



DOROTHEA RESCUE CENTRE – NAIROBI – KENYA.

A Love that Transforms Childrens Lives.

JANE (picture opposite) : *Why does God let me suffer so much.*

This was the question that 10 year old Jane posed to the Catholic sisters when she was picked up from the streets in Nairobi, Kenya - all covered from sores. It is not an easy question to give an answer to an 10 year old child. Jane is one of 16 children being cared for now at a new rescue centre being run by the Assumption Sisters of Eldoret - 100 km outside of Nairobi and being supported by the Spiritans. . (See the story and the transformation of Jane further on in this story) These sisters have a special devotion to looking after street children- especially girls. Their new rescue centre is especially devoted to taking care of the girl child , rehabilitating them and helping them to rebuild their lives after a painful childhood. Let me take you through the process of this rehabilitation of the girls and how the Sisters try and run the rescue centre.

Dorothea Rescue Centre: Who runs it.

Dorothea Rescue Centre, a project under the Assumption Sisters of Eldoret was started as a response to the large numbers of vulnerable street girls who live or spent most of their time on the streets. The home provides a home environment and loving care for the street girls within Machakos County and Nairobi Metropolitan area. While at Dorothea Rescue Centre, the children undergo rehabilitation for a period of between 3-6 months after which they are reintegrated to the relevant institutions i.e. home placement, boarding schools or networking with other programs.



One of the beauties of this project that it is totally run by Kenyans - 4 Sisters under the leadership of Sr. Caroline. They also run a primary school in which the street girls are integrated into the primary school.

Sr. Caroline originally began her work with street boys and did this for many years but she noticed that there were quite a few street girls also but no other organization willing to help them get off the street. So she spoke to her

Congregation about this and then they decided to try and do something to help these girls that they came across on the back streets of Nairobi. Also, these street girls tend to be hidden away by their families and are not as visible on the streets as the boys are. Sr. Caroline began to visit the back streets of Nairobi with her social worker Sylvester , who is employed at the center. They came across many girls who have had to run away from home because of abusive parents or because their parents themselves have had to move to live on the streets due to non payment or rent and problems arising from drug and alcohol abuse. It is sad to see that the collateral damage from all this is the young girls who end up on the streets and 90% of them are physically and sexually abused. To enable them to survive on the streets, the girls are given a substance called “ jet fuel” to sniff which gets them high in a very short time and then they go off begging for food and money. Sr. Caroline, along with Sylvester, goes to the city center 3 times a week to

meet up with the girls on the street and make friendship with them, bringing tea , milk, warm clothes to them and their families.. Over a period of time friendship is built up and then the girls who look the most vulnerable and traumatized are invited to come to the Rescue centre.

Sr. caroline in her own words ... *“For efficiency and sustainability of the program we offer family therapies and empowerment programs to the parents, relatives and guidance of these former street children. This helps to ensure that our children don’t go back to street after going through the program. The girls are provided with food and clothing. Thereafter, they are provided with stationery, education, and vocational training. The girls are also provided with psychosocial support as well as medical healthcare. Thereafter, follow-ups and home tracings are undertaken to ensure that the rehabilitated girls do not relapse. The Home reintegrates about 50 girls at the end of the year to pave way for new admissions. We give primacy to education as our rehabilitation program is deeply convinced that through education and skills training, these children stands greater chance to fully develop their potential and skills and advance their individual well-being as well as contribute significantly to development. Vision –Transform street girls to develop to their full potential Mission –To rescue, rehabilitate, and reintegrate girls from the streets of Nairobi and Machakos back into their families.”*

The burning of clothes. When the children are brought to the center they are taken to the registration room where they are warmly welcomed and heir names recorded. It can take a child time to remember their real names because while they are on the streets , they have taken street names which they have to give up and go by their real names from now on. -They fill their registration forms which are also necessary to be able to register them with the police for good child protection. After registration they are taken around the centre and shown the different areas of the centre which will be their new homes for the next 6- 12 months or maybe longer depending on their rehabilitation needs. They see the very nice new dormitory that the sisters have built with modern beds, the kitchen, dining room, chapel and the primary school area. They are then taken for a shower with deep cleansing soaps as the children have a lot of ingrained dirt from their time on the streets. Then they are given new clothes .

The old clothes are stored away until they have a special ceremony of burning the old clothes. When the children have settled in a bit after a few days the priest is called and there is a special prayers said , a fire is lit and each child gathers their old clothes that have been stored away, brings their old clothes into the middle of the room and puts them on the fire. This is a ritual which symbolises them leaving their old life behind them and the start of a new life in a new home – The Rescue Centre.

Counselling the children:

The Counselling for the first few weeks involves a lot of physical activity – playing games, running around, creative dancing routines and singing. The physical exercise is done to help the children get to know each other and to begin to relax in the centre. Also it helps them to drink loads of water after playing as their are a lot of toxins in their bodies from sniffing glue and jet fuel , plus eating waste food. They are helped to reintegrate into normal society by learning politeness- to say thank you – to say please and to learn how to pray.

