

LERNEINSATZ

REISEBERICHT – KENIA
TRAVEL REPORT – KENYA
2025



Introduction / Foreword

This report documents an educational trip (LernEinsatz) to Kenya, which took place from 12th July to 29th July 2025. During this time, we visited various social and environmental organizations. These visits gave us valuable insights into local projects, challenges, and initiatives that are working towards positive change.

We learned a lot — both through the content and the many personal encounters along the way. We are very grateful for the opportunity to have made this journey.

A big part of what made the experience so special was the group itself. Everyone contributed in their own way and helped create an open, thoughtful, and supportive atmosphere. It was this shared experience that made the trip truly memorable.

We are also deeply thankful to all the people we met during our stay — for their time, openness, and their willingness to share their experiences and the work they do. Their stories and insights shaped our understanding in a lasting way.

In this report, we introduce the group and share what we saw and learned throughout our time in Kenya.





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The Team

Let us introduce ourselves...

Johanna

Age: 27

About me: I live in Vienna and I'm currently finishing my master's degree in computer science, specifically in "Media and Human-Centered Computing". Besides studying, I love visiting my family in Vorarlberg and spending time babysitting my nieces and nephews. In my free time, I enjoy traveling to discover new countries and cultures, going hiking in nature, and reading. I'm also fascinated by the underwater world and love to go diving whenever I get the chance.



Favorite food in Kenya: Chapati

Biggest learning in Kenya: I learned how donations from countries like ours can have a huge and positive impact. Furthermore, it was surprising to see how the colonial era still affects certain aspects of life there, even years after independence.

Special memories of the study tour: Getting to meet all the wonderful and truly inspiring people and discovering and observing so many wild and beautiful animals in their natural habitat.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Always carry sunscreen with you. Even if it's rainy in the morning, the sun often shines brightly in the afternoon.

Alexander Schober-Graf

Age: 28

About me: I come from Carinthia, more precisely from Ebenthal in Carinthia, a municipality near the provincial capital Klagenfurt am Wörthersee.

After completing my studies in geography and energy and environmental economics, I started working at the Ebenthal municipal office in Carinthia. There, I am responsible for the building authority and head the department of regional planning.



I devote a large part of my free time to my home parish. Not only because I am a very religious person, but also because, together with four others, I lead the youth group in our parish, sing in the church choir, and am involved in the parish council, working to keep the parish alive.

Favorite food in Kenya: Chapati, Mandazi

Biggest learning in Kenya: The motivation, perseverance, and creativity with which the local people master their everyday lives and never lose their smiles.

Special memories of the study tour: The time we spent with the children in the various projects. But also attending Holy Mass, where I was fascinated by the ease, musical diversity, and reverence with which people encounter Jesus Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: See the trip as another important step on your life's journey. It will open up new insights for you and feel like an adventure that begins anew every day.

Corina

Age: 23

About me: I live in Lower Austria and work with people with disabilities. In my free time, I volunteer at the local fire brigade. I like to go hiking and spend time in nature.

My family runs a small winery at my parents' house, so there's always plenty of work to do in the vineyards and the vegetable garden.



Favorite food in Kenya: Chapati

Biggest learning in Kenya: To start work with impact, it does not need plenty of resources and infrastructure – motivated people and some space are enough to encourage a new perspective in people's lives.

Special memories of the study tour: The spirit of the people who conveyed the meaning of their work with such joy and openness. Furthermore, "Karibu" – the culture of welcome and genuine interest in everyone's opinion.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Always have questions ready to ask and don't forget to learn some Kiswahili words.

Sandra Fahringer

Age: 48

About me: I live in Tyrol and work as a personal assistant. I help people with physicals and cognitive disabilities. Besides my work, I volunteer with seniors in a care home. I love to make music with my friends. Hiking and traveling are also my favorite hobbies.



Favorite food in Kenya: Mango

Biggest learning in Kenya: In Kenya, I learned that people improve their living conditions with little money and great deployment.

Special memories of the study tour: Singing and playing with the children and teenagers. We all shared so much laughter and joy.

Special memories of the study tour: A mother carried her child with disabilities on her back. She walked for one hour each way to school. She did this to bring her child to classes and therapy. That sight made a long lived impression on me.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Pack good hiking shoes. The paths in Kenya are often uneven and steep.

Maria Hofer

Age: 32

About me: I work as a project manager in a social business called Sindbad. We organize mentoring for teenagers for the transmission phase after mandatory school and therefore try to help them navigate the direction of their lives. I live in Vienna, which makes it easy for me to cover all my interests: sports, arts and social life. I really like to learn and stay active- luckily, I have lots of wonderful people I can share memories with.



Favorite food in Kenya: vegetarian stew

Biggest learning in Kenya: Children any age love to go to school, take the biggest effort to get there, stay as long as possible and are safest when in school.

Special memories of the study tour: The warm welcoming anywhere we went to- especially the excitement of all children that saw us, how they tried to clap our hands.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Focus on the positive things you see and learn, also: bring small hand sanitisers.

Thomas Kremshuber

Age: 24

About me: I live in Upper Austria and work as an IT technician. Alongside my job, I volunteer at our local fire brigade and the Jungschar in our town. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with friends and family.



Favorite food in Kenya: Samosa and Chapati

Biggest learning in Kenya: I've learned that life isn't about having the best things, but about making the best of what you have and sharing it with others.

Special memories of the study tour: The kindness of everyone, everywhere and passion everyone has for what they are doing.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Always carry a snack with you in case the program runs longer than planned.

Sophie Heine

Age: 22

About me: I live in Upper Austria and work as a safety engineer at an automation company in Linz. My hobbies are playing the trombone in the music association in my hometown, meeting friends, sports activities and travelling.



Favorite food in Kenya: Chapati, Avocado

Biggest learning in Kenya: I realized how important facilities such as schools and after-school clubs are for children in informal settlements, not only as places of education, but also as a safe place where you can just be a child.

Special memories of the study tour: Meeting so many wonderful new people and experiencing how warmly we were welcomed by everyone; interacting with many children and seeing how much they enjoyed playing and singing with us; the fear of being eaten by hippos; the home visits; experiencing biodiversity in national parks and so many more...

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Bring a large suitcase with you in case you come across a new piece of furniture in one of the organizations or on a market. And don't worry if you don't know every detail before the trip – the journey is very well organized by DKA and the local team. Just stay open to surprises and enjoy the time in Kenya, because every day will bring new insights and experiences.

Gerlinde Larndorfer

Age: 53

About me: I am a biologist and work for an environmental organization in Linz in Upper Austria, where I also live with my family. I love hiking in the mountains, sailing and spending time with my family and friends.



Favorite food in Kenya: Chapati, Sukuma Wiki, Mango

Biggest learning in Kenya: The organizations we visited support their target groups very professionally and with a great deal of heart and commitment. I saw how important faith is for many people in coping with their sometimes difficult everyday lives. I became even more aware of my privileged life and was touched by the warmth and openness with which we were greeted.

Special memories of the study tour: Seeing the dedication, joy, and pride with which the children worked in the school garden, we were baking cakes together, and many other very touching encounters.

Special memories of the study tour: Standing on the "Lion King rock" and looking out over the beautiful landscape, and of course seeing the hippos in our garden.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Perhaps take a map of Europe with you, as Austria is often confused with Australia ;-)

The schedule is not always "pole, pole" (Kiswahili word for slowly) but there is always enough time for warm encounters.

Anna Lena

Age: 21

About me: I'm a nursery school teacher and work in a nursery school and a Hort in Upper Austria.

In my spare time I love staying active through sports, meeting with my friends, being part of an orchestra and doing handcrafted projects with different techniques.



Favorite food in Kenya: Ananas, Chapati

Biggest learning in Kenya: I became aware that dreams and positive thinking are the keys to look forward in difficult circumstances.

Special memories of the study tour: So many wonderful moments and warm-hearted, welcoming encounters...

One encounter: A woman tailored us a skirt and as we picked them up, she was so thankful, and she sang a blessing song for us. This was very unexpected but so special.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Always have enough money with you to give a tip :)

Lisa

About me: I live in Vienna and work for different NGOs in the fields of sustainability, environmental protection and communication. Health, well-being and human rights, especially children's rights, are very important to me. My interests are biological agriculture, agroecology, animals and plants.



Favorite food in Kenya: Chapati, fruits & vegetables

Biggest learning in Kenya: Even if life gives you the most unpleasant lemon, it is still possible to make the sweetest lemonade out of it.

Special memories of the study tour: Kindergarten "students" know how to read and write; lots of incredible skilled young people; Kiswahili lessons by rescued street girls; Masai Market; bird watching.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Sharing is caring.

Katharina



About me: I enjoy meeting up with friends, hiking, and reading. I can talk a lot, but I can also be very quiet :-)

Favorite food in Kenya: Chapatiiiii :-), Pineapple

Biggest learning in Kenya: Every day is a new, huge learning opportunity in terms of language, biology, cuisine, culture... and a great opportunity to learn a lot about myself.

