

Health and education — at a price



right An informal primary school, Korogocho, Nairobi

Like many African countries, Kenya was determined at Independence to provide better social services for its people than the colonial government had seen fit to offer. Between 1964 and 1979, the number of university students increased 14 times, the number of secondary schools grew almost eight-fold, and the number of primary schools doubled. Over the same period, improvements in health care contributed to a rise in life expectancy from 44 to 55 years.

But these achievements have been threatened in the 1980s and 1990s. Government spending on health services has fallen by one third; programmes of school building and repair have long been abandoned; and structural adjustment reforms have introduced 'user fees' which are taking essential services out of the reach of the poor. Unless the government, with support from donors, can establish a safety net for the poorest, these changes will

create an inescapable cycle of poverty for millions of Kenyans.

A passion for education

The passion for education which grew among Kenyans under colonial rule remains unabated today. Children beg their parents to let them go to school, and no salaried uncle or aunt escapes the call to pay fees for nephews and nieces. With the government's role largely confined to paying teachers' salaries, parental contributions now meet more than one third of the cost of primary and two thirds of the cost of secondary schooling. But the curriculum remains much as it was in colonial times, geared to the education of a privileged elite and producing primary leavers ill-equipped for jobs in agriculture and industry.

Over 80 per cent of primary-age children are enrolled in school, but at secondary level the figure falls below 30 per cent. These

background and below
'Education is not a building. Wherever children come together to learn, you have a school.'

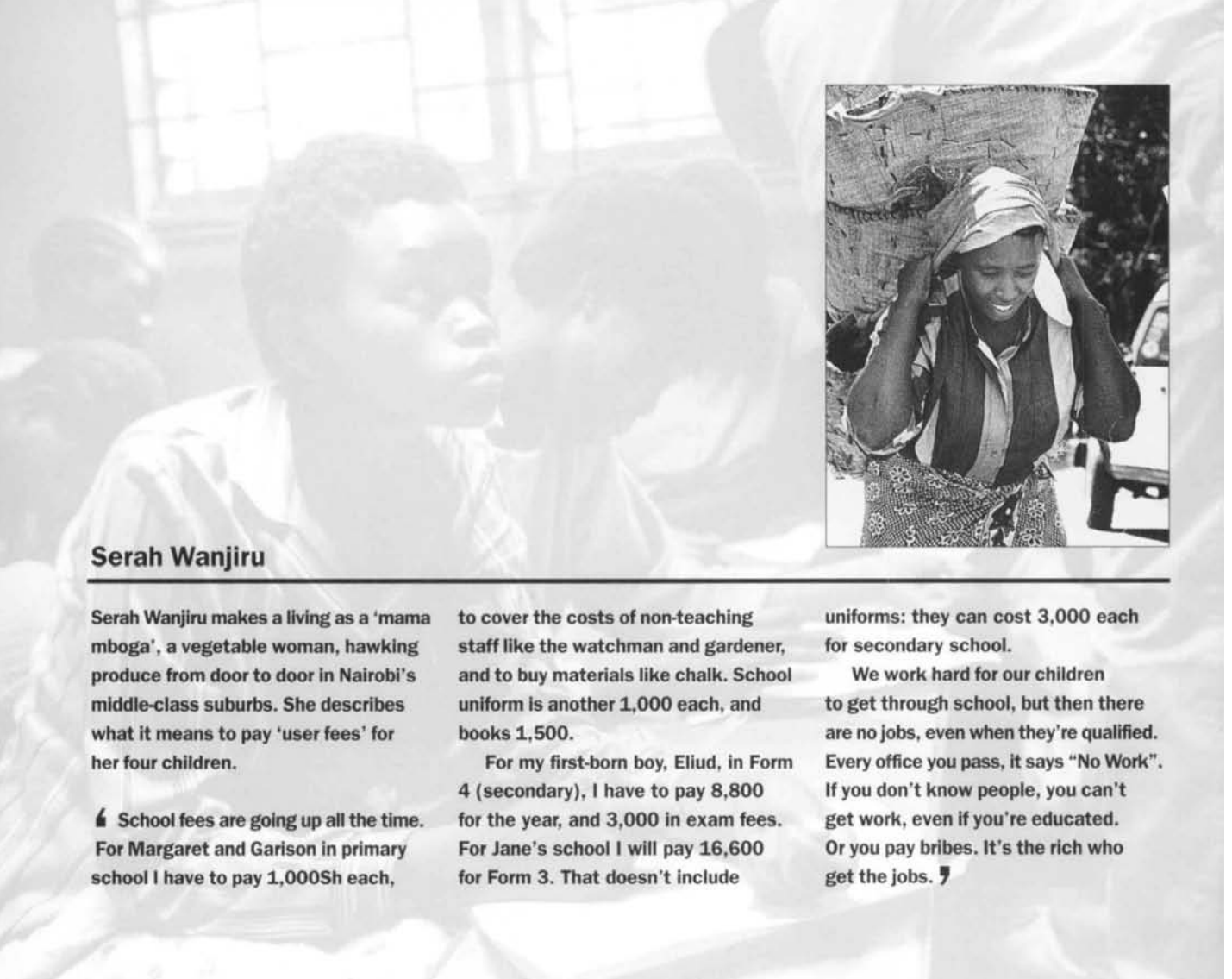
A school without walls

Throughout Islamic Africa, groups of nomadic people maintain their own mobile Koranic schools, which move with the homesteads as they follow their livestock in search of grazing. In Kenya, such a school is known as a *dugsi*, and the religious scholar who teaches the children to recite the Koran is known as a *maalim*.

A local organisation in Wajir District is training Koranic teachers to extend their services by teaching basic literacy and numeracy to the children and adults of their homesteads. Teaching aids — a blackboard and cloth sheets — hang in the trees, and are designed to be carried easily by camel or donkey when the community moves on.

In this *dugsi*, Ali Omar Adan, a secondary-school student, shares the benefit of his education with his community during the school holidays. The children learn maths, music, and reading and writing in English, Kiswahili, and Kisomali. For two hours each evening, adults concentrate on literacy and numeracy, human and animal health, environmental protection, religious instruction, and civic education. Ali comments: 'They tell me what they're interested in. It's the women who ask most of the questions. They have contributed towards my school fees. I just want them to have my education. When I finish, I want to be a teacher.'





Serah Wanjiru

Serah Wanjiru makes a living as a 'mama mboga', a vegetable woman, hawking produce from door to door in Nairobi's middle-class suburbs. She describes what it means to pay 'user fees' for her four children.

📌 School fees are going up all the time. For Margaret and Garison in primary school I have to pay 1,000Sh each,

to cover the costs of non-teaching staff like the watchman and gardener, and to buy materials like chalk. School uniform is another 1,000 each, and books 1,500.

