

Rich Tarro, Kenya – Summer 2023

### Prince and the struggles of a family of 12



*Aniki's son Moses, Aniki, Rich and the eight grandchildren  
(Prince is front right, in the blue and white shirt)*

Prince is 7 years old and in preprimary school. Every time he sees me, he has a big, infectious smile that lights up everything around him. You can't help but feel good when you see Prince.

Prince should be in the first grade, but he had to repeat the second year of preprimary school. Last October, as he was getting ready for school, his mother was boiling water on a *jiko* (a small, charcoal-burning stove). Prince accidentally knocked over the pot of boiling water, which fell on top of his legs, scalding them. Prince spent five months in the hospital as a result of the burns. He still has trouble walking as some of the flesh on his legs is still not healed properly. He needs to undergo more treatment. Although he attends school (with some difficulty), he is not able to attend our Saturday tutorial sessions, so I unfortunately don't get to see him that often.

We recently accepted Prince — along with six of his siblings and cousins — into the HOPE Project. Prince lives with his mother and his extended family, which consists of 12 people (three adults and nine children). After we enrolled the children in school and got them situated in their classes, we visited the family to bring them two new mattresses. They were living in two rooms of a rundown house and sleeping on the floor. We found the rooms in horrible condition, with broken doors, windows and holes in the roof where rain can enter.

That was when I first met Aniki, who cried when we delivered the two mattresses. This in turn made me tear up. She could not believe that her family now had mattresses on which to sleep.

Aniki is Prince's grandmother — a 65-year-old widow whose husband, Joseph, passed away after battling throat cancer. Prior to his death, the couple and their children lived in Nairobi; Joseph was a mechanic and Aniki owned a grocery shop. After Joseph's death, saddled with huge debts incurred from his cancer treatments, the family was forced out on the streets. Aniki had to beg for food for her family, and the children had to drop out of school because she couldn't pay their school fees.

Aniki moved with her children to Mombasa and began working for her niece, who opened her house to the family. Tragically, the niece was killed in a car accident not long after that. After her death, her niece's family forced Aniki out of the house. Eventually, a friend offered to let the family live in an old house with two rooms that he owned.

Aniki lives with two of her older daughters, her son, who has recently completed primary school, and her eight grandchildren. Her daughter Teresia, Prince's mother, is 31 years old. She left an abusive husband and is in poor health — in and out of the hospital. In addition to Teresia's two children, Aniki also takes care

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of her oldest daughter Zipora's four children as well as the two kids of a third daughter who works as domestic help in Saudi Arabia.

When we delivered the two mattresses to their home, we immediately knew that we needed to do more. There was no way that three adults and nine children could sleep on two mattresses. We soon returned with two additional mattresses as well as four beds, sheets and pillows.

Several of our students helped with the delivery and assembly of the beds. Aniki, Zipora, and Teresia were overwhelmed with gratitude. The kids were so excited when they saw the beds and mattresses. The day we delivered them was one of my best days as a missionary in Kenya.

Unfortunately, this is not the end of the story, where everyone lives happily ever after. We had a lot of rain in Mombasa in April during our rainy season. It doesn't necessarily rain all day, but we get intense downpours. That did not bode well for the house where the family was living — not only because of the holes in the roof, but also because the structure itself was in disrepair and not structurally sound.

When we assembled the beds, we strategically positioned them in the rooms to avoid the holes in the roof and prevent the new beds and mattresses from getting wet. However, the intense rains caused the roof and walls of the house to begin to collapse. We had to scramble to find the family a new place and to move them and all their belongings into the new house. Fortunately, we were able to get everyone and everything out of the house before it completely collapsed.



Prince inside one of the new bedframes

The new place that we found Aniki and her family is a bit of a distance away from the place that collapsed, which meant that all the children, including the seven that the HOPE Project now supports, had to transfer to new schools. We helped reregister the children in the new schools, paid their school fees at the new schools and bought them new uniforms (every school has their own required uniform).

Aniki washes clothes and Zipora sells roasted corn on the side of the road to earn money for the family. With all the mouths to feed, Teresia's health problems and Prince's burned legs, which still need more treatment, the family barely survives on the little money that Aniki and Zipora earn.

We continue to help the family get back on their feet, but there is no easy solution. We also assist them with our monthly food deliveries to needy families. With HOPE supporting the seven children, at least they no longer have to worry about paying school fees and the children being sent home for lack of payment.

Aniki says that the HOPE Project gave her back her smile, which had been long gone. Although I don't face the hardships that she and her family do, I can say that witnessing their perseverance and how they stick together as a family inspires me and makes me smile too — especially Prince.

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