Special memories of the study tour: Testimonies of life and faith in informal settlements – a giraffe on the horizon – our coexistence as a singing, playing, and dancing community.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Be flexible: Surprises are guaranteed

Constanza Karan (Nickname: Consi)

Companion with experience traveling in Kenya

Age: 27

About me: I live in Upper Austria and work as a social worker with people experiencing homelessness. Alongside my job, I'm also pursuing a master's degree (social work) part-time. I love staying active with sports, spending quiet moments in nature, meeting friends, and traveling to discover new places and cultures.



Favorite food in Kenya: Mandazi, Mango

Biggest learning in Kenya: I became aware of the incredible power that a group of motivated people—or even a single individual—can have to create change.

Special memories of the study tour: Singing and dancing with the children—full of joy, laughter, and connection. And then, the kind of moment you never forget: a hippo strolling through the yard. These impressions—joyful, powerful, and sometimes surreal—will stay with me for a lifetime.

My tip for the next group traveling to Kenya: Always wear sturdy shoes, there might be some spontaneous hikes.

White Gazelle Tours

A social tourism company, based in Nairobi and led by Mr. George Otieno Ochola.



George and his team (Janet, Natascha, Chris..) accompanied us throughout our entire journey with great dedication and warmth. They guided us knowledgeably through both city and countryside, opened doors that might have otherwise remained closed, and made many special experiences possible. Thanks to their commitment and care, our trip became something truly special.

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Program

DAY 1, SAT. 12.07.2025:

Arrival in Nairobi

Infobox

- **Airline:** Brussels Airlines
- **Route:** Vienna – Brussels – Nairobi
- **Total travel time:** approx. 12 hours (including layover)
- **Time difference:** +1 hour (Kenya)

After an early start in Vienna, we landed in the evening at 8:20 p.m. local time at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Unfortunately, immigration did not go entirely smoothly, as two suitcases containing soccer jerseys as souvenirs were rejected by customs, resulting in an additional fee which needed to be paid. While part of the group was negotiating with the customs officers, the others passed the time with small gymnastics and training exercises. This way, we quickly learned that patience and flexibility play an important role in Kenya—something we would notice again on several occasions over the following days.

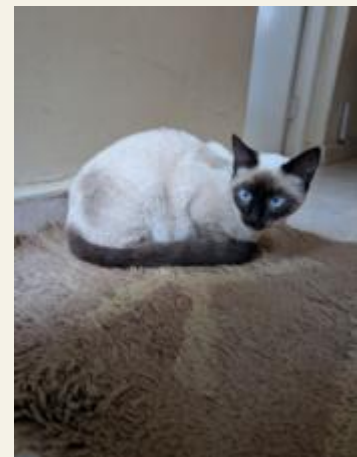


Accommodation: Kerygma House

Infobox

- **Run by:** Yarumal Missionary Brothers (from Colombia)
- **Founding of the order:** 1927
- **Mission:** Promoting dignity & sustainability among the most disadvantaged groups. In Kenya since approx. 1971
- **Capacity:** approx. 25 guests / 14 rooms
- **Staff:** Valerie, Raphaela, Victoria, Sally
- **Housecat:** Lilly

Kerygma House is a guesthouse run by the Yarumal Missionary Brothers but it is also open to non-members of the order, such as DKA members or participants of the SolidarEinsatz program. In addition to accommodation and common areas, it offers very tasty meals and the possibility to do laundry. The warm welcome with “Karibu sana” and “feel like home” set the tone for our entire stay. We enjoyed freshly prepared meals together, spent evenings in reflection rounds or playing games, and celebrated two birthdays within our group. A special highlight at Kerygma House was the Austrian dinner we organized for our Kenyan friends and the current residents, featuring potato/pumpkin goulash and Kaiserschmarrn with Apfelmuß. At Kerygma House, we quickly learned that hospitality here is not just a word, but a lived attitude.



DAY 2, SUN. 13.07.2025:

A Tour of Nairobi

Infobox

- **Population:** 4,397,073 inhabitants (as of 2019).
- **Area:** Approximately 704 km².
- **Location:** 1624 meters above sea level.

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nairobi> [19.09.2025]

On Sunday, after our first night in Nairobi, we had a guided tour of the city center (KICC, National Archives...). Then we enjoyed an incredibly delicious lunch, and in the afternoon, we watched a traditional dance show.



DAY 3-5, MO.14.07. - WE.16.07.2025:

Visit: MPC - Mukuru Promotion Centre

Infobox

- **Year founded:** 1985
- **is supported by DKA**
- **Target group:** people (many children and youth) of Mukuru Informal Settlements
- **Mission:** Give children, adults and families, including those with disabilities, hope for a better and brighter future with projects in education, health, social transformation, social rehabilitation and environmental change
- **Offer:** Primary Schools, Secondary School, Vocational Training, Clinic, Home Based Healthcare, Social Services, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Nutrition and VCT, Rehabilitation Centre, Songa Mbele, Sponsorships Programs

How does the organization work?

"Education is our aim." (Sr Barbara)

Education is very important at the MPC campus (and probably beyond) in Kenya. In some very large classes (up to 70 children), reading, writing and arithmetic are taught from a very early age, starting with five-year-olds. The children grow up bilingual (Kiswahili and English) at the very least, and some speak a third language.

The Mukuru Promotion Centre is divided into four different locations and various facilities. A total of 7.000 pupils are taught and fed there. In some cases, their families are also visited at home. The following facilities belong to MPC: 4 primary schools, a secondary school, an outpatient clinic, a facility for children with special needs, a rehabilitation centre for boys who used to live on the streets, vocational training facilities (carpentry, hairdressing, cooking, service...).

What did we do during our stay at the organization?

"Every day is a working day." (Luciah Njogu – Education Coordinator)

At the MPC campus, we met highly committed employees and motivated students who impressed us greatly. In a tightly organized programme, we first got to know the various facilities at MPC before choosing an area to explore in more depth.

Among others, we met enthusiastic singers of kindergarten age (Aramsamsam was also a hit in Kenya), schoolchildren who worked very eagerly in the school garden, and Oliver, who taught us a few words of Kiswahili with great patience, humour and pedagogical skill. Alikuwa mwalimu mzuri sana! (He was a very good teacher!).

What did we learn?

"Karibuni. You are very welcome." (Many, many people in Kenya)

We were deeply moved by how many people, young and old, welcomed us to Kenya and the facilities and greeted us with such enthusiasm. The 'home visits' were particularly touching for us. Together with the social workers, we accompanied some children on their long journey home from school to the neighbouring informal settlements and were welcomed into their families' homes.

We were also impressed by the dreams and visions of the children and young people, the variety of learning opportunities in the DJ and art classes (a few works of art and stools also found their way to Austria), the carpentry workshop, hairdressers and masseurs.



DAY 6–7, THU. 17.07.–FRI. 18.07.2025:

Visit: Rescue Dada Centre

Infobox

- **Year founded:** 1992
- **DKA has been providing support since:** 1994
- **Target group:** girls (street-connected), ages 5–18
- **Mission:** reintegrating girls into their families and into society
- **Offer:**
 - social services,
 - education,
 - childcare,
 - empowerment

How does the organization work?

"The best place for the girl is in a family." – Ruth Waithira (Head of Livelihood Department)

Support at the Rescue Dada Centre is provided, among other things, through case management, where different professional groups – such as social workers, house mothers, psychologists – work together with the legal guardians to ensure full reintegration. The social workers try to work intensively with the families so that the girls have the best chance of returning home.

When admitting the girls, a comprehensive assessment of the current situation is carried out: health check, educational level, mental health, and social environment are considered. At the centre, therapy, educational training, and skills training are offered. Rescue Dada continues to accompany the girls and their families after their stay for up to two years.

The Rescue Dada Centre does a great deal of networking and advocates together with other organizations for child protection and children's rights.

What did we do during our stay at the organization?

During these two days, we were able to spend intensive time with the girls: playing, doing sports, exchanging ideas, and eating together. The girls and we taught each other Austrian and Kenyan songs and dances. Together, under the guidance of the girls, we made jewellery and carpets.

What we took away from our visit was that the girls were very open and curious toward us. We also realized that children's games are a wonderful way to communicate and to build community.

How did we perceive it / What were we able to learn?

The time we spent together showed us that it doesn't take much in terms of material things to build relationships. For the girls to be reintegrated in the best possible way, they need long-term and careful support with a lot of empathy. The girls look out for each other and hold together.



DAY 8, SA. 19.07.2025:

Safari: Nairobi National Park (not part of learning journey, paid extra)

Infobox

- **Area:** 117 km²
- **Location:** Only 7 km from the city center
- **Elevation:** Between 1,533 and 1,760 meters above sea level
- **Birdlife:** Over 500 different bird species can be found in the park
- **Wildlife:** Home to a high density of large game, including lions, buffaloes, zebras, rhinos, and hyenas – (Approximately 80 mammal species.)

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nairobi-Nationalpark> [19.09.2025]

Early in the morning, we were picked up and then headed to the national park. We saw many animals (Lions, rhinos, many ostriches, zebras, giraffes, ...) and were impressed by the natural surroundings.