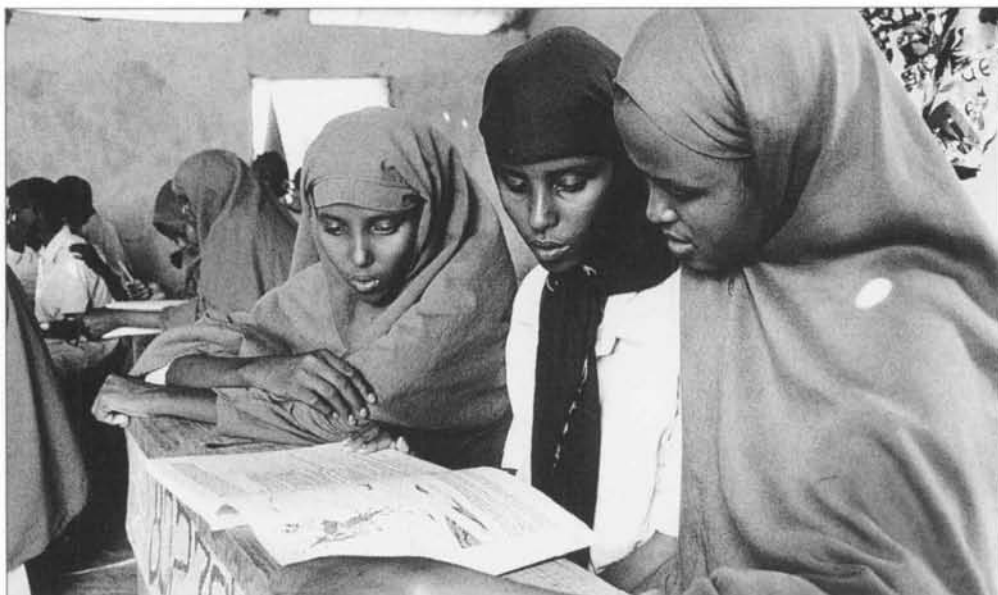
For my first-born boy, Eliud, in Form 4 (secondary), I have to pay 8,800 for the year, and 3,000 in exam fees. For Jane's school I will pay 16,600 for Form 3. That doesn't include

uniforms: they can cost 3,000 each for secondary school.

We work hard for our children to get through school, but then there are no jobs, even when they're qualified. Every office you pass, it says "No Work". If you don't know people, you can't get work, even if you're educated. Or you pay bribes. It's the rich who get the jobs. 🗨



right Dekha, Alasa, and Ethey share one textbook at Khorof Harar Primary School, Wajir District



averages mask huge regional variations: in Kenya's arid regions, primary attendance falls below 30 per cent, and standards of school achievement are usually the lowest in the country. It is often the girls who lose out, leaving school in the later primary years to take on responsibilities in the home. Throughout the country as a whole, fewer than 40 per cent of the girls who start primary school complete the eight-year course. *'Girls are not passing clouds, to be married off at a tender age,'* wrote Diana Omollo, 13 years old, during a class exercise. *'Parents ought to realise that we have a right to education.'*

In Khorof Harar primary school, in the north-eastern district of Wajir, only three of the 28 pupils who recently took the national leaving examination were girls. 'Thousands of families lost their animals in the drought and were forced into Wajir,' commented the head teacher. 'And they are told to build their own schools! Families can't afford books, and the school has no money for them. We just have chalk and talk.' Meanwhile, the children of the rich are driven in limousines to expensive private schools, wearing English-style blazers. Many of the staff are expatriates from the UK. The contrasts between these well-endowed institutions and the wretchedly resourced State schools and Koranic schools vividly demonstrate the divided nature of Kenyan society.

The health of the nation

Despite cuts in government spending, broad indicators of the nation's health have continued to improve. Life expectancy rose steadily after Independence. Infant mortality has continued to fall to about 70 per thousand births. But the figures disguise huge disparities between urban and rural areas, and between the better-off and the poor. In 1992 almost half of Kenya's rural population was living below the poverty line defined by the World Bank. More than one-third of under-fives in rural areas were stunted in growth due to poor nutrition, compared with one-fifth in urban areas. And by the late 1990s HIV / AIDS was casting a deepening shadow over the lives of many Kenyan families.

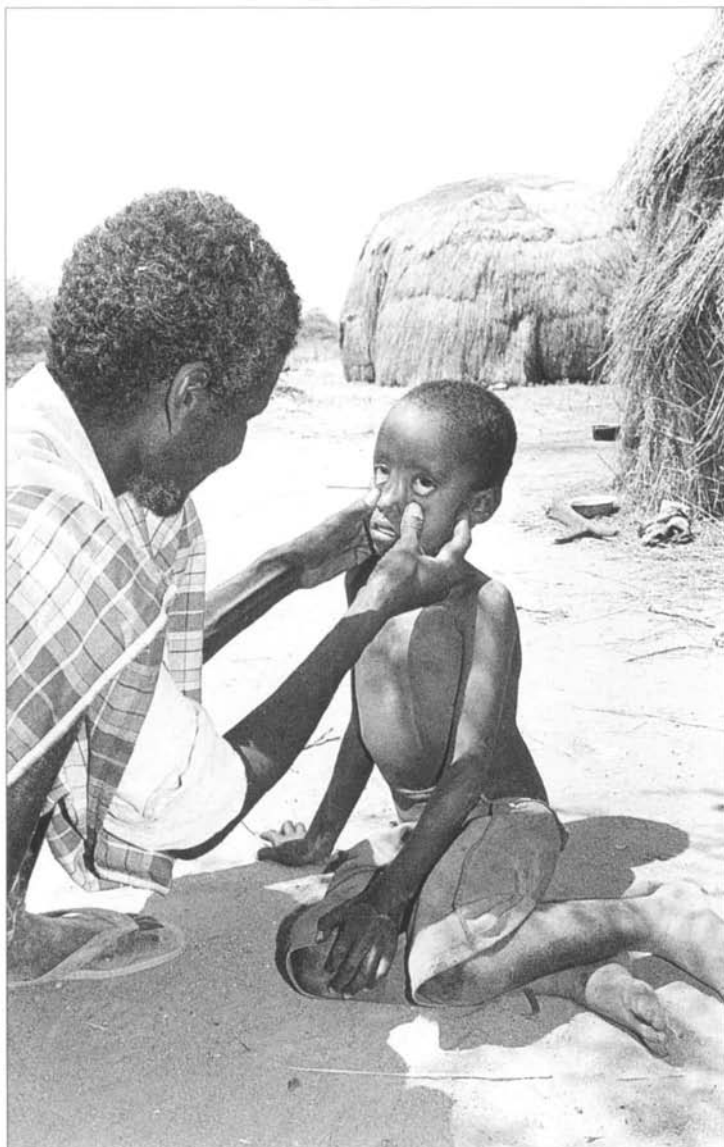


Desperate measures in a rural health centre

Efeli Aleri brought her son Joseph to Kima Health Centre, in Vihiga District, weakened by fever and diarrhoea. Seriously dehydrated, he was given an intravenous drip which included quinine to combat his malaria. With further treatment for dysentery, Joseph quickly recovered.

Malaria, anaemia, and diarrhoea are the commonest fatal illnesses among young children in Kenya. Many reach medical help too late to survive, often because their parents

above Efeli and Joseph at Kima Health Centre, Vihiga District (Western Province)



above Riba, Wajir District: Kanyare Wardere, a community health volunteer, examines Mohamed Abdullah, who has been suffering from diarrhoea and malaria

right Rose Omuyoma (left) advising Ana Abwacho on the use of contraceptive pills, Esisimi Village, Vihiga District



fear bills they can not pay. Though Kima is church-supported, it has had to introduce charges for medicines and treatment, in line with the Ministry of Health's cost-recovery programme. Fees are charged for all in-patient and out-patient services at all hospitals and health centres.

