

Let me introduce you to yourself. First off, your name is Bahati, which means fortune, or good luck in your language. But that is hardly what you have. You live in slums in central Tanzania, with your mother and four siblings. You know that two of your brothers died long ago, and your father, too. You can't go to school most days, even though you would almost die to. You struggle to find enough food each day to feed all six in your family. What little money you have from running errands around where you live is used to buy rice. Every day, you walk three kilometers to the nearest well to get water, but it is often murky and makes you feel sick. When someone in your family is sick, everyone is sick. No one can go to school, or do jobs or help Mama. When your tiny shack of a house starts falling in, you and your brothers scrounge for sticks and metal scraps to fill the holes. Your younger sister, Doto, cannot help. She is too small and sick. Mama says she will die. You don't want Doto to die. Your family is all you have. You don't have shoes; your clothes are little more than rags. Welcome to your life, Bahati.

You wake up feeling every rock beneath you, hearing the early traffic of the morning groaning outside the door. You reluctantly get to your feet and find the tin bucket in the corner of the hut. When you walk outside you see everything that you see every morning. The canal running past your hut, littered with everything from sewage to food wrappers. It smells like it does every other morning, damp and the sickly sweet smell of urine. You get on your way, down to the well. It is three kilometers away, and the road is rocky, hot and filled with people. They all want water, too. You wait, and wait, and wait until your turn for the water. It runs out when your bucket is only half full. The people behind you groan and you quickly hobble away, before they take your own water. Your feet are strong now, but they hurt from the rocks in the road. When you get home, Mama is up. She is holding Doto, and sighs when she sees the bucket only half full. The boys are running errands for the people across the road. Mama puts down Doto and finds a little packet of rice. You help her make the rice, and you want to make it well because you know there is no more rice in the house. When you are done with the rice, the three boys come in.

"Mama," They beg, "Can we go to school?" Mama looks weary, tired.

"Are your jobs done?"

"Yes,"

"Ngapi-how much?" Mama asks how much they were paid. I sometimes do jobs for other people, across the road, but Mama thinks it is unsafe for me, because I am a girl. I know I am unwanted. Girls don't get an education, they just marry before they become more of a burden on the family. I'm sure Mama will be relieved when I leave home.

The boys pull out a small sachet of rice, smaller even than what Mama and I have just made.

The look on Mama's face says it all. She sighs a long sigh, but she knows that it is all she can do. She takes the rice.

"Ask for money next time. Then you can buy the rice, much more cheaply!"

"Can we go to school then?"

"Hmmm, okay. Take Bahati, too. But be back before jobs this afternoon!" You scramble to your feet. School! It's a treat. The boys and you head towards the school, little under five kilometers from here. It's dangerous on the road, but you feel safe with your three brothers. It's a long way to school, and you always have to watch your feet, in case you stand on something. The thin dog runs out at you suddenly, snarling and snatching for food. Your older brother kicks it and it yelps and

scurries away. The homeless people bother you, too. They come up and ask for money and food, and they scrabble at your clothes. You are afraid of them. There is a dead body on the side of the dust track. You see blood, but look away. It makes you feel sad. One day, you want to be a doctor who helps people and makes them better. But you know you can't if you don't go to school.

And then you can see the dusty dirt walls of the school, and you can hear the children singing and you run, run as fast as you can, all the way to the classroom. You see the queue of children, stacked up at the door, and head for a window. You peer in, listening intently for the teacher. Everyone is learning arithmetic, you can see the sums on the board. You chant with them, straining to hear your own voice. "Moja, mbili, tatu..."

You make the most of it, you won't stay long. When the children go out to play in the dirt, your brothers find you to take you home. All the way home, you chant the numbers. You feel tired when you think about the jobs at home. Mother makes you work hard, and you know that if you work in the canal, you will be sick. The roof on the house is coming off, too. You stumble on home, feet aching.

When you get home, there are strange people there. They are dressed in orange and they are not one of your people. They are clean, and white, fixing the tap where you get water. You go inside the house, and two of them follow. They explain who they are, and you've heard of them before. They tell Mama that they will fix the roof, and they ask you if you go to school.

"Ndiyo" you reply. Yes. They hand you a stick of chalk and a rubber ball, and you take them with awe.

"Is this God?" you ask Mama. They laugh and hand Mama some rice.

"The tap is working" They announce, in your language.

Then they leave. You do not understand. Why are these orange people so nice to you? Why would they give you a ball and chalk for school? They are not one of you, but they helped you. Little do you know, some one you age in another country, far across the stretch of land and water that separates you, has just completed an event known as the '40 hour Famine.' Like you they are oblivious to what is going on, they take up the 40 hours as a one-off challenge. The little amount that they have raised is what you have received in the form of a ball and chalk, via these people known as 'World Vision.' All you know is that for the first time in a long time, you feel happy.