

## Volunteering in Kenya

### Helping a resident fulfill her dream to volunteer overseas with the help of the Devon and Cornwall Housing small grants and awards programme.

Each year Devon & Cornwall Housing Trust awards up to 10,000 to DCHA, PHA and Tor Homes local groups and residents where financial assistance will help meet their aspirations and objectives.

Jasmin, a DCHA resident from Millbrook, Cornwall received a community investment award to enable her to volunteer at an orphanage in Kenya and this is her report on her time there.

Well, where to start with my stories? So much happens every day, I feel like I've been here weeks already. Nancy and Jonas and their family are such wonderful people, I feel completely at home and we share a lot of laughter and fun together. Their house is lovely and I even have my own room. There is no running water or electricity though they do have a generator which they turn on for around an hour each evening. To wash we just have a bucket of water and sometimes if you're lucky it's warm. The toilet is just a hole in the ground as expected and it is full of cockroaches! It is quite terrifying when it's dark because you can hear them scuttling around and above you but you can't see them. That's the only thing that has actually freaked me out a little.



My work programme keeps me busy for six days a week. Friday is my day off. It is varied and includes visiting widows to see how they are doing. I have maize flour and matches to give them so that they can cook ugali (their traditional Kenyan diet). I teach the children and basically keep them happy and entertained all day. On Saturday the orphanage is open for all the community, some of the most needy come on that day for activities and fun. On Sunday we have a service in the morning and then the day proceeds as normal.



The experience has been wonderful. I am working hard and am shattered at the end of every day but it really is so rewarding and their beautiful smiles and endlessly positive and grateful spirit keeps me going even when I'm finding the emotional side hard.

The children have a limited education of what they know outside of Kenya so I am teaching them many things, about penguins and Antarctica, where things are in the world, English, maths, weather, new songs and telling them stories. We do a lot of singing and dancing and the children regularly just burst into song and are so happy when they do so. We all also sit and talk about life a lot. They are all amazingly deep thinkers (which I think is a lot to do with the religion which is so very central in their lives). Most of them are still extremely thin and many have swollen bellies from lack of nutrition. But if you ask them they will tell you that they are very happy and that they have faith in God to lead them to a positive future.

They are all so capable and I'm touched by their positivity in spite of the horrific things they have experienced. I am going to buy them new mattresses and as they love to do artwork I am going to decorate the place with all of their beautiful pictures.

I think the hardest thing so far was when I visited the widows of the community. Most are living in mud houses with leaking roofs (it rains heavily daily), either alone or with children to support, with no source of income and only the project for support.

One little boy Hillary who is around 5 years old (they can't be sure as he is so malnourished) is probably the funniest little child I have ever met. He has such a sweet little giggle and finds everything absolutely hilarious and does a funny little dance. I can't wait to show you the pictures and tell you all the stories because there is so much more to tell! Basically though I am happy, and I could happily do this my whole life really!

To find out more about the Community Investment Scheme contact your local housing officer or email the Resident Involvement Coordinator [julie.west:@dcha.co.uk](mailto:julie.west:@dcha.co.uk) or call on 01752 229395