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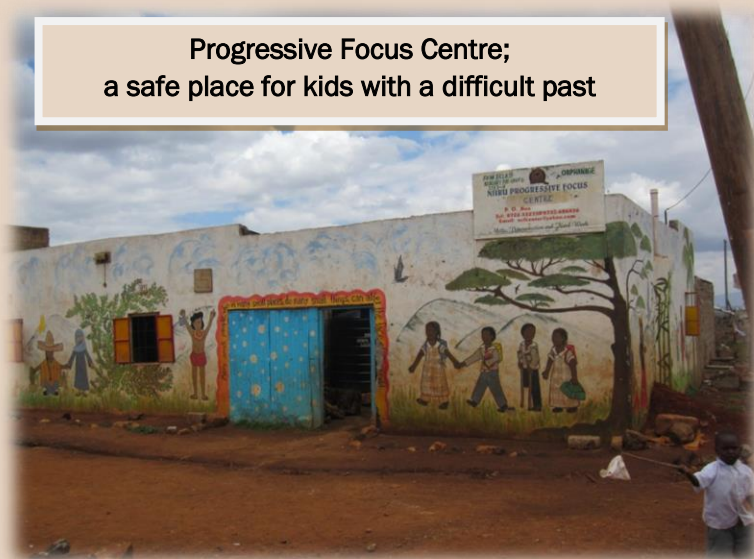
Africa is a continent of contrasts. It is a place of endless beauty and paradise that can be profoundly uplifting, but the struggles of its poorest residents are deeply troubling. In late 2014 and early 2015, I spent five months backpacking through Africa; I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, visited UNESCO world heritage sites and saw wildlife of every kind. But, it was time I spent with these children that will change me forever.



This is Sally, an amazing woman.

I started my Africa trip in Kenya and spent nine weeks as a volunteer. I chose to work in child care, and my placement was at Progressive Focus Centre. It is both an orphanage and a school. Progressive Centre cares for about 120 children from as young as 2 years old up to 17. This includes about 35 who are full time residents: 47 for whom there is no room at the centre but who receive free education, material support, food and social support: and about 36 who live with parents or guardians but come to the school and pay what little amount they can afford. The centre provides all these kids with food, shelter, security and parental supervision (a 'mum' and an 'auntie').

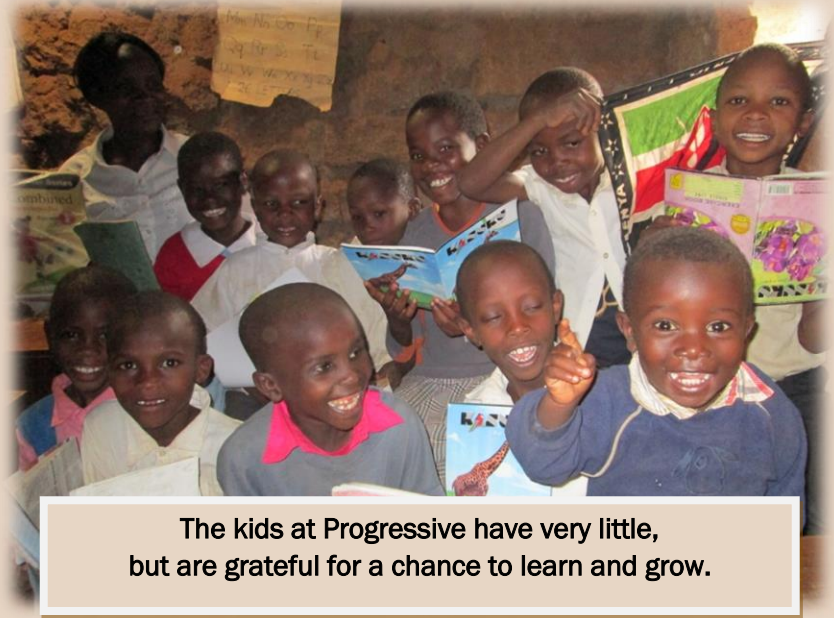
Progressive Focus Centre;
a safe place for kids with a difficult past



Progressive Focus Centre is run by an amazing woman, Salyviah (Sally) Thuo, who has dedicated her life to rescuing children. When Sally was 21 and not yet married, she and two other women decided to rescue a young girl who was being raped by her father. The police got involved for the father (probably because of a bribe) and brought the women into the

station. When pressed to drop their complaint, the other two women backed down, but not Sally. The police implied that she was placing herself in danger, but she told them, "I don't care, you can kill me if you want, but you are not getting this girl." She eventually decided to use a bluff and pointed to a portrait of a government official on the wall of the office. "Do you know my relationship with this man?" she asked, not even knowing his name. "Well, you will soon find out!" She was eventually released, and has now spent nearly 20 years rescuing children in distress. Now, the police bring children to her. Spending nine weeks with Sally, I learned to admire her loving nature mixed with exceptional determination. With the little she has, she has done all in power to provide a better life for these kids.

When you enter Progressive Orphanage, you are initially shocked to see the physical conditions. The main building is very rough masonry; the floors are dirt and rocks; the windows are missing and there is little light. The latrines near the front entry smell awful. The girl's "dormitory" is only the size of a small bedroom, but is packed wall to wall with three bunk beds where 17 girls



The kids at Progressive have very little, but are grateful for a chance to learn and grow.

sleep. The boy's dormitory is about the same. After spending over two months with these kids, I became very close with them and they gradually opened up to me about some of the horrific experiences they have endured. Most of these kids have suffered abuse; some have been deserted by their parents and left on the street with nothing; others have had to run away from home because of their parents' drug addictions. These homeless children have suffered terribly and often resort to alcohol and drug abuse at a very young age. The number of street kids I witnessed sniffing toxic fumes from glue bottles is sickening. Progressive focus centre is a place where vulnerable children like these can find sanctuary.

I have seen first-hand the endless struggles Progressive orphanage faces daily. Food is a constant battle; hygiene is poor; medical supplies and treatment are insufficient. Half the classes at progressive school unfortunately have no teachers because of a lack of funds. They are left with torn-apart and outdated textbooks. I have no formal



training, but took on the roll as a teacher to assist, and taught up to two classes at a time. I learned that these kids all have multiple talents and ambitions, but lack the basic resources to reach their potential. For these kids, education is the only hope of progress in life. Over 20 million people in Kenya live on less than a dollar a day, if these kids do not have sufficient education, the overwhelming poverty is almost certain to consume their future.

I have decided to start up a fundraising campaign to provide the support these kids need for a brighter future, and I am asking for your help. Our fundamental focus is to improve access to education by advocating a sufficient amount of teachers and education resources. In order to make this possible we must produce long term self-sustaining activities such as purchasing another cow, utilizing acquired land to grow crops and a poultry farm. We aim to provide consistent health check ups, a constant food supply, one set of books and 2 sets of uniform for each student every year. Essentially our goal is to develop a sustainable source of income that will generate financial growth to support the needs of Progressive Focus Centre. My goal is to raise \$10 000, this amount of funds will build creative opportunities for these vulnerable children and foster physical, intellectual and aesthetic development.

Charitable organizations can be wonderful, but a portion of the donations generally have to go towards overhead and administration. Unfortunately, traveling through Africa I also learned of some supposed “aid organizations” that are poorly managed, with highly-paid officials segregated in the capital cities, having little actual contact with the poor. In the case of Progressive Focus Centre, you have an opportunity to directly support kids in need without paying administration fees. I promise that not a cent of your donation will go to waste. I also promise that you will feel a little extra joy, knowing that your generosity is making a child’s life better.

Alex Miteff