The entire group also had the chance to visit the **Sheldrick Elephant Nursery** on the same day. <https://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org> (not part of learning journey, paid extra)



Afterwards, we enjoyed a delicious lunch together in the national park. Then a short nap.. 😊



DAY 9, SUN. 20.07.2025:

FREE DAY

Have a look at the “Free Time Activities” section for more information. (S.39)



DAY 10-11, MO 21.07.-TUE. 22.07.2025:

Visit: MSDP-Mukuru Slum's Development Projects

Infobox

- **Year founded:** 2002
- **is supported by DKA**
- **Target group:** young people, teenage moms, people with disabilities, parents of children/young people affected by poverty
- **Mission:** structure for young people after school for a meaningful pastime, increases future prospects, halfway home for boys from the street, vocational training for young people and teenage moms
- **Offer:**
 - business owner start-up/ kick-start support (Mukuro Economic and Social Opportunities= MESO),
 - form clubs and groups,
 - interventions for domestic violence,
 - day care center for children of teenage mothers in training,
 - support children to go back to school,
 - child protection through sports and acrobatics

How does the organization work?

As there is a wide range of offers, the organization covers many target groups and supports them for different lengths of time. The overall goal of MSDP is to improve the living conditions of vulnerable children, youth and women and to help them access new social and economic opportunities in the informal settlement of Mukuru. After their participation the outcomes are:

- Vulnerable children are protected and engaged in meaningful and empowering program
- Children have access to quality education
- Women and youth have access to sustainable livelihoods
- Communities gained knowledge and skills and start to change their attitude to take action for climate adaption
- Policy dialogue

What did we do during our stay at the organization?

After a comprehensive introduction to the organization on the first day with all of the above-mentioned offers, we had a good overview of who attends MSDP, how long people stay and what happens after they leave MSDP. We were then able to get to know all the rooms in the organization and were able to see where bottlenecks exist. We were then able to get an impression of the people providing support. Separated into small groups we went to homes of MSDP participants. The following homes were visited: Business Start-Up owners, people with disabilities, teen mothers, mom of a halfway home boy.

In the afternoon we enjoyed an acrobat show.

The next day we started by exchanging in small groups with representatives from all groups. We discussed political participation of the people, the challenges of teenage mothers, the tasks around opening a business, the dreams of students of vocational training and the difficulties of people with disabilities in informal settlements.

After talking to the participants, we were able to join two programs hands-on: cooking and baking with teenagers from the vocational training and soap making with teenage moms. In order to get a better understanding of the surrounded institutions, we were able to visit a rehab clinic for victims of alcoholism, psychological diseases and malnutrition. The visit was wrapped up by a catholic mess held by a German speaking priest. Above all, we were served very delicious food for every lunch and coffee break.

What did we learn?

We saw that through the help of MSDP the participants get a chance to change their lives to the better in a short time. Especially at the home visits, we could tell how participants flourished due to their activities. Another outstanding note was the close contact of social workers and their participants. We also learned to be patient in waiting situations and the fact that plans can change spontaneously. All in all we got a good insight of the multiple tasks MSDP covers.





DAY 12, WE. 23. 07. 2025:

Visit: Slums going green and clean (SGGC)

Infobox

- **Established:** 2015
- **Target group:** Kibera community
- **Mission:** Improving living conditions through sustainable waste management and raising awareness in the informal settlement of Kibera
- **Activities:** household waste collection, community clean-ups, waste to art pieces, urban farming, tree growing, youth rehabilitation, library, social funds

How does the organization work?

Slums Going Green and Clean is a community-based organization (CBO) located in the Kibera slum, committed to environmental protection and social justice. A core focus is collecting waste and finding environmentally friendly ways to process it. The organization carries out awareness campaigns within the community and addresses harmful practices such as burning waste in residential areas. It promotes everyday waste reduction tips, such as using reusable lunch boxes when buying food to avoid plastic packaging. SGGC also supports women through social funds, access to microcredits, and practical lessons like soap-making. A small bookshelf in their office offers educational resources to the neighborhood.

Motto: Service from the soul

What did we do during our stay at the organization?

Together with Bryan (Gisore Nyabuti) and his team, we started our tour of Kibera at the SGGC office, where he explained the organization's tasks and working methods to us. We then proceeded to the workshop, where plastic waste is processed into house number signs. The machine they use for this was even developed and built by Bryan himself. We continued through the alleys to the water pipes and later up to a rubbish mountain. Finally, we visited the micro-forest created by SGGC, which is located next to a school ground in the middle of the informal settlement.

How did we perceive it / What did we learn?

"It's everyone's responsibility to live in a cleaner slum" Bryan (Founder of SGGC)

During our visit, we learned that there are no formal recycling companies operating in Kenya, which means that local communities have to manage waste on their own. This makes the work of organizations like Slums going green and clean all the more important. As we walked through Kibera, we noticed that – compared to other areas – the settlements of Kibera appeared relatively clean. This left us with the impression that the efforts of the organization and the local community are already having a positive impact



DAY 13, THU 24.07.2025:

Visit: LCMC - Loyola Centre for Media and Communication

Infobox

- **DKA has been providing support since:** 2019
- **Target group:** children and school kids, parents and guardians
- **Mission:** “let children learn not earn” protecting every child’s right to play; to create audiovisual content for an online open resource platform, and offer formative training to parents, guardians, and instructors directly involved in the holistic development of children
- **Offer:**
 - Childrens rights to play vs. child labor
 - Digital charter for AI transformation
 - Rooting for children’s ecological rights
 - Children identity formation
 - Angaza dialog platform to fight corruption
 - Communication to think positive

How does the organization work?

The vision of LCMC is to form creative and critical young minds able to integrate in diverse global cultures. One of their main topics LCMC tackles is to stop child labor. Overall their goal is to promote children’s spiritual and character formation in a globalized world. The way they do it is by visiting affected areas in Kenya, some are in the North of the country, most are around the area of Nairobi. They focus on educating the community, not by telling them what to do but by raising awareness, asking questions and involving them to engage in arts projects. Through that thoughtful approach, the people of LCMC build trust, get people to speak and finally see real change in their behavior and further on, their lives. Educational work also spreads into communities that are not themselves working in child labor, but also to children in schools to raise awareness. With the technological and environmental knowledge LCMC spreads, they foster the goal of becoming a holistically developed child in a globalized world.

What did we do during our stay at the organization?

We spent half of a day at LCMC at their Jesuits center. After our very warm welcoming, we got a broad introduction to the variety of LCMC's actions. The team members concluded their interesting and diverse insights with a video around child labor. The awareness they would like to spread in schools were so far only accepted by 3 out of the 7 desired schools.

One of which we were able to visit after the theoretical insight we got. The St. Stephan Kindergarten and Elementary School was our next stop. Pupils of the school skipped exams just to show us their performances trained by LCMC. The content they touched was around child labor. We were happy to see actors, graphic designers, painters, poets and dancers. After their great performance, we enjoyed our freetime by playing some group games with the children of the performers trained by LCMC.

Back at the Jesuits office, they invited us for a delicious lunch.

What did we learn?

LCMC could stretch the variety of topics around children. They made us aware of new issues such as child labor, ecological education and cutting young girls' private areas. It is essential that children know about their rights in order to make self-determined decisions. Educated kids can pass on their knowledge to the next generation.



WEEKEND AT LAKE NAIVASHA

DAY 14, FR. 25.07.2025:

Visit: Waste management in Naivasha & Gathengera Practical Permaculture Center (GPPC)

Infobox

- **Established:** 2007, 15 employees
- **Target group:** communities in Kenya and beyond, citizen of Naivasha, farmers, teachers
- **Mission:** Promoting the development of resilient communities in which indigenous knowledge, regenerative agriculture and circular economy practices are employed to preserve livelihoods, restore ecosystems, and preserve cultural heritage.
- **Activities:** Permaculture trainings & workshops, household waste collection, regenerative farming and consultancy, biodiversity preservation & seed bank, eco-tourism, environmental research advocacy & awareness

How does the organization work?

The Gathengera Practical Permaculture Center (GPPC) is a community-based permaculture farm in Naivasha, dedicated to pioneering permaculture and agroecology. preserving indigenous practices that foster community resilience, protect animal and plant diversity, and honor human culture.

GPPC Waste to Best Environment Action collects waste from households in Naivasha and separates it. The organic components (approx. 60-70% of the waste) are composted and the compost is sold. The center is testing creative solutions for recycling the other waste components: glass bottles are used as foundations for buildings, old clothes and shoes as insulation material, and plastic bags as containers for young plants...

They share their knowledge through workshops, training courses, and projects.

What did we do during our stay at the organization?

James Kagwe, the founder and CEO of GPPC guided us through the permaculture center and presented practical examples of ecological and traditional agricultural methods at various stations: agroforestry systems, mixed cropping, species-appropriate animal husbandry, propagation of old varieties, production and use of compost, experiments in protein production for chickens by drying fly larvae, and much more.

As GPPC seeks to disseminate this content widely through workshops and seminars, we visited the seminar rooms which are currently being built as tree houses.

"I don't live to make an income but to make an impact" - James Kagwe, CEO GPPC

What did we learn?

James Kagwe made a big impression on us as a person because he radiates so much enthusiasm and commitment, conveys the courage to try creative approaches, and works with his team in such a practical way to find viable solutions for people and nature.