Josephine the counsellor, works with the children on group therapy and individual counselling. She emphasises that they need to learn to ACCEPT their reality – that their mother is a drunkard or that their

father is abusive. There is also a program to counsel the parents or guardians of the children so that gradually the children can accept their parents situation and move away from not wanting to go back home at all to see them - to a situation where they can gradually accept to go home again and reconnect with their real families but to keep a distance from their former lives on the streets. If there is no good chance of the children being able to live a reasonably normal life with their parents or guardians then after their time at the Dorothea Rescue Centre, they are taken to different boarding schools where they are funded by the Sisters to stay in the boarding and have a good education in school. The goal of this program is to integrate the children back into society- not to institutionalise them but to reintegrate. – which is absolutely wonderful.

The Children who have no birthdays.

When she started up a few years ago Sr. Caroline had found out the birthdays of one of the girls and organised a party for the wee girl. During the party she asked if the other girls had birthday parties but they said that their parents never celebrated their birthdays. These are children who have been deprived of the normal joys of childhood and it is really wonderful to see how the Rescue centre can help them feel like normal children again.

Back to the The Story of Jane : A girl transformed – the girl in the center of the photo.

A beautiful transforming LOVE – the work of NLW.



Jane is 10 years old and she is in grade 4 (smiling in the centre of the photo). She has a critical medical condition. She has an unknown disease that is connected to her lymph nodes and has led to outbreak of terrible wounds in her private parts and all over her body.

Like most of the girls on the streets of Nairobi, she had been physically and sexually abused.

She does not know where parents are. She was living with her grandmother on Nyuhuru Street, Nairobi, due to her medical condition; her grandmother couldn't afford her treatment, so her grandma took her to Jopasha Children Home. As her condition got worse and she needs to see doctor very often, the Jopasha Children Home could not afford her treatment either. They had to bring her to Dorothea Rescue Centre and now she is a child transformed. Thanks to the love, counselling and acceptance that she has found in the Dorothea Rescue Centre her condition is

improving rapidly. When she came first to the centre, she would often be found sitting alone on her bed and not interacting with the other girls. But now as she shares with the counsellor her trauma of the streets and she is opening up and playing again as a child. She is also doing well in school and has become more adjusted socially.

Two other girl stories :

Shanaya wambui is 6 years old (girl on the right) and she is in grade 1. She was living in Pangani Street with her grandmother and two other siblings. Her mother is 18-year-old woman with three kids, she is a drug dealer, and her dad is in prison as he was involved in crime.



She would beg from passers-by in the streets, shops, restaurants and any place that she thought had money or food to provide something for two little siblings. She was raped at her age. We visited the grandmother and other two siblings, the grandma narrated

the struggle of living on the streets with three children, and she has an eye problem. I spent three days in Dorothea Rescue Centre and I had conversation with Shanaya, she is very intelligence young girl. How ever she seems to be a bit mentally disturbed as at the beginning she told me her true-life story but on our way to her grandmother's place in the city centre she was imagining her life story and making up unreal stories about her parents – a child whom I think has developed multiple personality disorder.

China is 8 years old (girl on the left). She was living with her mom on Nairobi Street. Her mom is smoker, drunkard and prostitute. China's mom does prostitution and also begs to get money to buy food for her two kids. She does not know who the father of her daughter China is. China was drugs abused by her mom -her mom forced her take drugs. As we visited her mother, she explained the struggles of living in the streets and she admitted she is a prostitute and sells drugs

to her follow women and men on the streets. When we were having this conversation with her - she was so drunk and she kept saying “ I gives these drugs to my daughter so that my daughter doesn’t bother me when I am drunk and doing my business of prostitution.

Irene (on the right) is 11 years old. Her mother got pregnant with her and she blames herself now for getting her mother thrown out in the street as her mother was pregnant with her. She was begging on the street with her mom. When Sr. Caroline met them. She used to do begging to buy food for her mom, her little brother and sister every day from the street before she was recused. She does not know who father is. Irene spent most of her childhood just trying to survive on the streets and bouncing between streets trying to find any form of a stable life.

Mary(on the left): Her mom has a drink problem, her dad passed died some years ago. Mary



and her mom begged on the streets to survive. Her mom lived in a basement in Nairobi Street. As we were visiting several mothers on the streets, we met Mary’s mother. She told us how she is struggling to raised her children on the streets. She

said she is HIV positive and she finds difficulty to prevent herself from getting sick. She tried family planning but it did not work well for her. She is now pregnant and she has other children. Mary likes the life in the Dorothea Rescue Centre away from the streets but her traumatized mother wants to take her back to the streets.

These are just 3 of the short life stories of children who have been brought to the Dorothea rescue centre and whose lives have been transformed – thanks to the Sisters and the support of the Spiritan Congregation. . One of the really great things also about the Sisters and the running of the Centre is that Sr. Caroline herself goes to a different parish each week to tell her own people – the Kenyans – about the work of the Centre and to get donations from other Kenyans. She gets a warm reception from the parishes that she goes to and the people are very generous in their support of her and the work of the Rescue Centre. It truly is a work of Transforming Love.











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