

In our part of town, there is little running water; there are few toilets and no garbage collection. There is trash, dirt and rats everywhere. I live in a slum - a poor neighborhood. The slum is called Kibera and is the largest in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Approximately 250,000 people live here. Our huts are made of mud, wood and corrugated iron. My father died before I was born. When I was one year old, my mother died in a car accident. I have lived with my uncle ever since. He sells vegetables at a stand and works all day long. On Sundays I help him at the stand.

“I LIVE
IN A SLUM”



Carlton, 12, lives in Kenya, in Nairobi’s largest slum. He shares a room in a mud hut with his uncle and dreams of a life as an actor.

My uncle and I share a small room with no windows. We have two beds, a table and a chair. We put our clothes in a yellow plastic bag. We hang it high up on the wall so the rats can’t get it and to keep our clothes dry. When it rains, it drips through the roof and the clay soil gets wet. We have a small stove we use to cook. My favorite food is chicken with rice, but we only have it rarely. Mostly we eat ugali: boiled corn flour with green vegetables.



Living in the slum: the corrugated iron roofs of most huts are rusted - hence the reddish-brown color.

Carlton likes to play football with his friends. They made the ball themselves. The children can’t afford a real one.



On Sundays, Carlton doesn’t have school. Then he helps his uncle (right) at his vegetable stand. The money they both earn is barely enough to live on.



I’m in the seventh grade at a school in the slum. It is made of corrugated iron huts and is located next to a train track. When a train rattles past, it gets so loud that we can’t hear anything for minutes and have to hold our hands over our ears. There are 36 to 48 students in each classroom. There are not enough books. So we share them. I’m the third best in my class. Math is my favorite subject. And I like to read. But I have only one book. It’s called This Land is Our Land. It shows pictures of Mount Kenya. It is one of the largest mountain ranges in Africa and lies right on the equator. I enjoy looking at them. Classes last from six thirty until five o’clock. On Saturday, school lets out at three. Then I go home and wash my school uniform. It always has to be clean. I also do the dishes and my homework. Or I play football outside with friends. At school, there are special courses for us children from ONE FINE DAY and ANNO’S AFRICA. We rehearse plays. And we sing, dance and paint. That’s a lot of fun because there is nothing else like it in the slum. I’ve been taking acting lessons for five years. I’d like to be an actor. Visitors from rich parts of town or other countries almost never come here. Of course: the area is dirty and smelly and also dangerous. There are thieves. And some men like to brawl, especially when they are drunk. Like many other orphans, I have a sponsor. That is a donor who pays for my school fees and my school uniform. His name is Tim, he lives in England and has visited me once. I’m hoping that I can go to high school next year. You get something to eat there regularly. If I had enough money, I would buy books and a book bag. Also, a new school uniform and shoes. I would give the rest to my uncle.