We really got the impression that through their work those important issues are disseminated.

After spending two weeks in Nairobi, the permaculture center seemed like a green paradise to us with its tremendous biodiversity and cool, fresh air, where we would have loved to spend even more time.

Contact: <https://gathengerapracticalpermaculturecenter.org>



Lake Naivasha – Afternoon

Infobox:

- **Freshwater lake:** It is one of the few freshwater lakes in East Africa and an important habitat for many animals.
- **Formation:** It is a volcanic crater lake formed in the basin of an extinct volcano.

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naiwashasee> [19.09.2025]

We checked into our accommodation and then went boating on the lake.



DAY 15, SA. 26.07.2025:

Safari: Hells Gate National Park

Infobox:

- **Area:** The national park covers approximately 68 square kilometers.
- Hell's Gate National Park is one of the few national parks in Kenya where visitors can explore the landscape **on foot or by bicycle**.

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell%E2%80%99s-Gate-Nationalpark> [19.09.2025]

On this day, we cycled through Hell's Gate National Park and hiked the Ol Njorowa Gorge Trail at the end of the park.



Evening program ...



DAY 16, SUN. 27.07.2025:

After a tasty breakfast and lunch, we returned to Nairobi.



DAY 17, MON. 28.07.2025:

FREE DAY

Have a look at the "Free Time Activities" section for more information. (S.39)

DAY 18, THU. 29.07.2025:

Evaluation meeting with White Gazelle's Team

Time to say goodbye..and..THANK YOU!

ASANTE SANA KWA UKARIMU WAKO, MPANGILIO MZURI WA PROGRAMU, NA FURAHIA UNAYOLETA. UNAKARIBISHWA KILA WAKATI NCHINI AUSTRIA.



Animal Species

of Nairobi, Lake Naivasha & Hell's Gate Nationalpark

Our nature enthusiast Lisa created a list of animal species and selected plant species of Nairobi, Lake Naivasha & Hell's Gate National Park.

Mammals & Reptiles:

African Elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*)
Black-backed Jackal (*Canis mesomelas*)
Bush Hyrax (*Heterohyrax brucei*)
Cape Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)
Coke's Hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus cokii*)
Common Zebra (*Equus quagga*)
East African Lion (*Panthera leo*)
Eland (*Taurotragus oryx*)
Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*)
Impala (*Aepyceros melampus*)
Mantled Guereza (*Colobus guereza*)
Masai Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis tippelskirchi*)
Nile Crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*)
Olive Baboon (*Papio anubis*)
Thomson's Gazelle (*Eudorcas thomsonii*)
Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*)
White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*)
Wildebeest (*Connochaetes taurinus*)

Birds:

African Fish Eagle (*Ichthyophaga vocifer*)
African Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*)
Black-headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*)
Common Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)
Common Ostrich (*Struthio camelus*)



Fischer's x Yellow-collared Lovebird (*Agapornis fischeri* x *personatus*)

Hadada Ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*)

Hamerkop (*Scopus umbrette*)

Helmeted Guinea Fowl (*Numida meleagris*)

Marabou Stork (*Leptoptilos crumenifer*)

Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*)

Pygmy Falcon (*Polihierax semitorquatus*)

Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*)

Superb Starling (*Lamprotornis superbus*)

White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*)

Yellow-billed Stork (*Mycteria ibis*)

Selected Plant Species

of Nairobi, Lake Naivasha & Hell's Gate Nationalpark

Candelabra Tree (*Euphorbia candelabrum*)

Sausage Tree (*Kigelia africana*)

Umbrella Thorn Acacia (*Vachellia tortilis*)

Whistling Thorn Acacia (*Vachellia drepanolobium*)

Yellow Fever Tree/ Naivasha Thorn (*Acacia xanthophloea*)

Free Time Activities

independent of the scheduled program

Right next to the accommodation, you can have beautiful clothing items tailor-made by **Evelyne and her daughter**. Our group had skirts, dresses, shirts, aprons, and hair scrunchies made. Just ask at the accommodation for more information.



At the **Mukuru Art Collective (run by Adam Masava)**, you can view impressive artworks – it's also located near the accommodation. We were truly impressed.



On Sunday, we attended a mass together at **Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church** in Nairobi. There was a lot of singing, and the service was beautiful.



Every Wednesday, a **Maasai market** takes place at Capital Centre, where we picked up scarves and various other souvenirs.

On one of our free days, some of us visited the **Giraffe Centre** in Nairobi. Some others took the opportunity to visit a **coffee farm**.



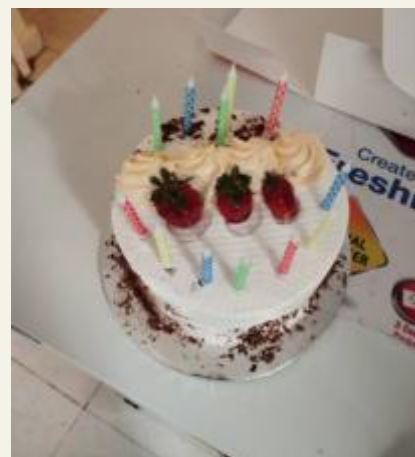


Riding in a **matatu** was a fun and unforgettable experience for all of us.



A little **group training** in the courtyard is fun and a great way to stay active together. 😊

And **birthday celebrations** are always a blast (Thomas, Anna Lena).



To end our trip, we took a walk through **Karura Forest** on our final day.



Research Questions

Before, during, and after our journey, we explored a self-chosen topic and a specific research question. The goal was to set personal focus areas and to enrich the experience through individual research and reflection.

Below, you will find the respective research questions along with the insights and answers that were developed in response.

Johanna

What are the Meanings and Functions of Art for Artists from Nairobi's Informal Settlements?

Art plays a multifaceted role in Nairobi's informal settlements. Before my journey, I was particularly interested in the reasons why artists choose to engage in creative work within this context. During my stay, I encountered a wide range of motivations and practices: art as a source of income and career opportunity, as a way of processing personal experiences, as a tool for social awareness, and as a contribution to sustainable living.

The following chapters explore these different functions of art, drawing on academic literature as well as personal observations and insights from conversations and encounters.

1. Art as Education and Source of Income

Art as education and source of income Contrary to the widespread assumption that artistic success depends primarily on talent, research shows that formal education plays a crucial role in securing long-term survival in the art sector. A Danish longitudinal study demonstrates that an artistic education significantly increases the likelihood of sustaining a career in the arts—less through higher income than through the development of networks and technical skills [1].



This finding is reflected in practice within Nairobi's informal settlements. The Mukuru Promotion Centre (MPC) and artists such as Adam Masava [2] function as informal training hubs. They provide not only artistic techniques and professional education but also direct market access and income opportunities through the sale of artworks. Masava, who grew up in the Mukuru Slum himself, is a prime example of how art can offer professional prospects.

2. Art as Expression of Personal History and Identity

The traditional view of art as a direct expression of the inner self is challenged by postmodern theory. Hawkins argues that identity is not simply expressed through art but actively formed in the artistic process. Artists adopt and recombine visual languages and cultural symbols, shaping identity through constant reinvention [3].

This perspective is reflected in the practice of Nairobi's artists. For example, artists working with Adam Masava often repurpose materials from their immediate surroundings — old corrugated iron sheets from shelters, discarded wood, or used school notebooks. By transforming these materials, they not only reference their lived reality but also extend their personal and collective histories. The “quotational” nature of these objects allows them to construct and reveal identity in dialogue with their environment.



3. Art as a Therapeutic Medium

Slayton, D'Archer, and Kaplan summarize numerous studies showing significant positive effects of art therapy across diverse groups and conditions, including trauma processing, reduction of anxiety and depression, and improved self-esteem. These effects are documented both in case studies and controlled designs, especially among children and adolescents [4].

At the Rescue Dada Centre which we visited, art is deliberately integrated into psychological support for girls who formerly lived on the streets. Here, art provides an essential non-verbal medium for expression and trauma recovery, directly reflecting the empirical findings from the literature.

4. Art as a Tool for Social Awareness and Activism

In informal settlements such as Kibera, wall murals function as accessible channels for conveying socially relevant messages. As Kaivilu highlights, murals are deliberately used for peace communication and identity building, serving as visual educational tools that reach even non-literate audiences [5].

During our own observations in Nairobi, we discovered murals on the walls of Kibera addressing climate protection and coronavirus prevention. Positioned in highly frequented areas such as along railway lines, they acted as public announcements—colorful, easy to understand, and widely visible. In addition, organizations like the Loyola Centre for Media and Communications (LCMC) also use artistic approaches to raise awareness on issues such as child labor, thereby protecting vulnerable children. This underscores art's role as a versatile tool for advocacy and social change.



5. Art and Sustainability

In Kenya we learned that sustainability is often thought of in very practical and resource-oriented terms. A particularly impressive example can be found at the Gathengera Permaculture Centre, where founder James combines permaculture with artistic and educational practices. On his website and in his videos, he demonstrates how art can be used to communicate ecological techniques such as composting, water management, and food cultivation.

