



During Advent and the lead-up to Christmas, there are not many decorations to be found in and around where I live in Kenya. Even the churches do not decorate until Christmas Eve. Although I do not miss the over-commercialization of Christmas in the United States, it is strange not to see more lights and decorations. On the positive side, this absence helps me think more deeply—beyond the glitz and glitter—about Christmas and the birth of our Savior.

Jesus chose to enter the world in abject poverty, surrounded by dirt, and laid in a trough from which animals feed. As St. Paul said, “Yet for your sake he became poor” (2 Cor. 8:9). The Lord, the Creator of all, became one with the poor and identifies with them.

Fatuma is a widow raising two teenagers on her own. Her husband, Mwero, passed away in 2010, leaving behind four children, including a one-year-old and a four-year-old. After Mwero’s death, his family mistreated Fatuma and her children, prompting her to move with the kids to Mombasa to stay with her sister. Once there, Fatuma began working as a housekeeper.

While Fatuma worked, her sister cared for the children. That arrangement lasted only a month, after which her sister asked Fatuma to find her own place. Fatuma located a one-room mud house with no running water



FATUMA AND HER FAMILY STAND WITH RICH TARRO IN FRONT OF THEIR COMPLETED HOME—A PLACE OF SAFETY AND NEW BEGINNINGS.

or electricity and began renting it. The house was in very poor condition. Eventually, the owner gave the house to the family, and Fatuma added another room, as the entire family had been crowded into a single small space.

Fatuma was not able to earn enough money to send her two youngest children to school. As a result, Hamisi and Bahati missed several years of school and would have missed more if the HOPE Project had not begun supporting them in 2016. Because they could not read or write at the time, both children had to start in pre-primary school, even though they were older than most students in those grades. We have continued supporting them ever since. Hamisi is now 19 years old, and Bahati is 16. They both recently finished eighth grade.

In September, we delivered two new beds and mattresses to the family, as they had been sleeping on the ground. When we delivered the beds, we were shocked by the condition of their house.

Because we had the budget to construct one more house in 2025, we decided to help Fatuma and her family with what would be our final new house of the year. Thankfully, Fatuma had inherited a piece of family land suitable for construction, as the site of the current house was not appropriate for rebuilding. We are only able to construct new homes for families who own suitable land.

Since we can only build one house at a time and another home was already under construction, we could not begin work on Fatuma's house until early November. As preparations were underway, Mombasa experienced a week of very heavy rains in October, causing the already dilapidated mud house to deteriorate further and partially collapse. Fortunately, no one was hurt, and the new beds and mattresses were not damaged.

Through God's grace, what could have been a disaster instead opened the door to new opportunities. The new house now provides a much safer and healthier place to live. Fatuma and her family finally have a home they can call their own.

In addition to supporting Hamisi and Bahati in school, building the new house, and providing beds and mattresses, we have also given the family a 200-liter water tank for drinking water, installed a portable solar panel unit with three lights so they are no longer in darkness after sunset, and provided a fuel-efficient, low-smoke cooking unit.

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