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THE CHANGING PEASANT: Part VIII: The Hunter-Warrior's Heirs

by Richard Critchfield

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Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, is at once a gleaming center for the exchange of capital and consumer goods and a chaos of grinding poverty that jeopardizes progress being made in villages. The need for positive attitudes toward farming is central to healthy social as well as economic and political development.

A traveler in Kenya a half century ago was asked by Kamba tribesmen, "You Europeans know so much more than we, have you found the edge of the sky?" He told them the sky has no edge and that it nowhere touches the earth. They didn't believe him.

Some of this stubborn faith persists. Nairobi, with just under a million people, has become black Africa's prime showplace of what the West can do. It is the center for its banking, multinational corporations, United Nations organizations, jet travel, and tourist industry (400,000 a year). Skyscrapers, many built just since the 1977-78 coffee boom, rise to 28 stories. Herds of Mercedes and Peugeot sedans roam the streets. Color television sets and the many newsstands offering the Paris *Herald-Tribune, Paris-Match*, or the *Daily Telegraph* add to the cosmopolitan ambience. Among at least 120,000 Europeans in Kenya on any given day, there is an enormous number of Western experts on everything from man's origins to recombinant DNA.

New glass-and-concrete towers, gracious colonial architecture, and parks ablaze with red and purple bougainvillea, lilac jacaranda, and orange flame trees obscure squatters' camps and shantytowns that spread like fungus in the outskirts. Except for the occasional Maasai, naked under his blanket, even the poorest Africans look well-dressed in suits, tweed jackets, and sweaters, or high-heels and cotton frocks; much of this clothing comes, secondhand, from markets supplied by the Salvation Army.

Nairobi is Africa's archetype of what anthropologists call a *heterogenetic* city, an urban center that came into being only in the twentieth century as a colonial market for exchange of coffee, tea, and other local produce for Western capital and consumer goods. Its people are concerned with the market, producing goods, expedient relations between buyer and seller, ruler and ruled, native and foreigner. Priority is given to making money.

At the open-air Thorn Tree restaurant of the New Stanley Hotel, swarming with bush shirts and the leopard-skin-banded sun hats of safari-bound tourists, everything imaginable—currency, narcotics, women—can be bought and sold. As the young American drifter, hair lank and shoulder-length, skin leathery from the sun, in shorts and sandals, can tell you, "Money *talks* in this town." Or as the Reagan-appointed American Ambassador told the group of chuckling businessmen at a recent lunch, "Gentlemen, there's money to be made."

Kenya has an essentially free market economy, which makes it the main African testing ground for President Reagan's development philosophy, expressed in his famous remark: "No American contribution can do

more for development than a growing, prosperous U.S. economy." Western capital, which flooded in after independence in 1963, has dropped from a share of 59 to 42 percent of ownership in manufacturing and tourism, yet three-fourths of both sectors are still managed by foreigners. The Kenyans want modern aids to living as much as anyone—telephones, electric lights, cars, jets, fridges, and computers. This means large numbers of whites and Asians will be required, if grudgingly, for quite some time. The Europeans will stay on for money, or, like so many from David Livingstone to the Leakeys, because they have Africa in their bones.

Nairobi sits a mile high. The Equator is just 100 miles to the north yet it's often cold at night. "Looking back on a sojourn in the African highlands," recalled Danish Baroness Karen Blixen in 1937, "you are struck by your feeling of having lived for a time in the sky." She described wild buffalo, eland, rhino, and lions roaming the Ngong Hills near her coffee farm where there is now a fashionable Nairobi suburb—called Karen; the game is still there, protected in a government park. It is all astonishingly recent: Blixen in her 70s was a world renowned literary figure writing as Isak Dinesen. Her faithful Kikiyu servant, Kamante, romantically portrayed in *Out of Africa*, at age 77 lives in poverty on land owned by Peter Beard, an American photographer married to model Cheryl Tiegs.

No other part of Africa has so captured the Western imagination—Ernest Hemingway, Robert Ruark, Alan Moorehead, Martha Gellhorn, Elspeth Huxley, Joy Adamson, from the White Hunter to the Mau Mau, from *Born Free* to "she did not hear him for the beating of her heart." Without Louis, Mary, and Richard Leakey, and the Kenyan family's discoveries in Olduvai Gorge and Lake Turkana, we wouldn't know that it was in Africa that man first diverged from the apes between four and eight million years ago and emerged as a recognizable human being two million years ago.

When you approach Nairobi from the southeast, across the Kapiti Plains grasslands and scattered with thorn-trees and thatched huts, you are in an enduring, natural Kenya where, on a lucky day, you can see herds of giraffe, zebra, eland, impala, wildebeest, buffalo, and the occasional ostrich. Then, about 20 miles out, the city's shimmering towers rise from a haze of factory smoke and traffic fumes, a faint silver mirage.

The city, erected on a highland swamp, came into being when the British built the Uganda Railroad to Kampala. This led to English coffee and tea farms in the highlands and the very sudden introduction of modern agriculture, which helps explain Nairobi's curious air of recency and impermanence. (Except for old Arab trading centers along the coasts, there are very few ruins of ancient cities in sub-Saharan Africa.) For in Africa settled farming, and the food surplus that accompanies it, is, in the main, a twentieth-century development.

In the span of a single lifetime, Africans now in their 70s have gone from hunting, herding, tribal warfare, and a primitive slash-and-burn cultivation of sorghum and millet to settled agriculture, the plow, and the production of maize as the new staple food. It is the speed with which this has happened that perhaps most ails black Africa today.

In Kenya, change has come quickly—in barely two generations. The old tribal values have not yet had time to catch up with a totally different economic basis, especially among African men. The hunter-warrior is no more. The settled farmer has yet to fully take his place.

Women still produce 80 to 90 percent of Kenya's food and do all its marketing. East Africa remains one of the world's most rural regions; 86 percent of the 17 million Kenyans live in villages, most crowded onto the 17.4 percent of the country's land that is cool or rainy enough to grow sufficient maize to feed a family on a two- or three-acre *shamba*, or plot of ground. Kenyan farm women have become the prime agents of necessary change. They have been far readier to accept contraception, universal primary education, and modern farming techniques than have the village men.

Agricultural extension agents find that if they offer crop and fertilizer loans or training courses in farming techniques, at least 70 percent of the participants are women. In parts of the country where draft animals were introduced into the fields within the past 15 years, women even plow with teams of oxen. There is nothing quite like this anywhere else in the world.