The creative do-it-yourself approach was striking: old tires, plastic bottles, wooden scraps, and even discarded toilets are transformed not only into artworks but also into planting beds and water filters. Here, art is more than a medium for conveying messages—it becomes a sustainable practice in itself. Upcycling thus emerges as both an artistic and ecological strategy [6].



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How does the Catholic Church shape the lives of people in Nairobi?

Introduction

The Catholic Church is one of the most influential religious institutions in Nairobi and has played a central role in the social fabric of the Kenyan capital since colonial times. With its deep-rooted presence in the fields of education, health, social welfare, and political discourse, it contributes significantly to structuring the everyday lives of many city dwellers (vgl. Hobe News 2024 & Hard Talk Kenyan 2024). Nairobi, as the economic, political, and cultural center of East Africa, is home to a diverse population in which the Catholic Church acts as a stabilizing force – both on a spiritual and institutional level (vgl. RSIS International 2023).

Overall, the Catholic Church in Kenya is divided into 4 archdioceses and 27 dioceses led by 24 bishops, comprising 726 parishes served by 1.194 priests (vgl. Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops 2025).

The following areas of society should be examined in more detail on the basis of the research question posed:

- Education: the foundation of a society
- Health: healthcare network throughout the country
- Social engagement and economic promotion
- Political presence and moral voice
- Pastoral care, spiritual centrality, and cultural and media penetration

1. Education: The foundation of society

The Catholic Church is a key player in Nairobi's education system. It runs over 7,000 schools – that's 30 % of all schools in Kenya – including renowned schools such as St. Mary's School Nairobi, Strathmore School, and Kianda School for girls. These are located in the capital and are characterized by academic excellence and charismatic education (vgl. The Standard 2025 & Hard Talk Kenya 2024).

In addition, the Catholic Church operates universities such as the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Tangaza University College, and theological institutes such as Hekima University College (vgl. The Standard 2025 & Wikipedia 2025). This educational landscape has a significant impact on the lives of people in Nairobi – it provides access to high-quality education, promotes career orientation, and strengthens the intellectual capacity of church leaders and the population.



This was confirmed in the course of the learning mission (Lerneinsatz), as school facilities in particular are in Catholic hands and are often run by clergymen or nuns.

2. Healthcare: Nationwide network of care providers

The Catholic Church in Kenya operates a dense healthcare network of hospitals and health centers, including Mater Misericordiae Hospital in Nairobi, Our Lady of Lourdes Mutomo Hospital in Kitui, and Christamarianne Mission Hospital in Kisii (vgl. The Standard 2025).

At the same time, the Catholic Medical Mission Board (CMMB) is involved in HIV care, antiretroviral treatment, and systemic health promotion (vgl. Wikipedia 2025). These services are often vital, especially in rural areas with limited government infrastructure.

3. Social engagement and economic development

To strengthen economic resilience, the Catholic Church operates savings and credit cooperatives, Caritas microfinance programs, and trust funds designed to give poor communities in particular access to capital (vgl. The Standard 2025). Agricultural projects for food security are further initiatives—for example, through church-owned farms and pilot projects for food diversification in semi-arid regions (ebd.).

4. Political presence and moral voice

The Catholic Church in Nairobi has historically and currently enjoyed strong moral authority. As early as the 1980s and 1990s, bishops were critical of authoritarian structures – today the Church continues to be perceived as an important stakeholder and dialogue partner in the education sector (vgl. The Standard 2025). Another moral concern is the promotion of peace and reconciliation. The Catholic Church in Kenya has always been committed to promoting national dialogue and reconciliation, especially after the violent clashes in 2007-2008 (vgl. Opata 2023).

The Kenya Catholic Bishops Conference in particular has established itself as a mouthpiece for political mobilization and social change by calling on the government to show more responsibility and transparency in public statements (vgl. Houghton 2022).

5. Pastoral care, spiritual centrality, and cultural and media penetration

The Cathedral Basilica of the Holy Family serves as the spiritual center of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. It serves numerous parishes, offers regular Holy Masses, spiritual resources, and social meeting places—such as bookstores and souvenir shops—and is thus a visible symbol of Catholic presence in the city (vgl. Wikipedia 2025b).



The Church shapes cultural practices and public opinion through, among other things, its own radio stations—e.g. Radio Waumini, Radio Maria Kenya, and Radio Tumaini. Religious rites, holidays, iconography and values also convey cultural continuity and ecclesiastical identity.

Inculturation—the combination of Christian liturgy with local traditions—strengthens the cultural relevance of faith in Kenyan life (vgl. The Standard 2025). The connection between Christian liturgy and local tradition was clearly evident during the mass celebrations visited as part of the learning mission (Lerneinsatz). In particular, the mass celebrations were characterized by local dances and songs, which embodied a living faith within the framework of the mass celebration.

Particularly in connection with the World Synod, the Catholic Church in Kenya has spoken out on the key issues of family, human priesthood, accountability, and transparency in church finances (vgl. Nordkap nach Südkap 2017).

Conclusion

In Nairobi, the Catholic Church has a formative influence on urban life—through education, social networks, youth ministry, moral influence, and spiritual centers. Its institutions contribute significantly to the social infrastructure, particularly in terms of education and community building. However, it also has a responsibility to maintain its relevance by adapting to urban dynamics, transparency, and critical self-reflection.

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How do friendships contribute to a social network in the informal settlements of Nairobi?

Reason for choosing the question:

I chose this question because friendship has a very positive meaning for me, and I imagined it would be an easy way to start a conversation. In the different projects, I tried to talk with people and get answers related to friendships.

Theoretical background:

In the book "Soziale Netzwerke" by Jan Arendt Fuhse, one finds the following definition on page 14: "Social networks represent a pattern of social relationships between a set of actors. Social relationships refer to observable regularities of interaction between actors and corresponding expectations of behaviour."

Actors can be individuals but also organizations. Social relationships can be friendships, romantic relationships, or other forms of behavioural structures between people (pp. 13ff).

Findings:

My initial assumption was that friendships contribute to the formation of a social network. What I did not realize was that the opposite can also be true: social networks can foster the emergence of friendships.

People welcomed us very openly, and a sense of community and connectedness arose quickly. Therefore, I thought it must be easy in this culture to form friendships. I also assumed that social relationships are seen as something valuable and important in this culture.

When I asked children if they had friends in their neighbourhood, many answered no, because the infrastructure is not available for playing together and making contacts. Space for children in informal settlements is too limited, and their living reality leaves little opportunity to form friendships. However, when I asked if they had many friends at school, the answer was often a quick yes. Schools provide the space and time needed to build relationships and friendships.

The social network in informal settlements is often rather small. Mutual support among neighbours plays an important role, and people also greatly value their contact with social workers. Furthermore, religious communities and belonging to different tribes provide another form of network. These points of connection can lead to communities, but not necessarily to friendships.



Examples from projects show how friendships develop through shared life circumstances:

- **MSDP:** Teen mothers proudly told me how they had become friends through the project and now take care of their children together.
- **Slums Going Green:** People got to know each other by joining the project. Through their shared commitment to improving the environment in the slums, friendships emerged.
- **Rescue Dada:** A girl told me that she has friends at home, but they would not miss her, since they don't really do much together there. Now, however, she has found close friends in the project whom she truly likes.

This showed me again that friendship requires space and time, and that close and deep friendships are a privilege. Friendships do contribute to a social network, but even more strongly, social networks contribute to the formation of friendships. Actors meet through different life circumstances, connect through school, projects, or common concerns, and from this, friendships emerge. Friendships in turn strengthen the bonds between actors and make the network more stable and sustainable.

One cultural aspect I found very impressive is the symbol of men holding hands. Although this has declined in recent years and is now rarely seen, it still shows the value placed on friendship. This is especially striking given that physical touch between men and women in public – even between married couples – is not customary in Kenya.

Conclusion:

Friendship is something very special in every part of the world. However, finding friendships is not easy. Being neighbours does not automatically mean being friends – it takes shared activities, life circumstances, as well as space and time. Friendships are also an important factor for mental health: people who are embedded in stable social relationships feel supported and experience a sense of community. I realized that having friendships and maintaining these relationships is a privilege. Once basic needs are met does it become easier to build friendships – and then they can significantly contribute to a stable social network.



Sandra

What role does the community play in supporting inclusive education in Nairobi?

Reason for choosing the question:

The community plays a major role in the inclusion of children with disabilities. Society involves all people regardless of their characteristics or abilities.

Theoretical background:

In Nairobi society, children with disabilities often experience exclusion and a lack of recognition. Out of fear of stigma or due to a lack of support, some families may choose to keep their children with disabilities out of public life. This rejection hinders these children's social participation significantly. Limited access to essential services makes it difficult for them to feel fully included in their communities. To enable these young people to find a proper place in society, their integration into the school system and into the world of work is necessary. This means they learn alongside non-disabled children, which fosters understanding and reduces stigma. Inclusive education aims to create a learning environment where every child feels welcome and supported. (<https://www.caritas-international.de>)

Implementation:

Kenya has committed to inclusive education. Inclusive education means all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, learn together in regular schools. This approach emphasizes providing individualized support and accommodations to meet each student's unique needs. Many schools have established inclusion classes. These classes often involve specially trained teachers and adapted curricula to ensure effective learning for all.

