



## **Children With Hope - March 2008**

I'd like to begin this newsletter with a big "THANK YOU" for the prayers and support that we've received since the violence started in Kenya in late December. Those of you on our email list at the time hopefully received a couple of updates during those difficult initial weeks. It is a wonderful praise to report that God's protection was on the Leister family in Eldoret. As you may know, Eldoret was one of the areas that was most impacted by the violence. I've included below, a summary of what has transpired in Kenya over the last 10-12 weeks.

At the end of December, Kenya held their presidential elections. The incumbent president Kibaki "won" the election, but the results, many people believe both inside and outside of Kenya, were "rigged". The challenger, Odinga may have actually won and as a result, violence and rioting broke out across the country. Much of the violence was in the form of tribal conflicts. Neighbor turned against neighbor and homes have been burned and looted. Some of you may have heard that approximately 35 people were killed in Eldoret when "rioters" literally burned down a church with the people still inside.

To date, the estimate is that over 1,000 have been killed in Kenya as a result of the fighting. I believe I've seen figures as high as 500,000 Kenyans who have been displaced and are in camps across the country for IDP's (internally displaced persons). UNICEF has estimated that there are 100,000 children in Kenya that have been displaced. Some of these children have been separated from their families, so they are in essence "temporary orphans" who need to find and be reunited with their families. The need is overwhelming from a human standpoint...but it is not overwhelming for God.

Some may suggest that this violence has resulted in "economic suicide" for the country of Kenya. A recent article on CNN's website estimates that the violence has cost the country up to \$1 billion. For a developing country like Kenya, one can only imagine the impact.

Although the Leister's heard gun shots from their house in Eldoret, they were protected as the house which we've rented for them was in one of the few "safe areas" of Eldoret. The Leister's have recently returned to the U.S. to renew their visas and they will be going back to Eldoret in late April. We are so grateful for the Leister's unwavering commitment to God's call on their lives, even in the face of such turmoil and violence!

Some good news to report is the recent "power-sharing agreement" that has been reached between Kibaki and Odinga. The hope is that this will promote peace throughout the country. However, just how long it will take to stabilize the region of Jua Kali which is approximately 12 miles outside Eldoret where the *Children With Hope* land is, remains to be seen. Here is an excerpt from a recent email from our missionary friend, Keith Gafner in Eldoret, that I believe describes the situation very well:

*"But this (the power sharing agreement) does not mean that it is business as normal back in the country. There are at least 22,000 'internally displaced people' in Eldoret area alone. With 20,000 plus of these at the Agricultural Society of Kenya Show Grounds. It is a massive tented city! There are a lot of problems there as well. A lot of sexual abuse is taking place. They have a school trying to teach the children, but I hear that teachers and teaching supplies are lacking. We pray that the government will see what to do as quickly as possible, as the rains are about to come.*

*They are also predicting that if these people do not go back to their farms and plant maize, that there will be a severe shortage of food in Kenya next year. But can you go back to your land when you were chased out by your neighbors?! The government is saying they will help the people to rebuild their burnt houses and provide necessary protection. Let us wait to see what will happen."*

So how does all of this impact *Children With Hope*? Horace has talked with a tribal leader in the Jua Kali area who has advised us **not** to build on the land in Jua Kali for a number of months. Further, we have received advice from the gentleman who, in essence, is the head of Children's Homes in the Eldoret area and has been in Kenya for over 30 years, that it would not be wise for us to build in Jua Kali for at least a year. As a matter of fact, at least one orphanage was burned down not too far from this area.

**Here are a few of the facts that we are working with:**

- 1) *Children With Hope's* commitment to orphans in the Eldoret area remains unchanged.
- 2) **The needs of the children in the Eldoret area and across Kenya are greater now than ever.**
- 3) The Leister's continue to be committed to seeing the work completed for establishing the *Children With Hope* home in the Eldoret area.
- 4) Kenya is a very different place than it was just three months ago.
- 5) We have been blessed with the land in Jua Kali, but it is unwise to begin building there right now. An important side note is that perhaps the delays in regards to gaining the title were a blessing, as had we started to build prior to the outbreak of the violence, we could have had very serious safety issues.

**So where does this situation leave *Children With Hope*? I am delighted to report that we will be moving forward as quickly as possible in establishing the Children's Home. However, the way in which we move forward may look differently than what was originally planned. The *CWH* board has given the Leister's the "green light" to look at houses right in Eldoret to establish the Children's Home as quickly as possible with the following considerations:**

- 1) **We will be asking God to help us find an appropriate house, for a reasonable price, in a safe area of Eldoret.**
- 2) Between now, and throughout the Leister's search for an appropriate house, it will allow some time to pass for us to continue to evaluate the safety of the situation in Jua Kali.
- 3) **If we purchase a house in Eldoret, the land in Jua Kali will still be vital to us.** We have already begun the process of fencing and we will soon be planting trees for wood (which are a tremendous cash crop), fruit trees, vegetables, etc. We are having a farmer live and work the land for us who is comfortable with living in Jua Kali as he is from that area. This will be a great asset in terms of food for the children, and our efforts to become "self-sustaining" regardless of where the Children's Home is located.
- 4) The house which may be purchased in Eldoret may only be temporary as God eventually may still lead us to build in Jua Kali. However, we do not want to build in Jua Kali until it is wise and safe to do so. Until then, we'll farm the land.
- 5) Because of the turmoil in Kenya, the dollar is significantly stronger now and this allows us to "get more" with the same amount of dollars. Also, because of all of the turmoil, there are likely very "motivated" sellers in Eldoret. **As one of our board members pointed out, it could be less expensive to buy right now than to build something similar there.**

We have been blessed by the financial support that the Lord has provided through so many of you. We currently have approximately \$75,000 that can be used for building or purchasing a house. In addition to these funds, we've been blessed with the money to purchase a vehicle, buy the land, and support the day to day needs. If we were to build as originally planned in Jua Kali, Horace has estimated that the initial Administrator's House and the two homes for the children, along with the infrastructure needed, would likely cost around \$100,000. Finding a home to house the 20 children and the Leister family may cost at least this much, but it would allow us to move quickly, and more importantly, be in a much safer area of Eldoret.

So, we have some very real and pressing financial needs. **I would like to ask that you join us in praying for at least another \$25,000 to be raised in the next two months.** To many of you who have already given, we are so grateful for your generosity and support. Whether you've given in the past, or have never given to *CWH*, perhaps you have been blessed and are now in a position to give again, or for the first time. The need is greater than ever in Kenya and we are ready to serve in Eldoret, but we need your help.

Perhaps you're reading this letter and you're in a position to give a large gift of \$1,000, \$5,000 or even \$25,000. If that's the case, I'd encourage you to spend some time in prayer to see if God is leading you in that direction. Please be assured that every gift given will be used wisely to care for orphans in the Eldoret area. The need is great, but we know that God has a plan.

There is a donation form included which you can use to mail with your gift to *Children With Hope*. Our address is also listed below. Thanks to those of you who are making monthly donations! I'd encourage you to continue to do so. Included are some friendly monthly reminder forms which you may use.

Again, thank you so much for your ongoing support of *Children With Hope* through prayer and finances. We are so blessed for the trust, encouragement and wonderful support that we continue to receive.

We'll keep you posted as we see God continue to bless and open doors for His "Children's Home" in Eldoret.

For *Children With Hope*, gratefully,

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