There are plenty of danger signals in Kenya. Long touted as a model of successful development in Africa, it is now caught in the Third World

OUT OF AFRICA

In *Music for Chameleons* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), Truman Capote wrote:

The late Danish genius, the Baroness Blixen, who wrote under the pseudonym Isak Dinesen, was, despite her withered though distinguished appearance, a true seductress, a conversational *seductress. Ah, how fascinating she was, sitting by the fire in her beautiful house in a Danish seaside village, chain-smoking black cigarettes with silver tips, cooling her lively tongue with draughts of champagne, and luring one from this topic to that—her years as a farmer in Africa (be certain to read, if you haven't already, her autobiographical* Out of Africa, *one of this century's finest books).*

Karen Blixen's story is one of the real sagas of Kenya. After marrying her cousin, Baron Bror Blixen-Finecke, they went to Kenya in 1913 to run a coffee farm, which, after their divorce in 1921, she ran alone until a collapse in the coffee market forced her back to Denmark in 1931. She never returned to Africa. She wrote *Out of Africa*, widely considered a literary classic, upon her return home; later, writing in English as Isak Dinesen, she won world fame for her *Seven Gothic Tales* in 1934. (Not everyone shares Capote's unqualified adoration. Martha Gellhorn wrote in *Travels With Myself and Another* [London: Allen Lane,

(*cont'd.*)

1978]: "The power of *Out of Africa* is her self-possession. The charm of the writing is an archaic and quaint elegance—the idiom not quite right. But she worries me on God; as if she knew that He and she were well born.")

Out of Africa, when published in 1937, was widely praised and nearly won its author a Nobel Prize. *The Guardian* called it "a brilliant study of Negro life and thought." It said:

Through the medium of real affection for them, Baroness Blixen was enabled to understand the African natives to an extent rarely achieved by a White person. But while her affection for them was sincere, she had no illusion about them, just as her understanding of them was deep without being able to cope with their true inwardness.

In her book she translates the Negroes' ways of thought and action, and again and again shows how inexplicable are their emotional responses. This she does by describing the everyday life on her farm in Kenya, and so vividly does she conjure up scenes, incidents and personalities, that the reader gets to know the place and its people very well indeed, and, what is more, is able to like and, to some extent, understand the natives.

It is a powerful book. There is her romance with Denys Finch-Hatton, a white hunter and pilot who dies in a plane crash and is buried by Karen Blixen in the Game Reserve of the Ngong Hills. The author's portrayal of her Kikuyu servant, Kamante, whom she nursed back to health as a small boy, is deeply moving: "Rarely, rarely, have I met such a wild creature, a human being who was so utterly isolated from the world, and, by a sort of firm, deadly resignation, completely closed to all surrounding life.... His fortitude of soul in the face of pain was the fortitude of an old warrior."

Kamante is still alive. His real name is Kamande Gatura; he is 77 and lives with his wife and a blind, 30-year-old son in a thatched mud hut at Langata, a village just outside Nairobi overlooking the Ngong Hills. As a boy, Kamande's duty was to care for Karen Blixen's two dogs; later he became her cook.

Blixen wrote: "Kamante could have no idea as to how a dish of ours ought to taste and he was in spite of his conversation and his connection with civilisation, at heart an errant Kikuyu rooted in the traditions of his tribe and in his faith in them as the only way of living, worthy of a human being. He did at times taste the food he cooked, but with a distrustful face like a witch who takes a sip out of her cauldron. He stuck to the maize-cob of his fathers."

After Karen Blixen left Kenya in 1931, Kamande and the other Kikuyu squatters who had served her, were chased off the farm. She had made no provision for their future welfare. Kamande worked on and off as a cook for different white settlers and finally ended up in Karai village in Kiambu. About 20 years ago photographer Peter Beard, an ardent Blixen admirer, came to Kamande.

Kamande says, "He suggested that I should write a book about my life with Njeri wa Kahuga (the Kikuyu name given Karen Blixen) since I had lived on the farm and in her house a long, long time. I therefore moved from Karai to Eastleigh in Nairobi and for the next 12 years, I told my story to the taping machine which was then translated into English and written by my three sons, Gatura, Mburu, and Kiaboothi. I also drew many pictures of our life in farm to put in my book." 1975 saw the publication of *Longing for Darkness: Kamante's Tales From Out of Africa.*

Was he pleased by the book? "Talking about that book brings such pain in my heart that it eats me up like a disease," he says. "I have never seen a fifty cent piece from that book." A Danish organization recently bought Kamande a one-acre plot at Ongata Rongai near Nairobi, where it is building him a one bedroom mud and cement home. "You have seen that piece of dry rock they're building me a shack on," he said. "It's not that I'm ungrateful but if I don't accept their land, where will I be buried? This land—it belongs to an American company which is about to chase out me and the other three families who live here." He was not allowed to cultivate Beard's land, since the American wants to preserve it for wild game.

Kamande does not understand the title of his book, *Longing for Darkness.* "What does it mean," he asked. He didn't know Beard took it from Karen Blixen's 1960 book, *Shadows on the Grass*. She wrote:

We nations of Europe, I thought, who do not fear to floodlight our own inmost mechanism, are turning the lazing lights of our civilization into dark eyes, fitly set like the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, essentially different from ours. If for a long enough time we continue in this way to dazzle and blind the Africans, we may in the end bring upon them a longing for darkness, which will drive them into the gorges of their own unknown mountains and their own unknown minds.... The dark nations of Africa, strikingly precocious as young children, seemed to come to a standstill in their mental growth at different ages. The Kikuyu, Kavirondo and Wakamba, the people who worked for me on the farm, in early childhood were far ahead of White children of the same age, but they stopped quite suddenly at a stage corresponding to that of a European child of nine.

Kamande's main concerns are his wife, Wambui, now also in her 70s, and his blind son, Mburu. "What will happen to them if I should die?" he asked. "They are both disabled. Who can look after the other? If I was young, I could make a fresh start, but now it's too late." He also was worried about an unmarried daughter with six children. "These are some of the things that cause the bitterness in me," he said.

Karen Blixen died a few years ago, one of the most respected literary figures of this century. Kamande Gatura, bent, white-haired, living out his days in utter poverty, has only a few years to go. One wonders, in that beautiful house by the sea, amid the silver-tipped black cigarettes and champagne, did she ever think of him at all, a real person having to live a real life? You can throw away people.

poverty trap of soaring oil costs and stagnant earnings (in Kenya, from coffee and tea exports and tourism). Its 3.9 percent annual population growth rate is far and away the world's highest (runner-up Honduras has 3.5%). After more than 20 years of feeding itself, sheer numbers—and devastating, cyclical drought—began to catch up with Kenya in the mid-1970s with shortages of maize, wheat, rice, and milk. While world food output continued to grow slightly faster than population in 1970-1978, about 20 percent gross, 4.5 percent per head, in Africa it fell (7%).