The community

To realize the right to education for children and adolescents with disabilities, the cooperation between parents, schools, village leaders, youth welfare offices and parishes is essential. These different actors must act together to create the necessary support structures. State financial grants to promote inclusion are missing. This makes support from the community even more important.

Example of inclusion with support from the community

The Mukuru Slums Development Project helps disabled people to integrate into society. They support them through school or by setting up their own business. For example, with support from the community, a man with walking difficulties was able to open his own small business in the informal settlement.



Summary:

The inclusion of children with disabilities begins at school and ends when they get a job in a company or open their own business. To achieve independence, the help of many people from the community is needed. Only in this way can they take their place in society, because every person is valuable and has the right to education and work.

Maria

Political Participation in Nairobi's Informal Settlements

Shortly before we departed to Nairobi, the East African city was captured in many European (as well as international) news, because of protests. Within the travelling group some doubts about security within Nairobi started to be discussed. The protests were about a tax raise and increased intended gap between rich and poor. These news helped me to form my research question for the trip which I would like to answer here:

How can communities ensure political participation of people living in informal settlements, and how effective is this participation in practice?

Informal settlements are home to nearly **60% of Nairobi's residents** while occupying less than **10% of the city's land area** (UN-Habitat, 2020). Major areas include Kibera, Mathare, and Mukuru. Many residents lack formal addresses and secure tenure, which makes their political presence precarious. Still, they are part of Kenya's roughly **22 million registered voters** (IEBC, 2022), and their collective weight means they cannot be ignored during elections.

During our visit, a **social worker from the Mukuru Slum Development Project (MSDP)** explained how eligibility to vote is counted: through household enumerations every ten years, the most recent being in 2019. While this system is imperfect—many residents still fall through the cracks—it provides a foundation for voter registration. We also met individuals deeply committed to politics, like a man with a disability striving to represent the rights of disabled residents, showing that grassroots leadership is alive even under difficult conditions.

Kenya's 2010 Constitution created new entry points for citizen participation through **County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs)** and **Ward Development Committees**. In Nairobi, pilot programs in **participatory budgeting** have allowed residents to propose and prioritize projects. Community-based organizations (CBOs), such as **MSDP**, have also been crucial in mobilizing slum dwellers to advocate for housing, land rights, and services (Lines & Makau, 2017).



However, participation remains fragile. Research shows that **vote-buying, clientelism, and ethnic politics** often dominate electoral dynamics in informal settlements (Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis, 2020). In practice, many forums are captured by local elites who claim to speak for the community but negotiate personal favors. Activists risk intimidation, and after elections promises are frequently left unfulfilled.

Effectiveness is highest when **formal participation** (f.e. public forums) is combined with **informal strategies** (community mobilization, litigation, media advocacy). Tangible gains—such as halting forced evictions or securing road and water projects—show that engagement matters. But these successes depend on strong organization, external allies, and sustained pressure rather than one-off mobilization.

From what we observed, residents are not politically apathetic—on the contrary, many are highly motivated to shape their city. The challenge lies in ensuring their voices are not drowned out by systemic inequality and political opportunism. Nairobi's informal settlements reveal that participation is possible, but for it to be meaningful, structures of accountability and inclusivity must be strengthened.

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Thomas

How does technology and the usage of mobile payments influence life in the informal settlements of Nairobi?

Reason for choosing the question

I chose this research question because I am interested in both the supportive and critical aspects of technology. Even before the trip, I had already thought about if or how many people even have access to technology, but I did not expect that so many people in the world would actually own and use a smartphone and how present mobile payment is even in informal settlements.

My thoughts

On the one hand, smartphones and mobile banking create opportunities: they enable access to information, strengthen networks between family members, and open new opportunities for people.



On the other hand, technology can also have a big negative effects especially if not everyone can afford a smartphone or data, and dependence on digital systems creates new vulnerabilities such as fraud or debt through mobile loans.

Findings

In Nairobi's informal settlements, technology has become an essential part of everyday life. Mobile phones and especially the mobile payment system M-Pesa allow people without access to traditional banks to send and receive money, pay school fees, or handle small business transactions. For many families and stores this digital tool is essential. M-Pesa is a service provided by Safaricom a Kenyan mobile carrier, because of the wide use Safaricom has a monopoly in Kenya with over 90% of the mobile money market, This creates new dependencies and raises questions of control, privacy, and power – especially in communities where people already have limited alternatives.

Mobile banking and smartphones have transformed daily life in Kenya's informal settlements by providing access to financial services and new opportunities for millions of people. However, these benefits come with significant social and structural risks: unequal access, economic dependency, and monopoly power. In short, technology like M-Pesa is both an empowering tool and a source of vulnerability. Its success highlights the potential of digital inclusion, but also underlines the need for regulation, competition, and safety to protect communities that rely so on it.

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Sophie

What are the consequences of the waste problem in Mukuru Slum for people's health – and what solutions exist?

Why I chose this question

During our stay in Nairobi, the waste problem was very visible and troubling. In Austria, waste disposal is obligatorily organised: every household pays fees for waste collection or brings waste to a local recycling centre. Even if it is not the most popular expense, it ensures that waste is properly collected and disposed of. In Nairobi, the situation is very different. There is neither a comprehensive state-run disposal system nor public collection points as we know them.



If people want their waste to be collected, they must pay private providers – a service that is often too expensive or simply not a priority for many residents. As a result, waste often ends up by the roadside, on open spaces, or it is burnt. These differences struck me and raised the question of what consequences this has for people's health – and what solutions might exist.

My process on site

In the Mukuru slum we did not only see the waste problem, we also experienced it: piles of rubbish in narrow alleys, open fires burning waste, and the smoke mixing with the already dense city air. In addition, animals like goats, cows etc. moved around the rubbish. These impressions were touching. A part of our programme during our study tour was a visit to the organization 'Slums Going Green and Clean' in the Kibera slum. There we saw how residents take initiative by collecting waste together and raising awareness about waste reduction. Although Kibera is not Mukuru, many challenges and solutions are comparable.

Impressive encounters and experiences

Conversations with residents made it clear that waste is not a side issue, but part of everyday life. Children play within sight of rubbish heaps, houses and pathways are often surrounded by waste, and the smell of burning material hangs in the air. In addition, the Ngong River, which flows through Mukuru, is heavily polluted with rubbish and wastewater. These impressions showed me that waste is not only a visual problem, but one that deeply affects daily life and the living environment.

Health consequences

Although we did not identify concrete cases of illness on site, the associated risks are serious: burning waste releases toxic substances such as furans or dioxins, which irritate the respiratory tract and can be harmful in the long term. In informal settlements like Mukuru, such risks are amplified by open dumps, stagnant water and air pollution. Research shows that this environment can accelerate the spread of respiratory diseases, diarrhoeal illnesses or infections.

Solutions on site

Alongside initiatives like 'Slums Going Green and Clean', there are also other attempts to ease the problem: informal groups collect waste, sort recyclable materials and at least create a minimum of order. These initiatives demonstrate that change is possible, especially through community engagement. However, long-term improvement requires government support, infrastructure, regular collection and environmental education.



Insights and outlook

The engagement with the waste problem showed me how closely waste, environment and health are interconnected. I was particularly impressed by how much can be achieved through collective action, even without major resources. At the same time, it became clear how urgently governmental structures are needed to address the problem sustainably. For me personally, it was important to see that change can start locally with small steps – even if it is still a long way to go.

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Anna Lena

What challenges do street connected children and adolescents in the informal Mukuru settlements face?

Even before the trip, I knew that my research question would focus on the lives of children. The specialization on street connected children developed during the course of the journey. When we visited MSDP, we had the opportunity to speak with young men, former residents of the Halfway House. They shared their stories—how they moved away from the street.

Street connected children are children and adolescents under 18 years old who are homeless and live on the streets. They have to take care of themselves. Children who live on the streets together with their families are also considered street children.

[<https://www.plan.de/kinderschutz/strassenkinder.html?sc=IDQ26100>]

With over 400,000 residents, the Mukuru slum is the second-largest of its kind in Nairobi, Kenya. Living conditions are challenging: corrugated iron shacks offer little protection from heat and rain, and basic sanitation facilities are lacking. Diseases spread quickly, and children whose families have no support often face hopelessness.



Approximately 60,000 children live without fixed residence in the Mukuru slum. These children often lack access to education, medical care, or regular meals. Especially boys are affected, as they are often left to themselves by their families, being considered "the strong gender," and they experience a lot of violence. (BSIN_verbunden_Ausgabe1_2025_digital_pdf)

Below are some challenges that young men have shared:

Family: Family difficulties are the main reasons why children live on the streets. Some of these include: some parents cannot adequately care for their children due to poverty; others are exposed to violence or abuse. Sometimes adults are dependent on alcohol or drugs, which negatively impacts the development and well-being of the children.

Sleeping arrangements: They sleep on the ground in sacks, with cardboard covers, fabric scraps, or plastic tarps on sidewalks, at doorways, or bus stops. [<https://robinson-im-netz.de/>]

Food: According to descriptions, it is difficult to access fresh food because it is unaffordable for the children. Therefore, they search for food in trash or on the ground, which is often dangerous to eat due to glass shards, sharp objects, or toxic liquids. Access to clean water is also a challenge.