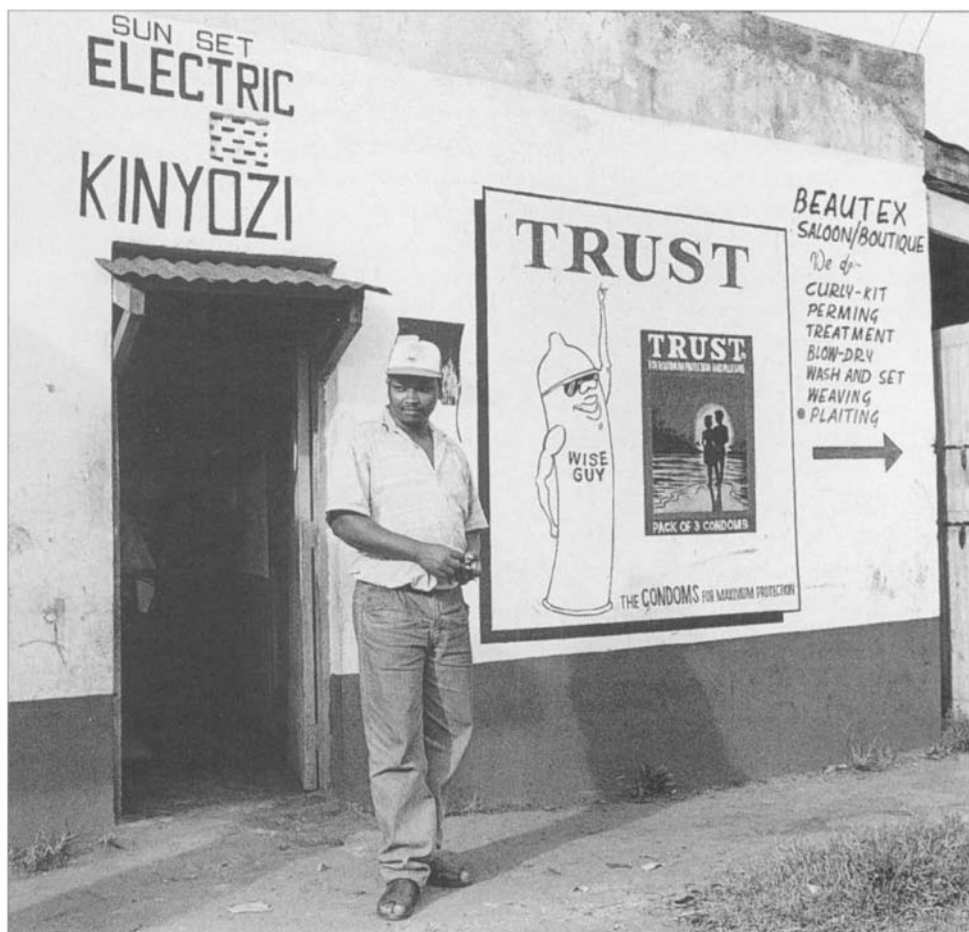
'I took the child to a dispensary near home,' explains Efeli. 'The nurse gave me septrin, just one tablet, and said I should go to Mbale hospital. That's too far for us to travel, so I went to a private pharmacy in our village. I paid 80 shillings [approximately £1.00 at the time] for three injections — I think it was chloroquin. At first Joseph seemed to get better, but then became much worse. I brought him here. I don't know how much I'll have to pay. People who stayed only two days paid 860 shillings. I don't have any money.'

Fred Wekesa, the doctor in charge, explains the dilemmas that this presents. 'The government helps with salaries, but otherwise we have to balance the books. We charge 120 shillings a day for a bed, 550 shillings for a delivery — 750 if it's a first-born — and so on. When a child like Joseph begins to recover, we begin to negotiate. We might ask a patient to leave something, like this radio: we didn't buy it for the hospital, we're just keeping it until the owner pays. If people really can't pay, we will waive fees.'

Prevention is cheaper than cure

Because of the high cost of curative hospital-based care, centres like Kima, with support from the government and NGOs, have placed increasing emphasis on preventive health care in the community. Kima has for many years organised a mobile outreach clinic for mother and child health-care. In 1985 staff began to train volunteer community health workers, and during the 1990s encouraged local villages to begin to take more responsibility for their own development. Several have formed committees, taking forward ideas to improve food production through organic farming, to protect and improve water sources, and encourage credit and loan schemes.

Rose Omuyoma has worked as a traditional birth attendant since 1978, and now reports to her village development committee in Esisimi,



left A barber's shop in Vihiga town: as AIDS awareness has grown, the use of condoms has increased

near Kima. She has no doubt that life has improved. 'When I started, there was a lot of malnutrition. Many children died from whooping cough and measles. Babies would be eating porridge, even ugali, at three months. Our drinking water was dirty. These days, far fewer children die. We have immunisation, clean water and better food, and people are spacing their children.'

Rose finds that more and more of her time is spent giving advice on family planning. 'Nowadays, now that they're informed, women are interested. Before, women even had ten children. Now most feel that six is enough, or even just three or four. It's partly because the cost of living is so high — schooling is expensive, and so is food.'

The impact of AIDS

The impact of the AIDS epidemic on life in Kenya now dwarfs most other concerns.

By the end of 1996 an estimated 1.25 million Kenyans were infected by HIV, most of them men and women under 30 years of age. Personal tragedy is compounded by the social and economic devastation that hits communities through the loss of large numbers of young adults. Worst affected are Nairobi and Western Kenya, where studies in 1995 revealed that over 25 per cent of pregnant women attending ante-natal clinics were HIV-positive.

Though government response was initially slow, the Minister of Health declared AIDS a national disaster in 1993. At first campaigns focused on raising public awareness about HIV. But people's behaviour is rooted in their society, culture, and economic status, and is not easily changed. The speed with which HIV has spread reflects the breakdown of customary sanctions in a rapidly changing society, and the powerlessness of the poor, the unemployed, and of women. Studies suggest

that a combination of fatalism and psychological denial makes the prospect of illness and death in ten years' time unlikely to discourage today's pleasures. Girls and women often have little choice in the matter: rape is commonplace, and their dependent role, inside and outside marriage, can leave them trading sex for short-term survival.

The government, the UN, and a host of Kenyan and international non-government organisations (NGOs) now support prevention and care programmes. In 1994 the Kenyan AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO) was formed to help co-ordinate the work and practice of hundreds of small and large NGOs. Some of the most promising initiatives are in youth-to-youth work, in which young people develop the understanding, social skills, and self-esteem they need to control their own sexual health. In effect they are also redefining their ideas about relationships between men and women.

One such scheme has been developed by the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA). MYSA was founded in 1987 to promote social responsibility through sporting activities. Some indication of the size of Nairobi's largest

shanty, Mathare Valley, is provided by the fact that by 1997 this association included 410 boys' teams and 170 girls' teams. The girls' teams were not established without a struggle, but they have proved successful in helping to change attitudes about the roles and status of women and girls. The club also tackles AIDS education by training young people, including the best footballers — who are influential role-models in the community — to spread the message to other young people.