Kenya has few industrial resources but considerable agricultural potential. Hope lies in applying science to farming: things like the spread of hybrid maize (about 50% of Kenyans still plant old, low-yielding varieties) and Nairobi's molecular biologists producing new nitrogen-fixing, drought-resistant crops or finding vaccines to control East Coast fever or the tsetse fly-spread trypanosomiasis, which severely restricts cattle raising. President Daniel arap Moi's government badly needs to increase farm prices, now held down in fear of unleashing politically destabilizing violence from the shantytowns on Nairobi's doorstep.

Much depends on Kenya's village men evolving a role for themselves that fits the late twentieth century.

This will take time. Talks with old people out in Machakos, a semiarid hilly region south of Mount Kenya, suggest why. Such aging Kamba tribesmen, those born from about 1900 to 1920, easily recall the hunting-herding days when a single family might possess a thousand head of cattle. When young they raided Kikuyu cattle kraals.

Any visitor to a Kenyan game park who has been awed by the spectacle of migrating herds of zebra, eland, or buffalo, or come upon, in a primal green landscape, a pride of lions, a lone rhino, or a family of giraffes, tall as dinosaurs, nibbling the treetops, gets a stabbing sense of what these men have lost.

Growing food was always the woman's lot. The world over, Neolithic woman, the collector, quite naturally invented agriculture. Outside black Africa, men took over farming only when draft animals were harnessed to plows, in most places between 6,000 and 7,000 years ago. In Machakos, it happened in 1966.

Until the 1920s and 1930s, agriculture in Machakos, as in much of Africa, meant men cut trees and burned them to clear a patch of ground for sorghum or millet. After about two months, when the soil had no weeds, ash supplied phosphate and nitrifying bacteria were coming back, it took no further muscle than for women to plant with a digging stick and children to scare birds away.*

Such slash-and-burn cultivation, like the big cattle herds (to provide milk and blood but seldom slaughtered), rarely supports more than 150-250 persons per square mile. Once the English settler *memsaabs* and doctors arrived to heal the natives with hygiene and Epsom salts, it was doomed.

What has happened across Africa has been a steady abandonment of this way of life in favor of permanent settlements of small farms at higher altitudes. There has also been a shift from cattle to goats and sheep. Maize, introduced by sixteenth-century Portuguese, has in the twentieth become the staple diet of 90 percent of Africans. (Just as, in the past 10 years, many city people have turned to wheat.) Precipitation increases at higher altitudes; the colder it is, the less water you need to grow maize. Much of Africa today is a big sea of flat, dry, fairly empty plains scattered with densely populated, intensively cultivated upland islands. Hope lies in growing hybrid maize and other new crops across middle Africa and harnessing such big rivers as the Zambesi, Congo, Senegal, Niger, and Volta, as well as other sources of water.

The enormous cultural repercussions of such rapid change largely affect women. A good many Kenyan men will tell you it is the woman's task to feed the family—farm—while the men brings in cash income. Most men will farm if cash crops are involved, or if machinery like tractors is used, or--probably because they did it in the old system—in helping to clear and prepare ground for planting. (Most plowing is done by women, sometimes with a husband walking alongside and shouting commands to a team of oxen.) Only a small minority of men have yet taken up full-time farming.

As a result, all over Kenya there are large and growing numbers of idle, jobless, culturally alienated men. Some do find jobs in the towns and cities, as waiters, household servants, construction laborers and perhaps the biggest numbers as *askaris*, or night watchmen.

Some take to crime; Nairobi buzzes with horror stories of gangs, armed with *pangas* (machete-like blades), invading dinner parties, waylaying tourists after dark, or stealing cars (often, in a bizarre twist, locking the terrified occupants in the trunk). In the shantytowns, where at least an absolute majority of Nairobi's people now live, alcoholism, drugs, family desertion, and wife beating are common symptoms of male social failure. Most tragic are the corpses of unwanted babies thrown into public toilets.

Family planners find men the main obstacle to acceptance of contraception. Psychiatrists report that male Kenyans suffer much more mental illness than women. Schoolteachers say youngsters feel farming is something for women or boys who fail at school.

Kenya has other related problems. Its free market economics make for dangerous extremes of wealth and poverty in any developing country; in Nairobi President Moi's government badly needs to intervene more on behalf of the poor.

In the villages, the failure of so many men to adjust to settled farming seems fundamental. This will change. Already the schoolteachers and more progressive men are starting to favor fewer children and more modern farming methods. In the meantime, Kenya's village women keep it all going—producing much of the food, marketing, fetching water and firewood—and having an average 8.3 children each (which

*See my "The Magician" [RC-3-'79], *AUFS Reports*, No. 28, 1979, for a description of this herding-slash-and-burn way of life as it continues among the Nuba tribe of southwestern Sudan. This is how the Kenyans lived about two generations ago.

could double Kenya's population in just 18 years).

Do they accept their lot? Well, no. As one of them in Machakos put it, "This is the problem we face here in Africa. You see these women working hard in the fields. They suffer. Their husbands may be working in town, drinking beer, spending their wages, enjoying."

Such cultural disequilibrium, even when it leads to political instability, is not something governments can do much about. Kenya's villagers will probably have to work it out for themselves. As a Westerner, one can only wish these women a lot of small and persuasive feminist victories.

* * * * *

The two old Kamba tribesmen, both in their 70s, chatted about long ago in their good-natured African way, disagreeing in an amiable fashion about when life was better, then or now.

"When we were young," argued Mzee Kibiti,* "there were no poor people like now. We had plenty of milk, meat, and sweet potatoes, maize, millet, and sorghum. Some had up to a thousand cattle and a small shamba. A poor man in those days was a man with only 60 cattle." Kibiti's spectacles and threadbare black suit gave him the look of the village schoolteacher he had once been.

His white-bearded companion, Mzee Sila, had an old lion's look of great physical strength. "Nowadays is better," he said. "We suffered so much sickness and so many cattle were dying. Now there is somebody to cure you."

The old men told tales of the epidemics of rinderpest, the plagues of smallpox, and the great droughts and famines, as if the Kamba tribe's history held little else. At least half of all the Kamba people died in 1899-1900 when the rains failed five successive times, followed by smallpox and cholera outbreaks. Sila recalled his father telling him how many men chose starvation rather than slaughter and eat their beloved cattle.

The two sipped their sweet milky tea, laughed easily about almost anything, and sometimes paused to greet fellow villagers. *Jambo, habari.* The walls of the mud-brick *duka* were gaudily painted with Biblical scenes; on them a cartoon Moses received the Ten Commandments.