Money & Work: Earning money is another challenge. Children try to make money by begging, collecting and selling trash, or through drug dealing.

Drugs: The money earned is often not spent on food or other basic needs. To escape the harsh everyday life, some children already take drugs and harmful substances. Since pure cocaine or heroin are too expensive, cheaper drugs like liquid glue, gasoline, or coca paste are used. Liquid glue and gasoline are sniffed to temporarily relieve hunger, cold, and boredom. Side effects include hallucinations and increased aggression. This can lead to conflicts (with violence) among children. The drugs are highly addictive and cause chronic respiratory problems. Cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol are also widespread. [<https://strassenkinder.de/>]

Combined with little or no education and poor hygiene conditions, a cycle is created that is very difficult to escape.

Fortunately, there are organizations like the Halfway House, rehab centers, the Rescue Dada Centre, and others supported by DKA. These organizations help children and adolescents off the streets by providing opportunities for education, shelter, and food, enabling them to start a better life.



Lisa

How Nairobi's adult population personally perceives climate change?

Introduction

Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, is facing increasing impacts from climate change, which affect its rapidly growing urban population. These challenges are compounded by socio-economic inequalities. Understanding how Nairobians perceive climate change is essential for developing effective policies to address its effects. Perceptions of climate change in Nairobi are shaped by factors such as socio-economic status, education, and direct exposure to environmental events.

Methods

I did qualitative research with oral interviews during the study tour and web research on the topic.

Results & Discussion

Some impressions:

- Chris, the White Gazelle driver, grew up in the countryside of Nairobi and when he was little, 26 years ago, the maximum annual temperature was 26°C, today it is 33 degrees Celsius. He talked to his grandfather who told him that today it is warmer and dryer than years ago. It seems that there is more heat in the northern part of the region. Heat waves are dangerous to people's health. Floodings damaged Nairobi town like parts of the streets. Extreme weather conditions happen more often.

- Teacher Margaret from the Rescue Dada Centre explained that it is too warm for winter season. Actually it should be very cold in July, but it's quite moderate and these days -18th of July- especially hot. "The weather used to be predictable, but it is not anymore. Floodings happen more often, because it rarely rains but if so, then it rains heavily, and also streets get washed away." Another teacher Sharon, 23, gave one recent example: avocado farming. July is avocado season, but the harvest decreased, the fruits are more expensive for costumers and producers get less income which leads to socioeconomic problems. Nowadays the weather changes a lot and very quickly, it's hard to adapt - for plants, animals and human beings.



- Ben, 28, from Slums Going Green and Clean in Kibera explained that the rent for buildings closer to the riverbed are cheaper than in the centre of the informal settlement, because of the higher risk of crime and fatal floodings. Due to land grabbing for agriculture in the 90s the deforestations led dry soil. "As a kid, it used to rain frequently, but now it doesn't rain for 6 months in a row and then suddenly it rains for 1 whole week." They talk about climate change issues in their organization, to raise awareness on important topics related to health, food security and carbon footprint. They promote to use alternatives for single use plastics, bio fertilizers instead of chemicals for farming in rural areas. They talk about fast fashion, microplastics and the water pollution due to waste and laundry in the river. It is all about saving resources.

- James is a permaculture consultant in Naivasha's countryside. His organization promotes upcycling of any dumped product, the values of organic fertilizer production and rainwater collection: they harvest every single drop of water from the roofs and road. With climate change adaptations – mainly tree planting – it is possible to create a life friendly environment: 600 different plant species and dozens of bird species live in the area. Circular economy and appreciation of all creatures in the circle of life is key, Laudato si'!

- Samuel, guide at the Hell's Gate national park, explained that parts of the valley aren't allowed to be entered because it is too dangerous at the moment. There where climate change related floodings which harmed the emergency exits in the canyon, which need to be restored.

Socio-economic Factors and Perception

A large portion of Nairobi's population lives in informal settlements, where residents are especially vulnerable to climate-related events like floods and droughts. These communities experience climate change through the lens of immediate threats that disrupt daily life and livelihoods (Moser et al., 2010). In contrast, wealthier residents, though more informed through media and scientific channels, are less directly impacted.

Education and Awareness

Higher education levels are associated with a better understanding of climate change as a global phenomenon caused by human activities, such as deforestation and emissions. The IPCC (2021) emphasizes that climate change is driven by anthropogenic activities, and this understanding is more common in urban populations with higher education. However, lower-income groups, especially in informal settlements, often view climate change as random weather events, rather than a predictable consequence of human action (Ngugi et al., 2020).



Impact on Livelihoods

Nairobians also perceive climate change through its effects on food security, water access, and energy availability. Droughts and erratic rainfall have led to water shortages and rising food prices, which are major concerns for urban residents. Informal settlements are especially affected, with inconsistent access to clean water exacerbated by changing weather patterns (Kairo et al., 2012).

Public Engagement and Government Efforts

Local government and grassroots organizations have been active in raising awareness. Youth-led movements in Nairobi are increasingly focusing on climate adaptation strategies, such as tree planting and waste management (Mogaka et al., 2015). Despite this growing awareness, a significant gap remains between knowledge and action, as many people face barriers such as lack of resources and infrastructure.

Conclusion

The perception of climate change in Nairobi is shaped by socio-economic factors, with more vulnerable populations directly affected by climate events. To address these challenges, there is a need for greater education and empowerment, particularly in informal settlements, alongside policies that promote both adaptation and long-term sustainability.

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Inequalities in Kenya - How do social and economic inequalities manifest in Nairobi?

Examples from the DKA learning journey 2025

A family of seven pays 2.000 KES (Kenyan shillings) in monthly rent for their tin shack in the informal settlement Mukuru in Nairobi, which we visit as part of the MPC (Mukuru Promotion Centre) home visits.

It costs 1.500 KES to get into the Alchemist, a highly recommended and trendy club in Nairobi, on a Saturday night.

A social worker tells us about children from wealthier classes in Nairobi who know nothing about the existence of informal settlements.

An employee of the MPC Clinic reports that in Kenya, hospital births are no longer free, nor is medical treatment for children between the ages of 0 and 5.

Norbert Hahn, former correspondent and head of the ARD studio in Nairobi, explains to us that the tax on real estate in Kenya was recently reduced from 14% to 7%.

According to a nurse working on the Slums Going Green & Clean project in the informal settlement Kibera in Nairobi, there are more private hospitals than public ones in Kenya.

All these stories were told to me during our learning journey. And all these examples show that there is a very unequal distribution of material, economic, social and cultural resources and opportunities in Nairobi and Kenya. This impression is also confirmed by German university lecturer Ingrid Laurien, who writes in her book *Kenia – Ein Länderporträt* that 'the unfair distribution of resources [...] leads to the extreme poverty in which more than half of Kenyans have to live'¹. According to Laurien, resources have been 'extremely unfairly distributed'² since the country was founded in December 1963.

However, Kenya is by no means alone in experiencing these social inequalities. They exist not only in Kenya, but worldwide. The 'unequal distribution of desirable goods'³ affects wealth and income, but also education, housing and healthcare. Specifically, the poorer half of the world's population has only 7% of global income.⁴



And even though Europe is one of the regions with the least inequality in the world, the gap is also widening in Austria: According to a 2013 study by the Chamber of Labour, 50% of private households own less than 5% of private wealth. 5% of households together own almost half of all private wealth.⁵

And in Kenya? After weeks of protests that left more than 30 people dead, President William Ruto withdrew the planned tax reform, which would have included higher taxes on foodstuffs such as bread, in June 2024.

¹ Im deutschen Original: „die ungerechte Verteilung der Ressourcen, [...] zu der extremen Armut führt, in der mehr als die Hälfte der Kenianer leben müssen“ Laurien, Kenia, S. 25.

² Im deutschen Original: „extrem ungerecht verteilt.“ Laurien, Kenia, S. 22.

³ Gemäß dem Artikel Was ist soziale Ungleichheit? Konzeptionelle Perspektiven soziale Ungleichheit wird von sozialen Ungleichheiten nach Reinhard Kreckel dann gesprochen, wenn: „die Möglichkeit des Zugangs zu allgemein verfügbaren und erstrebenswerten Positionen, die mit ungleichen Macht- und/oder Interaktionsmöglichkeiten ausgestattet sind, dauerhafte Einschränkung erfahren und dadurch die Lebenschancen der betroffenen Individuen, Gruppen oder Gesellschaften beeinträchtigt bzw. begünstigt werden. Als allgemein erstrebenswerte Güter gelten dabei Einkommen und Vermögen, aber auch Bildung und Status, Wissen oder Ansehen.“ Groh-Samberg/Kleinert/Konietzka, Was ist soziale Ungleichheit?

⁴ Vgl. Groh-Samberg/Kleinert, Internationale Trends der sozialen Ungleichheit, S. 69.

⁵ Vgl. Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte für Wien, Verteilung von Vermögen in Österreich. S. 4.

Gerlinde

The importance of school gardens for children (in informal settlements) in Nairobi?