Sarah started playing football five years ago, when she was 9 years old. In 1996 she was able to travel to Norway with her team, to take part in the annual Norway Cup. As well as playing football, Sarah takes part in neighbourhood clean-ups, referees matches, coaches younger teams, and talks to players about the threat of AIDS. 'I'm proud of my teams. The boys look on me as a sister, and I treat them like my brothers. They know I've got other interests in life and they respect me for that. In fact, playing football has helped me to get to know boys as friends. It's given me the confidence to say "no" to boys who are interested in sex.'

below A rally in Nairobi protesting about violence against women



City in the sky



Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, is the largest city between Cairo and Johannesburg. It dominates the communications, trade, and industry of East Africa. Its shining high-rise monuments to commerce and tourism create a mini-Manhattan, declaring their allegiances along the crowded sky-line: Lonhro, Barclays Plaza, British Airways, Norwich Union, Kenya Airways, Serena Hotel.

Conversations in English, Kiswahili, and Kikuyu are heard at every shaded street corner, interrupted by the horn blasts of traffic jamming the side streets. Fortunately for the motorist, the city's broad main street, Kenyatta Avenue, was laid out to allow a team of 12 oxen to turn about. A few remnants of those early colonial times survive, characterised by the

District Commissioner's Office of 1913, its grey stonework and once-imposing pillared entrance now crowded into insignificance by the twenty-storey backdrop of Nyayo House and the eight-lane highway at its doorstep.

Much of the city-centre's business is tourist-driven: the banks and money exchanges, gem shops and galleries of African art, one-hour photo-processing shops, and hawkers selling their bracelets and carvings. Bookshops display the works that have helped to glamorise Kenya: *Out of Africa*, *The Flame Trees of Thika* and its sequels, the books of Hemingway and the Adamsons and the lifelong traveller Wilfred Thesiger.

The Hilton is one of a cluster of luxury hotels, including the venerable Norfolk and the New Stanley with its pavement café, The Thorn Tree,

above Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi

where tourists take refuge from Africa at prices which only they will pay, write their postcards, and consult their travel books. The acacia tree around which the café is built carries a four-sided board covered in notes left by modern Livingstones and Stanleys who enjoy a less hazardous passage through Africa.

*Peugeot 505 drivers,
hope you made it from Blantyre.*

*Looking for lift north — Ethiopia, Eritrea,
Djibouti, Egypt.*

Dorothy, come home soon — Mum.

*Finlay MacMillan, proceed as planned,
but avoid Chancellor Kohl look-alikes.*

Beyond this modern facade is a city of intimidating contrasts. Before Independence, residential development was racially segregated, as in most colonial cities. To the west lie the leafy suburbs of Langata and Karen, where Europeans recreated their homeland under a perennial sun; to the north lie the airy hillside estates of Runda, Loresho, Muthaiga, and Spring Valley; to the east a mixture of orderly new estates and sprawling concrete blocks, creeping out towards the international airport.

Squeezed between these expanding suburbs and the city centre are the overcrowded shanties. No one knows how many people live in these unplanned settlements: the largest, Mathare Valley and Kibera, may each be home to more than half a million. Estimates of the city's population range wildly from 2.4 to 4.2 million.

Cardboard city

On the streets of Nairobi, boys as young as six years old meander and stagger around, their eyes half-closed, clutching balls of rag soaked in paint-thinner. Like the coca chewed in Peru, or the *miraa* in Somalia, it dulls the pangs of hunger.

Adults are more likely to turn to *changaa*, the illicit low-cost local spirit. Rape is not unusual in the tightly packed settlements, and prostitution is one of the necessary means of scraping a living. AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases are rampant. Crime is such a problem in the shanties that those who are caught or suspected risk being burned to death by mobs.

Individual sponsorship, to school or vocational training, opens the door for some to escape. But new arrivals pour in relentlessly from the rural areas and from Nairobi's low-income estates, where rents are rising all the time.

Street children

Some of the children who eke out a living on the streets of the city have a home of sorts to return to at night. Others live in *chuoms*, small communities sleeping in cardboard boxes in alleyways.

A development worker in Nairobi describes their situation: 'There are hideouts in town where they sleep, perhaps 30 boys and girls together. They play families: each little girl has a "husband". At night, when the boys are getting ready to sleep, the girls are getting ready to work. Even the people who live and work in Nairobi don't realise there are so many girls there, because they are only visible at night. Men are going for these young ones, the 9-13 year olds, because they feel it's safer. But many of the girls have sexually transmitted diseases and are HIV-positive. Some of these children are so intelligent and determined to get on in life. When we ask them what they most want, *education* is first on every child's list. Second is *love*: they want someone who will care for them.

'Usually the problem that brings children on to the streets is with the families and the communities, so we have to work with them. Some communities have just given up. Others have real cohesion, even though they are slums, and the children don't leave. They have to belong to the community, not just the family.'

Many organisations are working to improve living conditions in Nairobi's slums, from small local self-help and church groups to the Kenyan authorities, international NGOs, and donor governments.

St Luke's ROCK group

St Luke's is a small church close to Kenyatta market on the fringe of Kibera. Every day about 50 children come to school here, to a class run by volunteers in the shade of an acacia. On Saturdays and Sundays, when school is out, the children still come early in the morning to play in the dusty church grounds. For the boys rolling tyres along the paths, the girls skipping and hop-scotching in the shade, and those who, unexpectedly, lie in quiet discussion on the grass, it is the emptiness and quiet that bring them to the compound. In Kibera the landlords leave only enough space between the houses for a person to pass.

Every Saturday the women of ROCK — Rescue Our Children Kenyatta — also come together under the acacia to make their plans. The Chair-woman, Jane Wanjiru, explains the group's business plans. 'We began by contributing 10 shillings each week [about 15 pence at the time], then 20 and now 100. So far we have saved 32,000. Our project is a water point. We'll buy the tank and pipes and pay for them to be fitted, and for the City Council to install a meter. Once we have an income from selling water, we may move on to installing a kerosene pump.'

The residents of Kibera have to buy their water from privately installed pipelines, at a price set by market forces. The base price is 2Sh for 20 litres, but this rises during times of shortage to 10Sh, several times more than a middle-class householder would pay for mains supply.

Two-thirds of the women in ROCK are single parents. Many scrape a living in the middle-class neighbourhoods which surround Kibera, cooking, washing, and nannying for approximately £1.00 a day, or hawking vegetables from door to door. In Kibera itself there is petty trade in foodstuffs, daily commodities like soap, charcoal, and kerosene, and in illicit brews like *changaa*.

Women are the backbone of life in the shanties. Many arrive as single parents, disinherited by separation from their husbands. For others, the rigours of living in poverty erode relationships and lay bare the foundations of the family, breaking the spirit of most men and revealing in many of the women a remarkable tenacity to hold together a home for their children.



left Njeri Wanjohi, a member of ROCK, has lived in Kibera since 1971, raising her 8 children in this single room

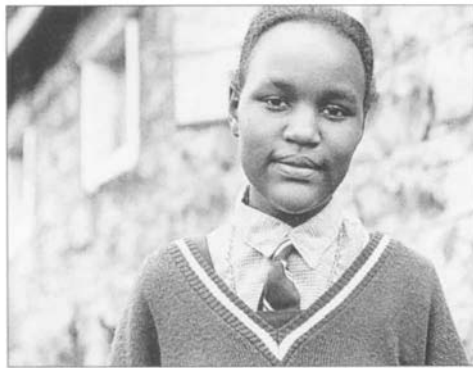


below Christmas party organised by the local Asian community for children at St Luke's Church, Nairobi

Tales of city life

right Mwangi and his sister Wangui trying to earn a few shillings in Uhuru Park, Nairobi, in 1994

below Wangui outside her boarding primary school, Limuru, in 1998



Mwangi's story

Mwangi lives in Line Saba, one of the nine 'villages' that make up the shanty town of Kibera, in Nairobi. He is known locally as 'Parking Mwangi', because he used to earn a few shillings by helping drivers to park at the busy Kenyatta market. His mother, who brought her five children to Nairobi when she lost her home and land in Central Province, recently died of an AIDS-related illness; the children have lost contact with their father. At the age of 16,

Mwangi became responsible for the future of his four younger sisters.

