

MCA in Kenya



Thika is an area that lies around 20 miles northeast of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. Its area includes an industrial town as well as surrounding plantations and countryside. The majority of people either work in the town's factories or in the outlying coffee and pineapple plantations.

Plantation land is owned by a few wealthy individuals. Life for the workers is difficult. Planting and harvesting are labor-intensive tasks and the salary is only about \$1.25 per day. Plantation work is seasonal and during the rainy season there are no jobs and therefore no pay.



Workers live in small tin huts on plantation land and must pay rent to the landowner. They own no land of their own to grow food. This desperate situation means that most

families cannot afford essential items and often go hungry.

As a result, many children are taken out of school to help their parents earn money for food by working on the plantations. Wages are still minimal and children without an education are then trapped in a cycle of poverty.

The Assumption Sisters of Nairobi recognized the

need for change and came to Thika to help. With



support from the Missionary Childhood Association, the Sisters run a feeding program, ensuring that the children living on the plantations are given the opportunity to have a healthy meal every day. The cost of this meal is about \$1—unaffordable to most of the families.

The lunch that the children receive at school is often their only meal of the day. It enables them to better concentrate on their schoolwork and provides for them nutritionally, aiding their health and well-being.

Another benefit is that the promise of a meal at school means that more families are choosing to send their children to school rather than having them work to earn money. This chance of an education means the children can hope to get jobs outside of the plantation and help improve their family's standard of living.

What the Sisters do for the children is more than simply physically feeding them. They are also nourishing them with love, empowering them with hope and fueling a more positive future for them.

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Eunice is one young girl whose life has been changed by the Sisters with help from Missionary Childhood members worldwide. She told her story to our office in England/Wales:



Jambo! Welcome to Kenya! My name is Eunice and I'd like to show you around my home, which is near Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya.

Where I live there are lots of factories as well as coffee and pineapple plantations, which all need workers. The people that work here often live in tin huts on the plantations with their families. My mother works on the coffee plantation and I was born here.

I have six older sisters who are all grown up and have children. I live with my mom, one sister and two of my nephews, all in one room. Isaac is six and Ryan is nine. I am only twelve but I help to feed my nephews, take care of them, and wash their clothes while my sister goes to work. My mother has a hard job and only gets paid about \$1.25 per day. We have to pay rent to live here, so we often don't have enough money for food or clothes.

None of the people living here have any land to grow their own food. Work on the plantations is seasonal, so it is especially hard on us in the rainy season when there is no work and no money. I know lots of children who don't go to school and have to work with their parents instead to help earn money for the family.

Thankfully things are changing, with the help of Sister Lydia and the Missionary Childhood Association.

Sister Lydia and the Assumption Sisters came to our plantation to start a feeding program at the school. The food we are given at school is

sometimes the only meal we have in a whole day. The Sisters give us rice or maize with beans and vegetables or fruit. This simple meal makes such a difference to the children living here. We all get a good, balanced meal each day, which helps us to stay healthy and concentrate on our schoolwork. It also means that more families send their children to school, so they can have the chance to be fed.



It is so important for us to go to school. We learn English, Math, and our own language, Swahili, to help us get good jobs and build a better future. My favorite subject is science and I want to be a doctor when I grow up. I really want to look after people and serve them with justice and fairness.

Life here can still be hard. The walk to school is long and dangerous, so we must always travel in groups. In the rainy season there is a lot of flooding and our route to school is blocked by hippos living in the water! But with Sister Lydia and the Missionary Childhood here to help us, we know things can get better.

I pray for children around the world and I hope you will pray for me and my family, too.



Sister Lydia always tells us, "Look to the past with thanks, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope." I think this is something we can all do, as brothers and sisters, together.

Thanks to Missio UK for this story!

Missionary Childhood Association

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