facilities to cope with the large number of children who turn up to benefit from the free education policy. Schools are short of classrooms and some have opted to use floor mats, as opposed to classroom desks, in order to accommodate more pupils. In one school it is difficult to tell the exact number of children enrolled at any given time because more are still streaming in from the slums, although the official registers



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Most families in Kibera survive on small businesses such as selling vegetables or roasting maize on the roadside, some using hand-pedal water or drugs; some sell sex. As a result of the extreme poverty, many children in the neighborhood have been forced to drop out of school each year for lack of money. This situation negated the potential for an enormous educated populace. In fact, if you visit Nairobi, the first thing you will notice is the slum kids, everywhere, with nothing to do and not for lack of wanting to learn, but simple economics prohibits it.

But this will hopefully change in the next few years. President Kibaki has just entered his second year in office and already there are noticeable improvements. Investments have been added on many roads and potholes are slowly being repaired. Beneficial changes to the constitution that would lower corruption and spread out the power base are in progress. Possibly most significant of all, President Kibaki fulfilled a campaign promise to provide free public education

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indicates that some 1,700 children are attending that single school. Most of the school's 28 teachers say they are overwhelmed by the large number of children who have turned up. Most classes, which have a capacity for 40 students, now have to cope with hundreds.

Our missionaries in Kenya are striving to make a difference one child at a time. Ruth Dickie has become a volunteer teacher at the Muthangari Primary School teaching English to 53 students, four children to a desk. The children range from 10 to 14 years old and vary greatly in their language ability. Jim Behr daily walks the streets of Nairobi at 5:00am with others from the "The Least of These" ministry, bringing much needed food and the Gospel to homeless children. The Ferris family is working toward establishing a children's program. With God's help, we can lift even some of the children out of the slum and into a productive Christ-centered life. In turn, they will help others and the Gospel message of God's love for us will spread as each learns to love another. Kibera will no longer be the forgotten city.



It has been almost a year since Angela Shih left CCV as a missionary to Japan and in that time she's had many experiences and we'd like to update you on just a few:

At Christmas, students from both of her English classes were given an opportunity to sing two carols in English

in front of the congregation during the evening service. Nearly all of her students attended and sang their hearts out making Angela feel like a proud parent. Many of the students had never attended church and Angela felt blessed to be there and share that first

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experience with them.

She also took her students caroling at a nearby nursing home, which for many, had been their first experience caroling. A Christmas party hosted by Angela followed where all were made to feel right at home sharing stories about Christmas and decorating cookies. Of course, a Christmas



party at Angela's just wouldn't be a Christmas party without a white elephant gift exchange! During the holidays, Angela was also able to visit Mt. Fuji with friends.

Currently, she has found a church planting location and asks that we pray that the leaders have wisdom in deciding whether to build or rent a home and which location for the

church will be best. Her new "Parent and Child" English class has begun and she has started teaching an English Bible class on the Book of Ruth which has afforded her the opportunity to bond with non-believers, the majority of whom have carried on through the other new classes. Angela is preparing for Team CCV to come to Japan in August and working hard on her Japanese.

These are just a few of the fruits from the tree that Angela is so blessed to be a part of. Please pray for Angela and this vital ministry.

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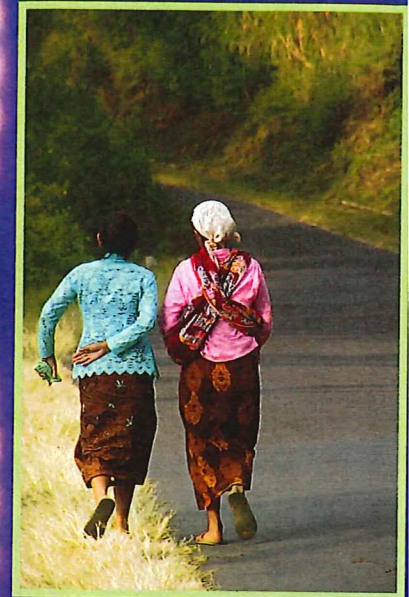
able to do it. We hope everyone will have an opportunity to do what we have done, and we wait for each of you to make the decision to do it. Fructify!

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greatest source of wealth) abounds, translating into simplicity, generosity, and peace. What is so lamentable is to see this nation giving a precious percentage of their hard earned fruits to gods of stone.

Sorrowfully, I conclude that though enchanted by this land, I am also excluded from comprehending their reality

unless I were to live among them for many years. Even then, it would only be a masquerade, unless I disciplined myself from ever resorting to external help when in need. Often, when I remember India, I think: Blessed are the poor in spirit for they will inherit the Kingdom of God. My prayer for them is that the Truth reaches their ears, and that their spirits become poor enough to receive it.



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