One of them, Wangui, has been lucky: she has been sponsored to attend a boarding primary school in Limuru, where she is regularly placed in the top five of her year. The eldest girl, Wanjiru, looks after Muthoni and Beria while Mwangi scrapes a living for them all by washing cars and clearing garbage. Occasionally, to make ends meet, Mwangi will spend 120 shillings on a litre of paint-thinner — the drug of choice among street-children. *Poverty knows no morals* is a catchphrase often heard in Kenya. *Poverty has no choice* might be more apt. With care, Mwangi can retail the can, shilling by shilling, for 300 shillings. His aim is to take Muthoni and Beria back to their father's village, so that they can start school. 'It just needs 1,800 shillings to get them started. School is cheaper in the rural areas. Then I have to get money to build a house there.' For himself, Mwangi dreams of training to become a mechanic or a driver; if the chance ever comes, he will seize it.

The street photographer

Bernard is at his 'office', marked only by the concrete block that serves as a seat, at 8.30 every morning. Seven days a week, 365 days a year. He leaves when the equatorial sun sets at 6 pm. Bernard makes his living as a 'street photographer' in Uhuru Park, working a pitch by the main road not far from the Nyayo monument commemorating Kenya's independence, near to the roundabout where the traffic on Kenyatta Avenue and Uhuru Highway meets — and often collides. Bernard is frequently called on to take photos for insurance claims.

Customers are regular, often coming every month or two for portraits against the different backdrops offered by the park, its monument, and the fringe of high-rise buildings. Bernard is even an employer, taking on an assistant to tout for business and look after customers while he is busy taking pictures around the park, or hurrying to the processing lab. He pays his apprentice, Mwamba, 100Sh a day.

Ten years on one of the busiest pathways in Africa have made Bernard a natural communicator. His face moves expressively as he speaks, his frequent overstatement acknowledged by a broad, lingering smile. He is also the Park's Number One philosopher, an avid reader of any magazines he can lay his hands on. He can give you fine detail on the history of the Palestine-Israel rapprochement, or Uganda's relationship with Rwanda since 1986, or the Lancaster House negotiations which secured independence for Kenya. 'Things were different then. Uhuru Highway was Government Road, and no Africans were allowed to pass.'

The taxi-driver

Business with officialdom in Kenya usually requires 'a small something', or *chai* (tea), as it used to be termed. This explains why cars, buses, and even aeroplanes can keep running until they fall apart.

The oldest and roughest-looking vehicles in Nairobi are the taxis. Looking too worn-out even for the wreckers' yard, they cough and rattle their way around the capital, a testimony to the 'small something' that can procure a permit or a licence for anything or anyone.



Most cabs lack lights and seatbelts; wind-screens are splintered and tyres worn down.

Richard has been driving taxis for two years, working in 36-hour shifts. He works every day and every other night. He has a proper licence now, though for years he drove with a fake, which cost him 5,000Sh on the black market — cheaper than taking the test. Recently, hoping to find work as a long-distance lorry-driver, Richard applied for a passport. 'On the form it said 400 shillings,' he complains, 'but I had to go from office to office, and those offices ate almost 9,000.'

above
Bernard in his 'office'

right
Edmund completing
a pair of shoes



The shoemaker and his wife

Edmund, Marceline, and their three children, aged 2 to 6, live in a single room in Dandora, a suburb of Nairobi. It is in a terrace of iron-roofed sheds facing on to a small walled compound. The room is divided by two hanging sheets, screening the two beds. The family cannot afford electricity, which would add a couple of hundred shillings to the monthly rent, paid through an agent to an absentee landlord.

Here, on the concrete floor, Edmund can make up small orders for shoes. For larger orders he pays rent to share the workshop of another shoemaker. He does work on contract and gets paid 60Sh for each pair completed. He can produce five pairs of shoes on a good day. The contractor sells each pair for about KSh500 to shops in town, where they are resold for KSh700–800. Edmund has tendered successfully for large orders of shoes; but, without capital or credit, he cannot buy enough material to fulfil the requirements.

His wife Marceline works in catering at City Hall, cooking for civil servants. She receives the national minimum wage, equivalent in 1996 to £35.00 per month. After deduction for hospital insurance and National Security, she takes

home 2,600Sh. Paying a rent of 1,500Sh per month, and a monthly bus fare of 600Sh, Marceline has only 500Sh left from her salary. This, together with Edmund's irregular earnings, has to meet all of the family's other needs.

The double disadvantage

Kenya's second city and premier port, Mombasa, has the atmosphere of a street bazaar, a cosmopolitan mix of Africa and Arabia. Lacking the investment that has transformed central Nairobi, the town's flaking blend of Arab and colonial architecture was designed on a human scale. The life of the town spills out over the pavements and roads, the shaded shopfronts obscured by the stalls of vendors. People throng the streets late into the evening, shopping or just talking, long after the workers of Nairobi have fled the threatening streets for the safety of their homes.

In Mombasa there is a fine tradition of institutional provision for disabled people. But institutions can constrain as well as liberate the spirit; negative attitudes towards disability leave disabled people doubly disadvantaged in a country where opportunities for education, health care, and jobs are already very limited.

Jennifer's story

Jennifer earns a living — of sorts — by sewing stuffed elephants for the tourist trade. She is paid 45Sh for each elephant — which is sold for 310Sh in the shops. Though she walks easily enough with a leg brace, others' perceptions of her disability are enough to limit her job opportunities to a sheltered workshop.

'I was born in 1969 in Murang'a. When I was eight months old I had polio. I went to primary school and did two years at high school, but I couldn't afford to continue, as we are six children.

'I did the tailoring course at Mathare Youth Polytechnic. When I left, I was afraid to look for a job. People advertise that they need a tailor; you go, and they just look at you head to toe and say they already have someone. They only look at my disability.

'When I go for interviews, they ask me different questions, the wrong questions. I want to be asked the same questions as everyone else, so that I can pass or fail like

anyone else. But they ask me, "How will you be coming to work? Can you walk around? Who'll be helping you? Who'll take you?" It's so discouraging. We have no rights. If you go to a supermarket, or even for an office appointment, the guard will stop you entering. He says, "There's no begging here." If you are disabled, they think you must be a beggar.

'I'm a member of the Kenya Society of Physically Handicapped (KSPH). There are benefits — not with money, but in getting to know about your rights, and how to fight and keep pride. So it's good to be inside. KSPH gives me a voice.'