Through the open teashop door, the sun sent blinding afterbursts of light as it sank across the mountains. Clouds slid across the enormous African sky. Mud huts and thatched roofs, picturesque but very poor. Burnt corn fields edged with cactus and eucalyptus. The hills, range after range, sloped to far off plains, unlived in and unused, miles and miles of emptiness. There, faint enough to be part of the sky, rose the square, unbelievably snowy, phantom-like top of Mount Kilimanjaro.

The talk grew lively with yarns of raids, long ago, to pillage of the cattle of the Kikuyu and Maasai.

"How we would listen with longing to our fathers' tales of cattle wars," Kibiti sighed. "I used to despise myself that I was almost 30 and had not yet killed a Maasai."

Sila had been a warrior and a hunter of zebra, elephants, antelope, and giraffes. "We used traps and spears and bows and poison arrows," he said. "After 1936 it was forbidden to kill animals, but many secretly continued. There are still antelope, baboons, and hyenas in the bush just two miles from here. It's too dry to plant crops."

Baboons tried to ravage the village's corn and bean fields. "They screech and make a very big noise at you," Sila said, "but they cannot attack a man." Once a baboon carried off a baby; it did not harm it but kept it out in a rainstorm and the baby died. In Kamba custom, the owner of the baboon's land paid compensation to the family.

Sila was born in 1906. "My mother was grown when the *wazungu* (white people) came. The Arabs were still catching our people to sell. The British took care of our people, so they would not be sold. My grandfather exchanged ivory with British traders for cloth and beads. Those British were afraid of our arrows and spears."

When Catholic missionaries first came, the Kambas chased them away. It was thought, Kibiti explained, that "they had come to take our land and make us slaves." When a mission school at last opened, the Kambas sent only the weakest or laziest children, those not good at herding cattle."

Kibiti chuckled, collapsing into a coughing fit. "The only reason I got educated was that I was always fighting with the other cattle boys. To punish me, my father sent me to school." He became a teacher in 1929 and since retiring in the 1960s has cultivated corn, beans, and bananas on his five-acre shamba.

Sila was fated to stay with the cattle. "Then, when I was still young, many cows were infected with disease and almost all our cattle died," he said. "My father also died at that time. From then on we had nothing."

Both remembered that once during a famine, a great *mzungu*, John Kennedy, sent cooking oil, maize, and powdered milk. They grieved when he was murdered.

They worried about the Kamba youth. "The young men want to be educated," Kibiti said. "They want to wear nice clothes and to be employed by the government. They don't want to dirty their hands in the soil. They don't know what a good life we had."

So the grass grows on the Kamba warpaths, the battle cries have long been stilled. Gone are the hunting parties and the great herds of cattle. The swords are almost literally plowshares—women use pangas for clearing brush from the fields.

* * * * *

When you walk from village to village along the rocky, red-dusty paths which crisscross the hills of Machakos, you know you are in Africa. The sky seems too big to be true. The air at 5,000-7,000 feet is bracing. Burnt maize stalks crackle in the wind. Far off is the burning desert of the Rift Valley, grass, thorn trees, flat-foliaged acacia. Half the shambas in Machakos have less than two acres in cultivation, just 55 percent of the land is tilled, the rest is too dry.

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* *Mzee* simply means "Old man," and is an honorific title in Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta in his final years was often referred to just as the "Mzee."

For a year and a-half now Monica Mutuli has walked these hills as a village health-care worker. At 29, a native of Machakos, she is a widowed mother of 5. Gentle, talkative, Monica smiles and laughs easily, at home with all the villagers. Yet, like so many Kenyan women, her face in repose shows sorrow. Her husband, a salesman for a foreign company in Nairobi, was killed in a car crash. Now in Kamba tribal custom, her children belong to her in-laws. If she remarried, she would lose them. Her husband's insurance, which she hoped to save for their education, was taken by a brother-in-law to buy land. When Monica discovered this, it was too much. She had a nervous breakdown, was confined to a Nairobi mental hospital for two months and, in the words of a friend, "ran screaming down the hills, tearing off her clothes." For a time, she worked as a clerk in a department store, but it took most of her $50-a-month wage just to survive in the terrible conditions of the city slums. At last she came home.

It is both Monica's personal predicament and black Africa's central dilemma that women are adjusting to change faster than men. Fully a quarter of Kenya's poorest households, in both village and city, are headed by women. In the words of an official 1978 monograph, most Kenyan women "spend much of their lives in a continuing cycle of pregnancy, birth and child dependency." Their life expectancy is 53.

This day Monica was going to a monthly meeting of voluntary, unpaid health workers in a village called Kaani. A few of the shambas she passed looked modestly prosperous, with new one-room brick houses, kitchen and storage huts, cattle sheds, and outdoor latrines. Many had huge concrete jars to catch pure rainwater from the roofs; all but the upland streams and rivers were infected with schistosomiasis.

These families planted new 90-day maturing hybrid maize, nitrogen-fixing mung beans, improved pigeon peas, and other new crops developed at the Katumani dryland agricultural research center just outside Machakos town. Monica, who had taken a farmers' training course at Katumani, had been told it was one of the best in Africa; the scientists

Monica Mutuli.

there said there was great scope to develop semiarid farming. Many of the Machakos families owned some goats or sheep and a few cows, mostly Friesians or Holsteins, plus two Zebu oxen to plow. Just as the plow has been used for only 15 years, terracing to prevent soil erosion was begun only four or five years ago. Kenya's agricultural revolution is very recent.

Other homesteads, most of them headed by single women, looked tumble-down, blighted; their huts had flaking walls and soggy, ruined thatch. Small children swarmed about, all scabs and sores, some with shriveled limbs and protuberant bellies, their noses running with yellow slime, flies nestling in the corners of their eyes. Monica knew about a third of them were malnourished; ringworm and roundworm were too common to treat; there were scabies and malaria; and babies got measles in July, Kenya's coldest month. But diarrhea and respiratory infections were the big killers.

Monica stopped, wiped the noses, and shooed away the flies. In a moment she had the children happily singing, "If you're great and you know it, clap your hands."

She went on; children were threshing a mass of pea and beanstalks with poles as thin as they were. It made a rustling sound as the grains popped out of the beaten sheaves onto the hard earth. A group of women were winnowing beans in the wind; the wind stilled and the women waited, cursing, their wicker trays poised to catch the breeze when it returned.

