

NATASHA NIYOTWAGIRA - *By Idabel Chege*

Everybody has a story, and true enough every child sponsored by the Project also has his or her own. Natasha Niyotwagira from Rwanda is no exception - together with her parents she was forced in 2008 to move to Kenya due to the effects of genocide leaving her two sisters and a brother back in Rwanda because at the time it was impossible and expensive to travel with four children to a foreign land especially when they didn't know how anything would turn out.

They settle in Kariobangi South slum and her father finds work at a local workshop as a blacksmith. Her mother has no skills, having being born in a poor family and never went to school, and thus is unable to find work. Due to this, the family is unable to send their last born daughter to primary school. Fortunately, family friends come together and pool some money so Natasha is able to finish primary school and scores 409/500 marks in her primary exams (KCPE).

Last year she was admitted to St. Mary Girls Igoji, a very prestigious school, but it doesn't take long before the family friends, as well as her parents, are unable to pay the fees. She is forced out of school and her future seems dim and almost unreachable. The same year, her father, the breadwinner, is diagnosed with blood cancer and towards the end of August of the same year he passes on.

Natasha and her mother are devastated. They have no means to make ends meet and this forces them to sell all they have with the aim to raise enough money to go back home to Rwanda. Moving back is not easy because the part of the family that was left in Rwanda feel abandoned and hurt and are not happy to see them.

Rachel Bermingham, an Australian author, says 'It's not about having enough time, it's about making enough time' and sure enough a church friend from Kenya called Martha knew Elizabeth from the Giraffe Project and after being notified about the sponsorship program finds time to contact Natasha and her mother and an interview is arranged. Natasha came back to Kenya for the interview and lived with kind Martha up until she received information that she has been accepted into the program and will be attending the Giraffe Education Centre (GEC).

Then it is time I ask the famous question, 'how did you feel when you found out you were going to attend GEC and your first reaction to the school?' Every persons' reactions and feelings are always different, she says, "I felt...I felt so glad because I thought everything was lost and I felt happy. At the very sight of the school I was so determined to pass my interview, I knew I had to come to that school, that was why I was here, that is why I had come back."

Inspired by Henrik Ibsen, 'a thousand words won't leave so deep an impression as one deed,' therefore, if I choose to write all day long about the impact you make when you choose to donate, volunteer or sponsor a child, it won't leave that much to be remembered, I don't expect it to. After it is said and done, actions are indeed better than words. So I will sign off with what Natasha has to say, so that you can see how a single persons' action can have so much impact in a young girls' or boys' life. When they think it is over, a person so much like you changes all that.

"So far, you are the best thing that has happened because now I have a clear view of my future and still have my dream of becoming a pilot. Thank you."