Patrick's story

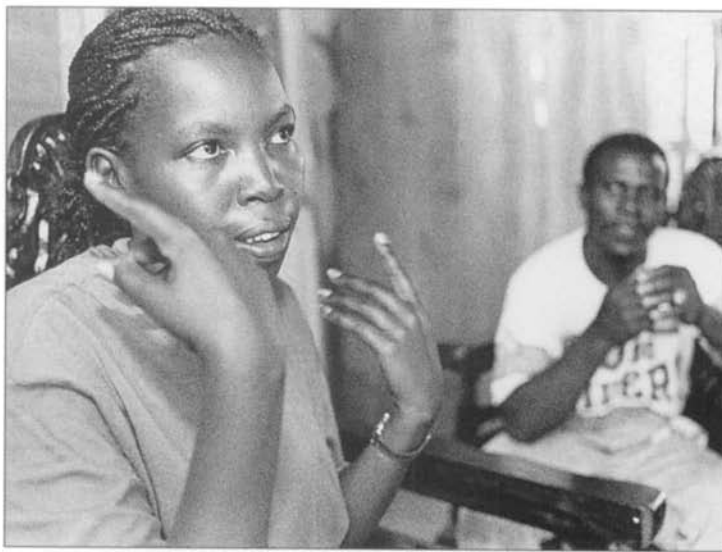
Like Jennifer, Patrick Makallo contracted polio as a child. After completing school, he trained in accountancy, and now runs a successful leather-working business, employing 20 women home-workers in the production of tourist souvenirs. 'Beadwork is not my profession,' he smiles, 'but I have to make a living. No one will create a vacancy for you if you are disabled. I can't wait the time it might take for me to become an accountant.'

Patrick recalls the frustrations of his boyhood: 'Boys of 12 and 13 would go out to hunt. They'd just decide, "Let's go", and collect each other and go off. I would want to go with them, but of course I couldn't. They might be away for a week, and when they came back: "Look, look what we've killed!" They could even kill buffalo and elephant. Now that's been stopped, but then you weren't a man if you didn't go to hunt. But I was gifted with a catapult! I was a sharpshooter. I could knock mangoes out of the tree, even coconuts. The birds feared me.

'But when I went to Kenyatta Secondary School, I found that other boys could understand me, we could make friendship. I had close friends and we shared all our ideas. My best friend was Lawrence. We're still in touch. But the other boys would sneak out to meet girls, and I couldn't. The girls wouldn't look at me. If they did come over to talk, their friends would tease them. You're not free when you're disabled. Now we have wives who understand us ... serious relationships are

different! But disabled girls don't get married so easily. Women have so many jobs to do in the home. No man is prepared to marry if he is the one who has to fetch water.'

Patrick too is active in KSPH, and was recently elected to the post of Secretary General of the Coast branch.



above Jennifer acting as an interpreter between deaf and hearing friends, Mombasa



left Patrick making a belt at his 'workshop' on a Mombasa street corner

Culture old and new

below Samburu District: playing *baa*, a game popular throughout Kenya

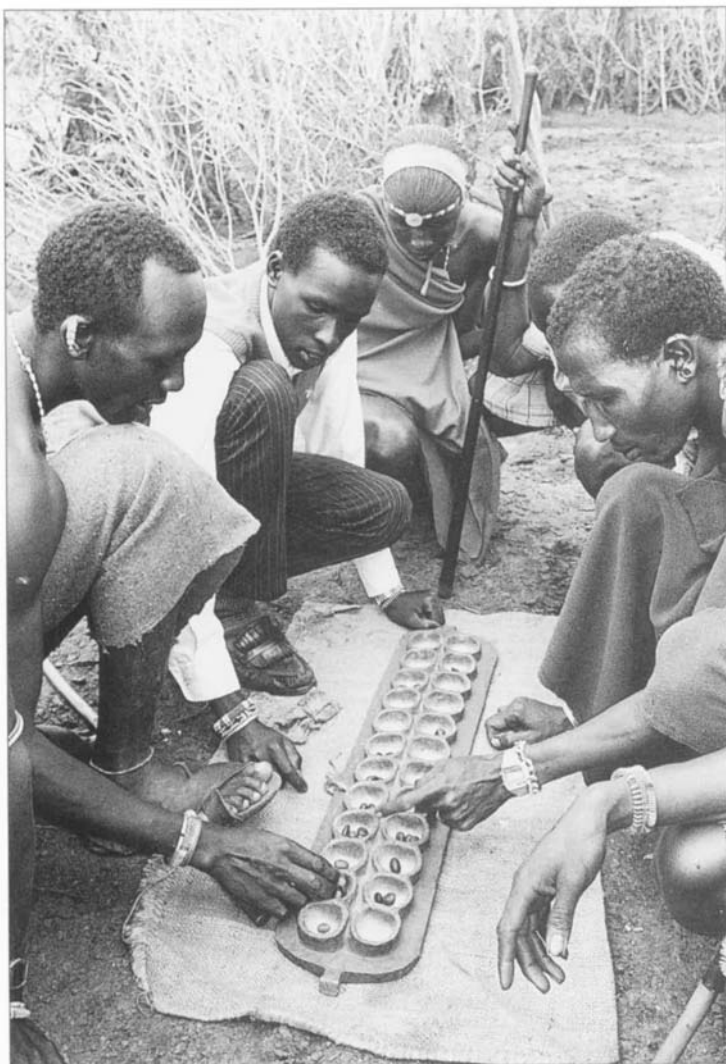
Western influences pervade Kenyan culture. For the ruling elite, being Western is equated with being modern. So a theatre-goer in Nairobi is far more likely to encounter a play by a British or North American author than an African work. Similarly, bookshops are full of books romanticising the colonial past and the role of the settlers. The impact of tourism has

reinforced this, so that many Kenyan musicians will create and perform Westernised music for an audience of tourists rather than indigenous music for a local audience. Even in sport, Western influences are pervasive: American coaching and sports scholarships have contributed significantly to the astonishing international success of Kenya's athletes. Such factors are not unique to Kenya, of course, but they carry even greater weight here than elsewhere.

Kenyan artists are forced to make difficult choices. The authoritarian and intolerant political culture weighs heavily on them, and they often have to struggle and suffer to make their voices heard. Kenya's best-known writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, was imprisoned for his views and wrote graphically about his experiences in *Detained — A Writer's Prison Diary*. Ngugi's early writings are a far more accurate portrayal of colonial life than those of Elspeth Huxley or Robert Ruark. He confronted the dilemma facing every African author — 'For whom do I write?' — by deciding in 1977 to abandon writing in English and write instead in his native Gikuyu. From this point, when he began to reach a wider and more popular grass-roots audience, the authorities clamped down on him more vigorously. Ironically, Ngugi's international repute is such that his works are immediately translated into English. Dominant themes in much Kenyan literature, whatever the language, are the clashes between local and foreign cultures and between the past and the present.

Local and oral culture

In Kenya there is a vibrant tradition of community theatre, in which locally written plays, often implicitly critical of the values and lifestyles of the elite, are performed before large and enthusiastic audiences. The Travelling Theatre of the University of Nairobi played an important role in strengthening this tradition.



Indeed, the culture of oral tradition generally is sufficiently strong that in the 1980s writers like Ngugi, Okot p'Bitek, and Taban Lo Liyong were able to get oral culture included in the syllabuses of schools, colleges, and universities, in the face of much opposition.