"We want to work together," one of them told Monica, saying they would go from shamba to shamba. "It gives us strength. You know the saying, 'One finger cannot kill lice.'" This ethic of mutual help is extremely strong in village Kenya, a happy legacy of the tribal past. Jomo Kenyatta harnessed it into what he called his Harambee (self-help) village program; rural Kenyans willingly construct their own schools, dams, roads, bridges, or whatever, once they are organized, led, and encouraged.

When Monica reached Kaani village, perched on a flat plateau beneath the Iveti Hills, some of the women had already gathered and were sitting on the grass under shade trees near a new Harambee nursery school. They looked remarkably well-dressed, in brightly colored cotton dresses and headscarves—oranges, reds, yellows, purples, greens. Some carried babies, with parasols to protect them from the equatorial sun. Kenyan villagers must be the cleanest in the world, forever bathing and washing and ironing their clothes, often with very little water. Monica, who could afford only three dresses on her monthly $25 wage, was up at 5:30 every morning to bathe and rinse away the red Machakos dust from one of them.

Monica took the roll call: Elizabeth, Agnes, Marcella, Agatha—for Kaani

was a Catholic village. Mary was reported to be home with malaria and Millika was sick with backache again. "Tell her not to carry so much water," Monica joked. "Let her husband carry the water." The women burst into laughter; that would be the day.

There was much to talk about. A drive was on to build latrines and the health volunteers reported that 16 of the 39 village houses now had them. They were making bricks; they told Monica it took exactly 112 to make a small *choo*, or pit latrine. She reminded them it should be built at least 16 meters from the kitchen, downhill. "You must persuade the rest of the women to build choos," Monica said. "If they just go in the bushes, flies can come and spread disease everywhere in the village."

She had obtained seeds for a kitchen garden from the government agricultural office in Machakos and handed out packets of carrots, onions, spinach, tomatoes, potatoes, and collard greens. This last, known as *sukuma wiki* in Kenya, loosely translates as "getting through the week." Together with *ugali*, or cornmeal, it is the basic diet of the poor. A common saying is, "Maize and beans, ugali and greens."

Other crops grown in Machakos include cassava, pigeon peas, cabbage, sweet potatoes, cucumber, onions and such fruit as oranges, lemons, mangoes, papaya, passion fruit, bananas, and mulberries. Along the mountain streams, Monica found an abundance of fruit and vegetables, but the village women had little knowledge of how to prepare them. She had to convince them that fruit like mangoes was good for children as well as adults.

Monica told the women that Catholic Relief Service planned to start a feeding program for pregnant mothers and children up to 5 years of age in 34 of the surrounding villages. Each family would have to pay five shillings (50 cents) a month for two kilos of fat, two kilos of millet, and two of dried milk. It was estimated this would save each family about $8.60 a month, a lot in a country with a $380 a year per capita GNP (the U.S. is $10,820), and supply a high-protein diet. Each village first had to build a storage shed and each mother had to submit a written application. Monica handed out the forms, telling the women, "Sign it so your grandmother can read it."

She also handed out forms to be sent to the Christian Children's Fund, which wanted 300 names and would send each child $10 a month. A problem was that the charitable organization required the exact birthday of each child; in Kamba tradition only the year is recorded. Monica told the women to make up a date if they didn't know. "We need something. So they can send a birthday present or card. Do the best you can."

Monica talked about building outdoor dish racks so the sun would kill bacteria; unlike latrines, these have not yet caught on. She gave a recipe for French toast (with 5 shillings—15 cents—a mother could buy 3 eggs and bread and feed 5 children, serving it with milky tea). She reminded them how to treat diarrhea (mix three tablespoons of sugar and a pinch of salt in a glass of boiled water and give the child

Nursery school in Machakos.

liquids slowly, so he or she doesn't dehydrate). The women listened attentively, now and then saying, "Oh, yes, yes, that is good." They seemed eager to improve themselves. Monica congratulated them on not losing a single baby to diarrhea in the previous 12 months and for seeing that every child was immunized.

Some women asked about weighing babies and keeping charts. Monica talked about future projects. The Machakos government would provide two beehives, if anyone was interested. Another week-long farmers' training course would soon be arranged at the Katumani research center. East African Industries had promised to provide a projector and films on nutrition and dental care.

A government agricultural extension worker came to explain crop loans. A few village men joined the crowd, but three-fourths of it remained women, for they were farmers too. They were told the government would supply enough hybrid maize seed and fertilizer for either one or two acres, but only if the recipient planted an equivalent amount of cotton, so the loan could be repaid in kind.

Several women protested. They asked if they could substitute sunflower for cotton. One woman said, "We tried cotton last year and sprayed, but lost our crops to two kinds of insects." After much discussion, he agreed to go back and take it up with the agricultural office.

Such community participation in this village started with a *baraza*, or large meeting, with the chief of the surrounding location, a Kenyan administrative unit, in this case comprising 34 villages and about 25,000 people.

As Monica explained it: "The chief will tell each headman to organize the people and set a date for a week-long village meeting. There we ask the people, 'What have you done?' They have many plans, but usually say, 'We don't have the money.' We tell them, 'Money is not the problem. You have the time, the place, the soil, and your own energy.' "

She went on, "A year ago such a meeting was held in my home village. We proposed what we wanted to do. The headman selected me for training to organize health workers. I was confused. What could I do? I thought, maybe it is God's plan. The training was good. My mother asked, 'How can you talk with the people when you are so shy?' But me, I'm not afraid of men."

In Machakos, this kind of village participation provides a link with an integrated provincial development project, sponsored by the European Economic Community, the first for a semiarid, marginal farming region in Kenya. As population pressure worsens, more and more people are forced to cultivate dryland regions like Machakos, where just 10 percent of 14,000 square kilometers has high agricultural potential.

The Katumani dryland research center produces drought-resistant higher-yielding seeds and the Machakos government also encourages improved livestock breeding and the construction of cattle dips for tick control. It has many new small water schemes, dams, weirs, pumping and piping, and new credit systems for seed, fertilizer, and farm implements. Shelters, with small diesel generators for power, are being set up in the small towns to employ nearby villagers in tailoring, carpentry, sheet metal, and making and repairing oxen-driven carts.

There are new handicraft centers, a drive to promote adult education classes, and a tree-planting program which aims to provide two million seedlings by 1982. Water is often the start; once a dam is built and terraces dug, a credit program offers seed, fertilizer and pesticide loans to be repaid, as in Kaani village, with some portion of a cash crop.

Such development works best when the government programs pay close attention to what the villagers themselves want to do. In Kaani, as in most Machakos villages, the main perceived needs and wants, in order of expressed importance, are water, roads, modern farming techniques, education for children, health care, and help in organizing Harambee groups. In the least accessible mountain villages, better transport gets the top priority.

