

The Gift of Hugging

16 May 2008

Kibera is one of the largest slums in Africa. More than 100,000 children live in this desolate area on the edge of Nairobi, Kenya—many of them with no home at all but the filthy paths between shacks and open sewers.



Barbara Schmid, a short-term associate (STA) from Germany, spent several months in Kibera last year. Twice a week she showered love on young children in a nursery school, playing with them and telling them Bible stories. On other days she led Bible studies with women and young people, and she also made home visits to people living with AIDS.

'When I see all the poor people and hear their stories, sometimes it's hard for me to believe that God is still the God who has a good plan for everyone,' says Barbara. 'But then there are other moments when I can really see that God loves each one so much, and has made each person very special. I really love to work in the Kibera slums.'

Peter Hahn, from the USA, invested all of his six-week term in Kenya at an orphanage for AIDS orphans. The people who run these homes are committed to very high standards, but the job is so big that the time-consuming acts of loving and paying attention to the children get neglected. Hugging turns out to be the skill most needed by volunteer helpers. 'It was my privilege,' reflected Peter, 'to be a presence there, forming 25 beautiful relationships with 25 beautiful orphans.

They have humbled me and given me a greater love than I could ever give them.'

SIMPact Makes Impact

SIM is actively recruiting short-term associates to serve from two months to two years in the [Kenya SIMPact programme](#). Most participants are between 20 and 25 years old, but all ages are represented, including retirees. The name SIMPact intentionally expresses the desired impact:

- on the participants
- on Kenyan ministries and individuals
- on churches, families, and friends back in the sending countries
- on the world

SIMPacters are all committed Christians with high moral standards. Some local ministries have decided to accept only volunteers from SIM. The volunteers serve in Nairobi and other urban centres, as well as in rural settings. Many opportunities exist to impact children at risk in slums like Kibera and in orphanages. Other openings are in education for all ages. The countless children who crowd slums and dusty trails need smiles, stories, hugs, and hope.



Dorothy Hazard, SIMPact Director, says, 'I fully believe that we can find a placement for anyone willing to serve the Lord in Kenya.' Contact your nearest SIM office for details or [visit simkenya.org/simpact.html](http://visit.simkenya.org/simpact.html)

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Urgent Prayer Need

Pray for the country of Nigeria - for peace to be restored, and for the Lord's comfort for all those affected by the recent violence.