Oral traditions, which include folk tales, legends, myths, songs, poems, tongue-twisters, puns, jokes, proverbs, riddles, and rituals, are alive and well, not just some relic from the past. Children learn manners, customs, and history through stories and songs recited in the evenings, usually at the home of a grandmother or other older woman. Adults and children come together, and all can join in the telling.

In 1988, traditional music was introduced into schools and colleges, on the recommendation of a Presidential National Music Commission, which took evidence from more than 10,000 people. Kenya has a rich history in traditional music, both as a recreation and, especially in the 1930s and 1950s, in the form of revolutionary political songs. Today there is an annual music festival for schools and churches which brings together many different forms of music. Ngoma (drum and dance) music is the oldest tradition. It uses local languages and dance rhythms and is played at weddings, births, and funerals. There is also a distinctive Swahili musical tradition.

In terms of modern popular music, because instruments are so expensive, Kenyan musicians are generally out of work, though Nairobi's recording studios attract musicians from far afield. Reggae music is very popular, and its derivatives hip-hop, slow-jam, funk, and lingala.

Sport

Sport in Kenya mirrors the divisions of class and ethnicity. Football is the people's sport, and teams have traditionally had ethnic identities. Though the explicit labels have been banned, the associations remain. Cricket is for the elite — which did not prevent a sense of great pride when Kenya beat the West Indies in the 1996 World Cup.

Athletes such as Kip Keino and Henry Rono and current stars such as Moses Kiptanui, Wilson Kipketer, and Daniel Komen have earned Kenya a wealth of Olympic medals in middle- and long-distance events. Joyce

below Runners competing in the Nairobi half-marathon



Maasai proverbs

One finger will not kill a louse.

The stick on the hearth laughs at the stick in the fire.

One cattle-gate is not large enough for two elders.

There is no gecko that does not claim to have the longest tail.

Chepchumba won the Women's London Marathon in 1997. Running (like boxing for black Americans) offers a route out of poverty for those lucky enough to attract the attention of coaches. This is even more the case now that overt professionalism has replaced 'shamateurism', and some Kenyans are able to demand high appearance fees for agreeing to run in major events overseas. Some have even opted to live and train abroad.

The impact of tourism

Kenya is widely renowned for its wildlife parks and the coral-fringed beaches of its Indian Ocean coastline. Tourism has become big business for Kenya in the age of the jumbo jet, the package tour, and shrinking holiday horizons. After agriculture, it is the largest source of foreign exchange. Tourism accounts for 19 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and employs several hundred thousand people. In 1996 there were about 720,000 foreign visitors — some way short of the government's target of 1.2m for the mid-1990s. Around 100,000 travel from the United Kingdom each year.

The industry faces increasing competition from 'the new South Africa' and Tanzania (whose beaches and game parks are less crowded), and is affected by concerns about AIDS and crime.

The leisure industry was in crisis in late 1997, after politically motivated violence in the coastal towns killed more than 60 people — none of them tourists — and forced an estimated 100,000 to flee from their homes. The impact on tourism was devastating: charter flights and hotel bookings were cancelled, and thousands of workers laid off.

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Chief Nkonina Songoi

👤 Tourists pass through here constantly, from one Park to another. We have no relationship with them. They come and leave, knowing nothing of us. If someone is dying by the road, they don't stop. They knock down calves and goats and don't stop. These people must be human. It's our land they cross to get to the Park. Surely they must stop and talk to us if they kill an animal.

Wildlife coming out of the Parks — particularly Amboseli — are all over our land now. They don't ask permission. But if we cross into the Park with our cattle, the Rangers chase us out with Land Rovers and helicopters. These hills are our dry-season grazing. We have to take our herds there, or they will die. But the tourists complain to the Rangers that they see too many cows in the Park. Then the helicopter comes. 🦘

Giving the tourists what they want

The government is trying to diversify the leisure industry, steering tourists away from 'beach and safari' packages by developing golf courses, lake cruises, and health spas based on geo-thermal springs. But Maasai Mara, at the northern tip of the great Serengeti plains, is still a huge attraction, host to the dramatic annual migration of more than one million wildebeest. The vast herds arrive on this favoured grassland at the height of the dry season and return south with the onset of the rains, pouring across the Mara River — a spectacle that tourists can, for a price, watch from the silent vantage of a hot-air balloon. The presence of wildebeest in the food chain ensures high numbers of lions and leopards, as well as hyenas and other scavengers.

In all there are now over 50 game parks and reserves, occupying almost 8 per cent of Kenya's land surface, dedicated to conservation and profit. The first parks were created in the late 1940s, to conserve the wildlife depleted by white hunters, though game shoots continued until 1977. The figure of the Maasai *moran*, or warrior, resting with his weight on one leg, spear in hand, is used as a symbol of the parks and lodges. In contrived homesteads, called 'cultural bomas', tourists are entertained by Maasai dancers and buy carvings and batiks depicting Maasai life.

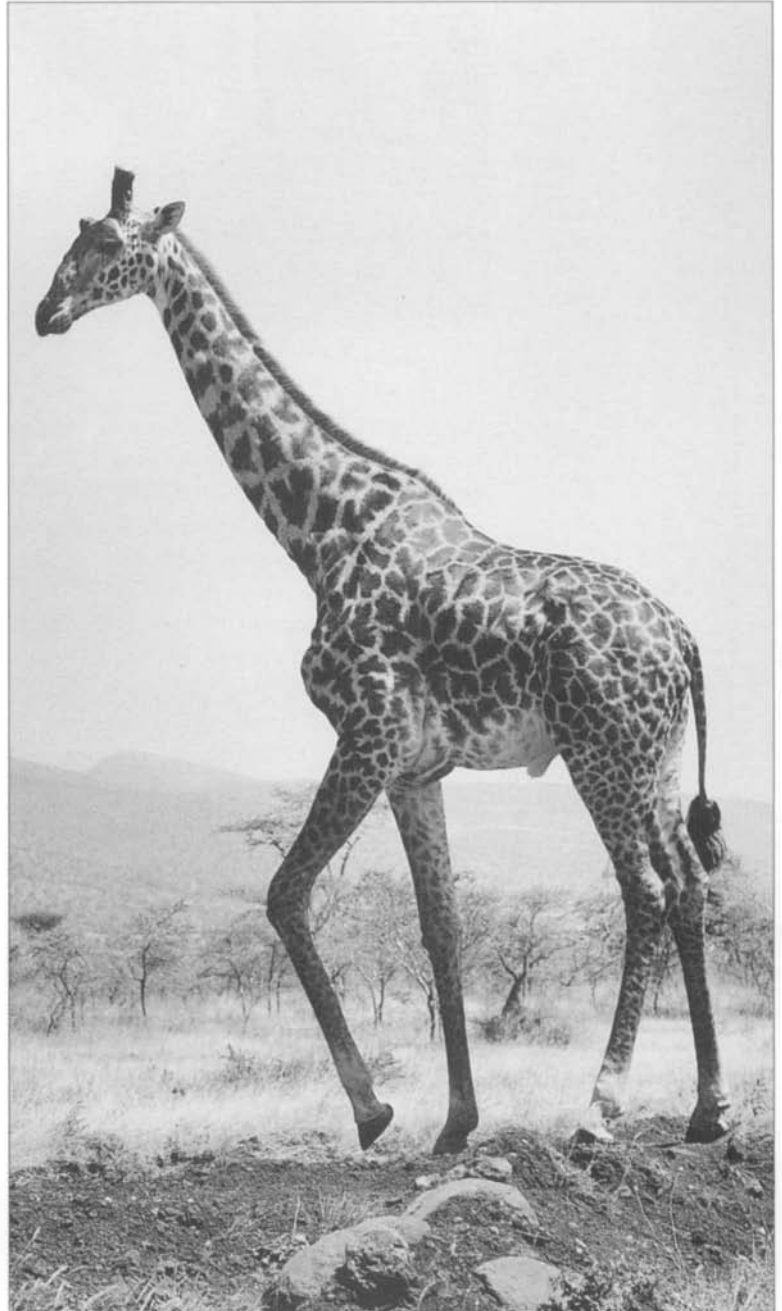
But the Maasai and their northerly cousins, the Samburu, were thrown off these grasslands when the parks were established. With their cattle they had lived for centuries alongside the teeming wildlife of the plains, following the rains and the grazing like the wildebeest. Ironically it is in the name of conservation that they have been excluded from their traditional water-holes, salt-licks, and dry-season grazing.