In February 1981, the most active people in Kaani, three-fourths of them women, drew up a two-year plan. Improved health and education were given attention, but it was felt income generation, mainly through improved farming, would be the basis of everything else. A plan was drawn up to terrace more fields, apply more fertilizer, practice crop rotation, plant more fast-maturing Katumani crops, dig small irrigation ponds and canals, plant crops earlier, grow more fodder, and build chicken coops. Targets were also set to establish a few small-scale cooperative industries: basket-making, sisal rope-weaving, beekeeping, blacksmith and tailoring shops, and a pottery kiln.

The aim is to achieve most of these by early 1983. The most ambitious project is building a new cattle dip, following the example of a neighboring village which constructed one for half the normal $4,000 cost. Village youths dug the hole, women earned cash to buy the timber and iron sheeting, and men did the actual construction. Already, by pooling their efforts in this way, Kaani's people had built a 20-kilometer road in 5 days, each family sending one laborer. The government responded by sending in a road grader.

Also during 1981, the villagers had walled in concrete several natural springs which supply cooking and drinking water, built a mud-brick, thatched nursery school (with parents paying the teacher), built many concrete jars to catch rainwater, repaired culverts, and begun the latrine-building campaign. Committees were formed for farming, small industry, health care, adult education classes, and women's traditional Kamba dancing. The government agreed to provide periodic visits by doctors and a mobile maternity clinic, and training in carpentry, masonry, tailoring, and typing.

This kind of government-village cooperation works both ways. A year ago, for example, only 62 farmers in Kaani's region applied for crop loans; this year, once the villagers organized themselves (and provided the cotton-sunflower issue is resolved) there will be 637.

For projects given the highest priority, a three-month timetable was set up. For example, the construction of the mud-brick Harambee nursery school, with each family contributing labor, was set for

February, cementing the floor and plastering walls for March, and fitting doors and making desks for April. The latrine-building campaign began with a village baraza in February, each family was surveyed in March, and construction began in April. Naturally, performance was uneven; by May the more prosperous families had latrines while the poorest lagged well behind. Some people held back until they saw what their neighbors were doing. A healthy spirit of competition developed. In Kaani, as in villages the world over, the most potent force for change is not government fiat or fear of God, but "What will people say?" In this way, Kenyan villages, which had the crudest of thatched mud huts a half-century ago, now have far more advanced sanitation than, say, the average village in India or Indonesia.

Most remarkable is how much is done by women. Katumani's director, Dr. D. M. Thairu, one of Kenya's most able agricultural scientists, told me his biggest problem is getting new crops tried out in the village fields. He recognizes that the mostly women farmers in Machakos—as in all Kenya—are not interested in high yields for their own sake as are the Katumani plant breeders and agronomists. Dr. Thairu said, "We can give the basic inputs—new plows, oxen, improved seeds, and train these women at Katumani. But back in the village they've got to meet certain basic requirements for food and cash. Our big challenge, aside from developing a workable way to get moisture into the soil, is to put our theoretical knowledge into a package villagers will accept. We've got two rainy seasons and the ground is twice plowed, which means erosion is a big problem. With intercropping, more ground cover and better tillage techniques, we can solve it." He admitted that most of Kenya's agricultural graduates and extension workers are men, whereas most of the actual farmers are women. He said, "Unless these women help us understand the purposes for which they grow a crop, we can't successfully offer them technology."

The lack of men in farming, which slows down technological advance, also affects birth control. The declines in human fertility in most villages in the 1970s were closely related to the rise of agricultural productivity which, if everybody is farming, makes time more valuable for both men and women. In Kenya, where universal primary education is an early possibility, the need to pay school fees and buy required uniforms should also act as a brake on population growth.

Monica said that while a majority of village women now seem to favor contraception, their husbands often get angry if they take the pill before bearing at least two or three children. "It used to be," she explained, "that if you had many children, a man created a proud name for himself, his family, and his clan. Children were your bank account in old age. Now everyone is proud to educate his children. Many women ask me, 'How, if I have to send my children to school, can I stop having more?' "

Monica finds about 6 out of every 10 villagers, including many of the women and some younger, better educated and more progressive men, are very interested in self-improvement. "Much depends on the headman," she said. "If he is selfish, the whole village may revert to self-survival. If a leader is good, most people will respond. Often it's not the traditional headman, but somebody younger. Some headmen, worried about their authority, may say, 'We don't want you wasting our women's time. They have to work the land.' But as they see the village benefit, these are getting fewer all the time."

Monica sees hope in the gradual spread of better farming, education, and contraception. "Villagers," she said, "especially women, have a lot of community spirit. Quite often they've been left out of the picture in the past. They've been pushed here and pushed there. Once you involve them, they respond."

* * * * *

While many Kamba tribesmen have not yet had time to fully adjust to settled maize farming, a growing, if still small, number are doing so. For example, Mutiso Mangi, 40, of Kamweleni village in Machakos, has gradually taken over from his wife since he terraced his 7 acres and bought 2 oxen to plow in 1977. Let other men go to the city to look for money, he said, explaining, "If you go to Nairobi, you have to pay a lot for food and there's a lot of noise and nonsense."

Mutiso's farm is sloping and sandy, yet he double crops two acres of maize and one acre each of beans, pigeon peas, and sunflowers, his only cash crop. Last year he built a new one-room brick house for his family and another for his elderly mother.

"These days are much better," he said. "The children go to school. We wear clothes. We can take a bus into town. Before there was a road it used to take us two days to walk into Nairobi to sell our chickens." He now takes government loans for fertilizer and pesticide and has started to grow new cash crops such as lemons, papaya, bananas, sisal, and tomatoes. He said, "If rain comes, we can have a lot of things."

Rare among rural Kenyan men, he felt three children were enough. He explained that while the new village primary school was free, the children's uniforms cost $7.50 to $10 apiece. Water, he said, was his biggest problem. Everything depended on the October-November and March-June rains. In 1981 Mutiso had given 90 working days to a Harambee dam project; it was now finished and once pipes were laid to his homestead he would have a supply of pure water. Until now his wife carried water in a calabash, slung from a strap resting on her forehead, a mile or so from the nearest river.

* * * * *

James Zachariah Nzoka, the Kamweleni village headmaster, drives a Volkswagen, lives in a comfortable four-room bungalow he built himself in 1970 and raises the latest maize and other crops from the Katumani research station. His seven-acre shamba is surrounded by orange and lemon orchards, hedges, and tall eucalyptus trees. Zachariah's wife, Agnes, is also a teacher.

"We're lucky," he said, "because we're both working. We're employed. The villagers need to build more schools so we can get the government to hire more teachers. After our students leave, there are few jobs for them. There is still a belief that farming is for those who

fail in school. We have to change that."

