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My involvement in FUTURE IN OUR HANDS KENYA (FIOHK) has been a life-changing event. I first volunteered with FIOHK for about a month in the summer of 2003 with my niece Michele Sprada. I had seen pictures, videos and heard many personal stories of the conditions in Kenya from my niece who first volunteered there in the summer of 2000.

Nothing had prepared me for the eye opening experience of seeing destitute poverty combined with the inner strength of spirit in the people I had the privilege to meet.

I have lived in or around Buffalo, NY USA all of my life. I am a member of a religious order, the Sisters of St. Joseph, founded in France about 1650. My professional training and work is as a physical therapist. I work for a local hospital home care program. I treat people who are very poor by the standards in New York State. However all of my patients have clean water to drink, food to eat, electricity, heat in the cold winter months, and a home or apartment to live in.

This is a sharp contrast to the many families and/or individuals I met in Kenya who have little or no means of income, no clean water, no home or a mud based tin or thatched roof hut without electricity. I saw young and old dying of malaria, cholera and the epidemic of HIV/AIDS.

Part of my first summer I volunteered in the physical therapy department of Kisumu Local District Hospital as arranged by Rom Wandera the coordinator of FIOHK. The doctors and professionals are well-trained and caring individuals. The hospital is severely overcrowded often with two adults in one bed.

There is great cooperation among the families of the patients. The families take care of the basic needs of the patients including bathing, changing sheets, supplying clean linens, and bringing food. There is very little privacy in the wards and infections spread easily. Few individuals have any health insurance and all services and medications must be paid for prior to treatment. One four-year-old girl I treated, Seraphine, had severe burns over her right arm chest and stomach that had become infected. Her family could not afford the antibiotics or skin grafting necessary to treat her and it was likely she would die. It only cost me ten dollars to supply the treatments needed. I have met with her since then and she is doing well.

We visited the village of Ober where Nelson Kabaka Oloo has established an orphanage for children whose parents have died mainly of HIV/AIDS. Sister's Hospital Long Term Home Health Care Program where I work was sponsoring a young boy, Nevil, who resided in that orphanage. When I arrived in Kisumu I met Nelson and was excited about the prospect of meeting Nevil face to face. I was sadly informed that Nevil had died in May 2003 of cholera along with other children of the orphanage due to lack of clean water. He was thirteen years old.

I felt called to respond to the injustices I witnessed. After trial and error, prayer and a lot of hard work, Michele and I founded FIOH-USA. We are a tax-exempt non-profit, 501c3 organization. Our date of incorporation is December 5, 2005. I have travelled to Kenya four times and also visited with FIOH-Tanzania in Bunda Tanzania.

The mission of FIOH-USA as stated in our bylaws:

Future in Our Hands - USA, is dedicated to more equitable use of world resources. FIOH-USA raises funds to support education, economic development, health care, sanitation and obtaining safe water for impoverished people throughout the world. FIOH-USA stands for a commitment to co-operation and active consideration (rather than competition) for our fellow human beings; equal rights for everyone; and co-responsibility to safeguard the environment for current and future generations. FIOH-USA hopes to promote social and economic justice in impoverished countries around the world.

We are a small organization with a Board of 8-12 members. Our main efforts have been raising funds and giving educational presentations about the needs in East Africa with our main focus in and around Kisumu Kenya. We work in close collaboration with FIOH-Kenya and communicate frequently/email and phone. We have raised over 150,000 dollars since beginning our work. As of January 2012 FIOH-USA had funded 18 borehole wells providing a safe water supply for thousands of people in the Kisumu area. At least 75 students have been sponsored for primary, high school, college or vocational training. Twenty-five individuals living in remote villages receive \$8.00/month to cover transportation to hospitals or clinics to receive the free anti-retro viral medications. Women groups have been provided with start-up funds to create a program of micro lending. Two of the groups have joined together and now run a sewing school for disadvantaged women that was started with seed money from FIOH-USA. Two posho Mills, to grind grain, have been funded making it easier on the villagers and providing an income for those who run the mill. A youth group has started a poultry project and a group of 5 widows have joined together in the village of Usoma to raise a dairy cow that was funded through FIOH-USA. The cow calved in December 2011 with a healthy male offspring.

FIOH-USA has expanded its outreach to include a FIOH group in Tanzania, FIOH-Zinduka. With our funding they have built an agricultural store and expanded their micro-lending project.

Our newest outreach is with FIOH-Zambia, a newly formed FIOH community. We look forward to a rich relationship with them.

It is inspiring for me to work toward justice with wonderful groups of people around the world in conjunction with our FIOH-USA Board that is extremely dedicated and hard working.