Other reserves are well known from books and TV documentaries: Amboseli at the foot of Africa's highest mountain, snow-capped Kilimanjaro; Lake Nakuru with its pink mist of flamingoes; and Meru, 'Elsa country', made famous by Joy Adamson and her lions. But the biggest attraction remains the Maasai Mara.

KWS: managing people and conservation

Wildlife is one of Kenya's most important natural assets, and wildlife tourism is worth US\$350 million a year, nearly half the value of the total Kenyan tourist industry. Yet, during the 1980s, poaching threatened to destroy one of its major attractions. The profits to be made

below The privatisation of land threatens to prevent wildlife from moving freely across the Rift Valley grasslands



right Elephants returning from a raid on local farms to Kimana wildlife reserve, which is managed by the local Maasai community



from illegal wildlife products, especially ivory and rhino horn, reduced the numbers of elephants from 160,000 to 20,000, and rhinos were virtually wiped out: there are now fewer than 1,000 remaining in Kenya.

The urgent need for conservation prompted the creation of the Kenya Wildlife Service (or KWS, as it is generally known) in the late 1980s. KWS is responsible for managing Kenya's wildlife resources, separately from the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. Under the leadership of Richard Leakey, KWS adopted tough measures to stamp out poaching and was largely successful in curbing the mass destruction of wildlife.

KWS, employing some 3,500 staff, now faces new challenges in identifying and maintaining a viable economic role for wildlife. Wildlife management remains a key form of land use in areas of marginal agricultural value. Wildlife tourism offers great economic potential, but most of the benefits go to foreign and private Kenyan owners and tourist operators, to the government, and to people employed directly in the industry. Very little benefit from one of the most valuable sectors of the Kenyan economy goes to poor people in rural

areas, and especially pastoralist communities. Apart from a few projects on communal (or 'group') ranches near Amboseli and in Laikipia, there are still very few examples of tourist facilities owned and operated by the local community. Instead, the people who live closest to wildlife are reduced to selling trinkets and doing 'cultural performances' for tourists, for which they might earn the equivalent of £1 a day.

KWS has developed a policy of revenue-sharing, intended to ensure that those who live closest to the wildlife and who are potentially the most effective conservers of it receive direct benefits. Nevertheless, KWS and some of the non-government organisations concerned with conservation recognise that, without rights to the use of wildlife, people in local communities are not likely to enjoy a share in the revenue or benefits, or to help ensure the conservation of this valuable national asset. Through projects like the 'Partnership Programme', KWS is trying to explore ways to develop wildlife management and community benefits, but this ambitious scheme is still at an early stage, and there are many obstacles in its path.



background and left
A desultory dance for
the tourists at a Game
Lodge in Samburu
District

Johnson Pesi

👤 Tourism has completely changed our lives. Some of the Maasai were very poor till they came here; now they can buy clothes for themselves, and some have even bought cows. So there have been some advantages for us. But there are disadvantages too. Sometimes tourists take lots of photographs, and some are completely pornographic. Sometimes they photograph someone who is not dressed properly; then they go and display it in their country, which is a big damage to our culture. I don't understand why they should want to do it, and I feel very uncomfortable about being photographed.

There is not much exchange between us. We don't tell the tourists about our culture, and they don't tell us about theirs. We don't sell them what we own: we make something similar to what we own, especially to be sold. The songs we sing for tourists are not the real songs that we sing during our own ceremonies, so they don't affect our culture. It's just a fake thing for tourists.

I am dressed as a *moran* (Maasai warrior). But I'm not yet a *moran*; I'm preparing to become one: I'm growing my hair. There are no real *morans* here. They are away eating meat at the meat-eating camps, so we have to act until they come back; then we'll go away.

The land of the Maasai Mara which was turned into a national reserve must have been sold unknowingly by our people. We are trying to see if we can compensate ourselves by collecting money from tourists. 7

The promise of prosperity

Compared with many other African nations, Kenya has an abundance of natural assets and economic opportunities. Yet for millions of Kenyans the promises which Independence offered remain unfulfilled, and the struggle for social, economic, civil, and political rights is still to be won. Drought, floods, lack of land, high prices for basic necessities, and — since the late 1980s — conflict and violence combine to make life very harsh for poor people.

History will reveal the true significance of the 1997 Presidential elections, which produced a third five-year term for President Moi and the KANU government. The prospects for peace, prosperity, and equality remain uncertain. What will need to change in order to give real hope to the kind of people whose opinions are represented in this book? Their future depends upon the implementation of policies which will achieve prosperity with equity; governance which upholds the law and recognises people's basic rights; stability and the means to ensure food security; access to land and security of tenure; and eco-

nomie measures which will prevent the blight of urban destitution for children, youth, and women.

Will the radical upheavals, both violent and peaceful, which have affected nearby countries be reproduced in Kenya itself? The stability of Kenya continues to be a vital ingredient of wider regional prosperity and progress in Africa. If IMF demands for economic reform and the elimination of corruption are upheld, donor governments may yet call for a change of tune from the KANU regime. It remains to be seen whether this call will be accompanied by demands for the eradication of poverty and an end to the abuses of human and civil rights that threaten the well-being of millions of ordinary Kenyans.

Despite their persistent and growing disadvantages, the fortitude of Kenya's desperately poor people means that there are very real opportunities for change. Above all, maintaining peace remains the biggest challenge. For the foreseeable future, there are no simple solutions for Kenyans and those who continue to support them.

right Street scene in Loitokitok, Kajiado District





background and left
Thomas Lugalya outside
the Nairobi club where
he was performing

Thomas Lugalya

🗨️ Let me not lie to you.

Kenyans are peaceful.

Enough blood was shed for Independence,
and we do not want to shed more.

How can you live with people for ten years,
twenty years, then fight them?

I like my country very much.

If we worked hard and stopped
slipping money into our pockets,
we could be as good as America or Britain.

If we work together.

Unity is important.

We have milk and honey flowing,
but we do not know how to tap them. 🗨️

*Thomas Lugalya, a 22 year-old musician
with The Ghetto Ruffians, Nairobi*