Zachariah said most of the children in Machakos now attend at least primary school. "You won't see a school-age child home during the day. Nobody grows sorghum or millet anymore because there are no children to chase the birds away."

The headmaster is bringing Western culture to his students. He has read them George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* and sometimes takes 40 or so of the oldest ones on a 12-kilometer roundtrip hike into Machakos town to see films like one made of Thomas Mann's novel, *Joseph and His Brothers.*

Zachariah and his wife plan to have no more children; they are satisfied with three. They are both too busy, for one thing. Agnes also runs a teashop in the market and recently attended a week-long farmers' course at Katumani. They are experimenting with coffee as a new cash crop, though their land may be too dry. The more productive they are, the more valuable their time.*

* * * * *

This writer has made much of villages as the key to the Third World's future. Commenting on this in mid-1981, John Hughes, the former editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, observed, "There will be those who debate him, for a few generals with a couple of hundred tanks can still wreak havoc in the capitals." (Or four assassins with AK-47s.)

Were one to view village Kenya in isolation, it seems quite hopeful that people like Sila, Kibiti, Monica Mutuli, Mutiso, and Zacharia will make a gradual, necessary adjustment to contraception, scientific farming, and practical application of education.

But then there's Nairobi, an extraordinarily artificial and Westernized city plunked down like a gaudy bauble in the middle of Africa.

Zachariah and Monica.

The problem with Nairobi, as with many African cities, is that it did not evolve naturally; that is, it did not arise out of a hinterland where settled agriculture, after the plow, created a surplus food supply. In 1900, Nairobi was scarcely a village. Even by independence in 1963, it was largely a marketing and administrative center. Had it not become the West's main staging ground in black Africa, certainly in East Africa, it might have become a Rawalpindi or Khartoum.

Village Kenya works because its small communities have the essential elements of civilization: the making of fire and light; the wheel and other basic tools; language, writing, art; agriculture; the family and parental care; social organization, morality and charity. There is very little crime.

In Nairobi's slums, these social institutions break down, as in Kabiro, a relatively small squatter colony of 1,754 people.

Mzee Kabiro, now an old man, inherited his 22.5 acre shamba in Nairobi's western outskirts from his father. As the years went by, in Kikuyu tribal custom, he let his steadily arriving kinsmen build huts between his maize and bean fields. Not many years ago, Kabiro, as the place came to be known, resembled a Kikuyu village, with small round-peaked earthen huts, women grinding maize or milking goats, and children and chickens afoot everywhere.

Population pressures and commercialization of land, rent, and labor, in rural Kenya as everywhere over the past 20-30 years, have steadily made casualties of the very poorest rural people—the landless, the least progressive smallholders, and the pastoralists. During the 1970s, they began swelling Nairobi's population at the rate of 7 percent, then 10 percent each year. In October 1981, the Nairobi newspaper *The Nation* reported the shantytown populations were increasing at the staggering rate of 22.5 percent a year.

In Kabiro, this has meant an inundation, not just of Kikuyus, but of Luo, Baluhya, and Bungoma tribesmen from fertile but densely crowded western Kenya near Lake Victoria, Kambas from the semiarid southeastern mountains—people from 13 different tribes. Among them are Maasai, Somali, and Turkana pastoralists driven from their nomadic herdsmen's lives by drought, wildlife destruction, and encroaching cultivation.

Kabiro has become a sprawl of shanties, with a few of the old huts

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* For a discussion of the increasing economic value of time as productivity uses and its relation to fertility decline, see the author's "The Changing Peasant, Part VIII: The Ghandians" [RC-3-'81], *AUFS Reports*, No. 27, 1981.

about, with flaking walls and ruined thatch. There are some wooden one-room African *dukas* which sell maize, salt, sugar, and a few basic staples and fly-ridden open spaces where women sit on mats displaying small heaps of vegetables or African herbs. Everywhere there are children.

As in all urban slums, Kabiro's people have to struggle hard for well below average wages. They are without sewers—there are only six latrines, one of which gets used at least 1,500 times daily—clean water, adequate schools, health care, and electricity; they face crime, outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, and feelings of claustrophobia. Those who can move out as soon as possible.

The basic diet is tea, cornmeal, and collard greens. Scabies, intestinal worms, gastroenteritis, and respiratory infections are common. A recent survey showed only 29 percent of Kabiro's people had regular jobs; 40 percent of these were part-time. Half are under 15 but everybody else spends most waking hours trying to earn something.

Among the men the most common occupation is as an *askari*, or night watchman. Pay is seldom more than $45.60 a month, the legal minimum wage. One of them, Alfred Mzee, 38, said he has only 26 cents a day to feed his family of 8 after the monthly rent is paid. His home, reached by a mud path, was typical: a dirt-floored, windowless, 10-by-10-foot room made of corrugated iron sheets. There's an iron bed, a charcoal cookstove or *jiko*, two soupbowls, two cups, and a cooking spoon. Mzee's six children share a straw sleeping mat and a single blanket. The family has tea in the morning, no lunch, and fills up on ugali and sukuma wiki at night. Last February when corn disappeared from the shops for three weeks, people were seen eating grass, rummaging through garbage pits (a rather common sight throughout Nairobi), or sending their children to steal in the market. Toward the end of each month, thousands of people can be seen in the early morning walking from the slums toward downtown Nairobi, no longer able to pay bus fare to their jobs.

Michael Masaba, 42, another askari, makes the same amount as Mzee, but his wife's earnings as a nursery schoolteacher bring the family income to $64.50. This might make life easier except that Mr. Msaba proudly spends $20 a month so his 13 brothers and sisters can go to school.

John Mathai, 54, also a watchman, whose wife has cerebral palsy, pays monthly school fees of $1.30 apiece for 4 children and himself (he takes an adult literacy course). After fees and rent are paid, he has 17 cents a day to feed his family. (Prices in Kenya are comparable to those in the United States; in a Machakos country store, a 50-gram tin of Nescafe costs $1.34; a 100-gram cake of Lifebuoy soap, 18 cents; and a tube of Colgate toothpaste, 32 cents—just raised from 29 cents. This store also sold washing soap, shortening, margarine, cocoa, biscuits, ballpoint pens, liquid paraffin, vaseline, razor blades, powdered milk, chocolate, tea, sugar, cornmeal, Strepsils for sore throat, beef soup, Coca Cola, Fanta, tinned orange juice, Cerelac infant formula, paper, Aspro, African tobacco, candy, and fresh tomatoes. This, typically, was the entire inventory. Prices are fixed by the government and shopkeepers must display them or be fined $30.)