Background – why I chose this research question

In Austria and Upper Austria, school gardens are becoming increasingly important as places of learning and as a building block of education for sustainable development (ESD). In my office, we now support around 50 schools in Upper Austria in creating herb gardens, planting hedges, and teaching children about soil, biodiversity, vegetable growing, and nutrition. This is why I was interested in the question of whether schools in Nairobi have gardens, how they are used, and what significance they have.

School gardens in Kenya

Many schools in Nairobi and Kenya also seem to have gardens, as all the schools we visited had one. Most of them not only had a sports field, but also a vegetable and kitchen garden with fruit trees, vegetable cultivation, and in some cases animals such as chickens and rabbits.

My online research revealed that there are also several projects and programs that support school gardens in Kenya, such as Johanniter and Plan International.

(<https://www.johanniter.de/johanniter-unfall-hilfe/auslandshilfe/laender/kenia/ernte-trotz-trockenheit-schulgaerten-in-kenia/> oder <https://plan-international.org/kenya/case-studies/students-turn-school-gardens-into-climate-solutions/>)

The importance of school gardens

It was very moving for me to learn and experience how important schools and school gardens are as places of learning for children, especially in the informal settlements in Nairobi. Schools are not only places of learning, they also offer a safe place to play and run around, and provide sanitary facilities and meals. That's why many students at the schools we visited arrive early in the morning and voluntarily stay on the school grounds after school ends.

Nutrition & Health



The schools we visited grow vegetables and fruit that are used in school meals, enriching the menu. We saw some very large vegetable gardens planted mainly with cabbage, beans, bananas, and much more. Two institutions also had chickens and rabbits.

For many children, school meals are extremely important for their nutrition and healthy development.

Education & Life Skills



The school garden at the Mukuru Promotion Center (MPC) has been expanded in recent years. Unused areas, including a garbage dump, were cleaned up and redesigned and planted with the help of the students. Chicken coops and rabbit hutches were also built together. Wastewater from washing the children's dishes is used to irrigate the garden. In this way, the students not only learn about plants and animals, but also about sustainable farming methods and resource use—important life skills.

Creativity & personal responsibility



Since the school classes are very large (up to 70/80 children), it is not possible to work in the garden with an entire class, we were told. Therefore, a small group of students who have volunteered usually take care of the beds and animals before and after class with the support of a teacher.

In my opinion, they are given a lot of freedom to design and maintain their garden independently and creatively.

Climate & Environment



The school gardens are green oases for the children, and they were for us too. Green spaces improve the air, making it cleaner, fresher, and cooler. In general, gardens cool the environment and retain water, thus contributing to climate change adaptation. This improves the learning environment for children and has a positive impact on the entire neighborhood.

Social impact



The children are encouraged to share their knowledge about growing and harvesting vegetables or keeping farm animals with their families. For this reason, some schools also plant in pots, bags, etc. – options that are possible even without a garden.

This also teaches the students self-efficacy, showing them that they can positively shape their own environment. This is a very important learning experience for the students.

The principal of the secondary school at MPC emphasized the importance of introducing students to agriculture as a career field and a way to earn an income, which may even make rural life more attractive to them again.

Challenges

- Due to inadequate municipal waste disposal, most of the schools we visited also used a corner of the school garden to burn waste.
- Unfortunately, I suspect that the large number of children in the schools means that only a small proportion of them are able to be active in the garden.

Summary

School gardens in Nairobi are more than just green spaces; they are living educational spaces, protected spaces for children to be children, sustainable food sources, and spaces of hope for the students. They strengthen education, nutrition, environmental protection, and community.

That's why the school gardens were a personal highlight of my educational trip for me. It was touching to see the children so happy working together and designing their garden. I was also impressed by the fact that the teachers – despite the enormous challenges – put so much heart and soul into such projects.





Quotes from the Trip

Funny moments ...

- Zoll bescherte uns einen längeren Aufenthalt in der Ankunftshalle (um die Zeit zu vertreiben Watermelonparty und Gymnastikeinheit)
- „Kennt ihr das voll gute Buch – die Gürtelrose“ (statt Wüstenblume)
- „Da sieht man ja im Zoo Schmiding mehr Giraffen als hier“ (im Nationalpark Nairobi)
- “2 minutes” (Durchgetacktes Programm – Leitung erinnert uns viele Male, dass wir noch 2min Zeit haben)
- “This is the last tough part” (Hellsgate Nationalpark – Walk war anspruchsvoller als gedacht, der Guide wies immer wieder darauf hin, dass es sich um die letzte schwierige Stelle handelt.)
- „Ohne Snacks geht nichts“ (Mittagessen ab und zu später als geplant – hungry stimmung)
- Chapatiiiii, Ugaliiii – beim Schießen von Gruppenfoto
- George is everywhere (wir trafen ihn 2 x mitten in der informellen Siedlung)
- Wir haben gelernt, wie laut Katzen schreien können. – Hauskatze Lilly und ihre Freunde waren sehr nachtaktiv...
- Text von (Ohrwurm garantiert): Baba asante sina cha kulipa wewe, Baba kwa wema wako ulio nijaliya



Makes you think...

- „You can kill a body, you can't kill the idea“
- „Land grabbing is a big problem we are dealing with“
- “70 children to 1 teacher”
- „Play is not just for fun, it's a right“
- “We are citizens of 1 world.”, “Talents are universal, opportunities are not.” & “There is some for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed.” (Ben from Slums going green and clean, Kibera)
- “I'm on Earth to make an impact, not an income”, “Do 1 good thing for the environment and the environment does 9 good things for you.” & “You can turn a desert into a forest.” (James, in the countryside of Naivahsa Town)
- Ein Spruch/Text den wir oft gehört, aber lange nicht verstanden hatten:
God is good - all the time. And all the time? God is good and that is his nature ... wow

What surprised me? What was new to me...

The large number of tribes, the large number of introductory rounds and interreligious coexistence

A lot! The country, the people, nature, traffic, animals, the way they celebrate church services; the city of Nairobi in all its diversity.

How visible economic interests and the influence of other countries are in Kenya.

That in a country with so many coffee plantations, people mostly drink instant coffee.

How central faith is for many people – it often seemed like their most important source of strength.

How small the living spaces are for some families.

How important school is for children – not just for learning, but also as a safe place.

Walking over a mountain of trash and inhaling the smell of burning waste – this was a powerful experience of the consequences of lacking waste management.

How naturally and warmly guests are received and welcomed.

How open and cheerful people were despite their circumstances.

I especially enjoyed the opportunity to engage in conversations with so many different people and exchange perspectives.

The variety of dangers that children are exposed to in informal settlements.

That there are projects that are largely funded by the DKA (please never stop! 😊)

The fact that even the small tin huts in the informal settlements are not the property of the residents, but only rented...

That hippos are the most dangerous animals in Kenya for humans.

How exceptionally friendly, warm, and welcoming we were received everywhere — whether during the learning journey itself or on excursions in our free time.

The direct insight into life in an informal settlement. Seeing the living conditions and circumstances there with my own eyes was a deeply impactful experience that no description or photo could truly convey.



What will I take away from my learning experience? What will I remember for a long time?...

Gratitude, a waterfall of memories, and wonderful friendships.

A home visit in the slum and the desperation in a parent's eyes when we asked what gives them hope.

A wonderfully tailor-made piece of clothing.

Mandazi = yummy, Ugali = not so yummy

That "lala salama" means "sleep well." 😊

A renewed appreciation for living in a social welfare state with democracy and a functioning healthcare system. This journey made me even more aware of the many privileges I have.

The many wonderful and inspiring people we had the chance to meet. The shared moments and encounters with them were the most beautiful part of the trip.

I'll remember for a long time the impressive hours and home visits in the informal settlements - pictures which will stay in my mind forever.

a.o. i will remember the home visits, the hard work of making soap, the visit to the Mukuru slum and the openness and warmth of the people

How grateful we can be for our life in Austria.

Impressions in all colours of life: beautiful and difficult; but much of it was totally impressive!

To the culture of welcome: Karibuni everywhere

A new sense of gratitude for many things that are often taken for granted in Austria.

Many beautiful memories and encounters with people.

A new perspective on life – and what truly matters.

That some "problems" in everyday life suddenly seem small and unimportant.



The friendships that formed within our travel group.

The special atmosphere in the group – how quickly trust can grow when you experience so much together.

During a home visit in a slum area, someone from our group asked what time of year was the most beautiful for them. Their answer: “Every day is the most beautiful.” – that deeply moved me, especially in light of their difficult living conditions.

The joy of the girls at the Rescue Dada Center when we visited them on the second day.

The powerful, infectious energy in the church services.

What I’m taking with me from the study tour is the incredible energy of those who dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to what they believe in.

I’ll fondly remember the great group spirit and the many joyful, funny moments we shared.

Closing Words

This journey was more than just a change of location – it was an experience full of impressions, new perspectives, and valuable learning moments. These were days filled with exciting encounters, inspiring conversations, and powerful insights that will stay with us for a long time.

We look back with gratitude on this unforgettable time and say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who accompanied, supported, and inspired us along the way.





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