Many are even worse off. One construction laborer in Kabiro said he earned only $225 the whole of last year, for 8 or 9 weeks of steady work. About 75 percent of Kabiro's households are headed by a single parent, the vast majority of them women whose husbands have died or deserted them. In 1963, at the end of British colonial rule when something close to apartheid existed in Kenya—separate housing areas for whites, Asians, and Africans—the number of males outnumbered women in the Nairobi slums thirty to one. Today the ratio seems to favor women. Since so many rural households are also headed by women with absentee husbands, a question I never fully found an answer to was: where are the men? Kenya is said to have close to a million unemployed high school leavers and that more than 100,000 are in Nairobi on any given day. This seems evident from the large numbers of young men seen in the streets. Where they all stay remains something of a mystery.

Kabiro's husbandless women survive largely by buying vegetables from trucks and selling them beside the road or in the market, netting an average profit of $2.50 a week. One such woman, Sera Wanjero, 38, a Kikuyu native of Nairobi, had no furniture in her hut, just one blanket for herself and her four children. She had managed to earn an average $13.50 a month in the three months before I interviewed her, mostly selling vegetables. Her rent took $3.80, leaving just 5.5 cents a day for food—about a penny per person.

Drunkenness, and the crime that goes with it, plagues Kabiro. The illicit distillation of *chang'aa*, a mind-numbing brew, is practically a home industry among the young men, as is the sale of *bhang*, or marijuana, a native plant in Kenya. (Kawangware, a much bigger slum area of about 50,000 people which surrounds Kabiro, has Nairobi's highest crime rate. Another shantytown, Mathare Valley, is bigger still, with an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 inhabitants.)

Monica Mutuli, who spent some months living in Kabiro when she worked in Nairobi, told me, "Sometimes it was terrible to live there. You could just find a dead body outside in the street. I've come across them many times, maybe two or three times a month." Other Kabiro residents said sometimes the bodies had been chewed on by dogs. The victims were mostly men, stabbed and robbed while staggering home drunk late at night from a beer parlor.

Enough crime seeps out of the shantytowns so that Nairobi's major hotels warn visitors not to walk the streets after dark. In August 1981, after an American woman journalist on assignment in Nairobi for the U.S. International Communication Agency was fatally shot during a car robbery, *The Washington Post* reported there was "an extensive crime wave directed against foreigners" in Nairobi. The *Post* quoted Ben Fordney, a U.S. Embassy spokesman, as saying there had been 51 incidents of violent crime against Americans in Nairobi between then and November 1980. The homes of 17 embassy employees had been burglarized, 4 Americans had been killed and 9 seriously injured. Fordney later told me that the *Post* failed to mention is that these figures included several Americans killed and injured in an

explosion at Nairobi's famous old Norfolk Hotel the previous New Year's Eve. The bomb, set off by an Arab in retaliation for Kenya's role in allowing the Israeli rescue mission to Entebbe to refuel in Nairobi, had no relation to internal crime. While the level of violent crime is rising in Nairobi, it is substantially lower than in Tanzania, Zambia, or Uganda. Except in Uganda, still trying to recover from eight years of chaos under Idi Amin, rising crime is usually explained as the consequence of economic decline and rising unemployment.

In Nairobi it is unquestionably worsened by the extremes of wealth and poverty its essentially free market economy brings. The Reagan administration's ideological belief that free enterprise and a favorable investment climate are the best way to develop overlooks the social tensions that result. Only in recent years has President Daniel arap Moi, Jomo Kenyatta's successor, begun to frame the populist policies needed to remedy the grosser inequities to income. Free market economics work in the Third World only where governments are prepared to intervene on behalf of its casualties: the poorest, weakest, and least progressive. Otherwise you get something like Victorian England, where the streets are safe for no one.

Mama Wahu, a handsome older woman much respected as a social worker in Kabiro, blames the collapse of so many families on alcoholism and joblessness. "The men have nothing to do," she said. "So they beat up their wives or wander off and don't know where they are. There's no money left for the wife to feed the children, so she takes them and goes off."

Mothers in Kabiro, Mama Wahu said, hide their money. "If the woman makes some, she wants to buy food. But if a man gets his hands on it, he won't let it go, he just won't let it go and he will go off and get drunk."

What is amazing in Kabiro is not the poverty, squalor and crime, but its people's tenacity and courage in seeking better lives. The Nairobi City Council provides adult literacy courses; in one class I visited, the men, most of them askaris, outnumbered the women about two to one. A few of them were Maasai with dangling pierced ears; their teacher said they at first refused to share a classroom with women.

Several had just written their first letters home to family members still in villages. Michael Masaba, who was among them, said, "Before I could read, I was always in trouble in Nairobi. Now if I see 'Fierce Dog,' I know what it means." The Maasai said that as children they were roaming with their cattle herds and had no chance to go to school. One woman said her parents died when she was small and there was no one in her village to pay her school fees or buy the required uniform. She asked, "Can you help us find jobs once we learn to read and write?"

Kabiro has a new primary school, built by its people themselves, and we found a seven-year-old writing on the blackboard, "Cows and horses walk on four legs. Little children walk on two legs." English is Kenya's official national language and the teacher asked the class to name English words which begin with the letter, "c." At once there was an eager chorus of "cat," "cup," "cassava," "car," "cabbage," and "carrot." One small boy happily shouted, "Bicycle!" and then looked anguished when the young teacher corrected him. She herself, when a child called out, "Curtain!" had to consult her dictionary hastily to see how to spell it.

Tragically, since Kenya's population could double at present rates in just 18 years, family planning is only starting to catch on. Still, in four months, a new clinic has had 404 acceptors, 270 of whom stuck with it. "Most women still don't see the need for birth control," explained a staff nurse. "Why? they ask. Some haven't ever been told about it. They don't know they can get contraceptives for free." Kabiro's men won't come to the clinic. But it has been found that if male family planning workers go to them and talk about their children's needs for food and education, they will listen.

Old Mzee Kabiro himself, though his land has skyrocketed in value to about $8,000 an acre, still lives in his original thatched mud hut and seems satisfied with his rents and his role as chief of so many squatters. He also stays drunk most of the time. His Kikuyu relatives, who came first, worry about so many people steadily moving in and putting up more shacks. Yet mutual help is still a strong ethic among rural Kenyans, they said there was nothing to be done about it. As Mama Wahu put it, "You can't throw away people."

But people in the Nairobi shantytowns *are* being thrown away. And their terrible, grinding poverty jeopardizes the progress being made in the villages, Kenya's political future, and the West's major foothold in black Africa.

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