Nyumbani Orphanage
Nairobi, Kenya

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Nyumbani is an organization that provides care for HIV positive children in Nairobi. Their services consist of an orphanage that houses between 90 and 100 children, an outreach program in multiple Nairobi slums that cares for around 500 children in a community based setting, and a commercial laboratory that supplies testing to the organizations programs as well as local health care providers.

The majority of time was spent at the orphanage site. The attending physician is a professor of pediatrics from the national medical college who has a clinic there three times a week. During these times, children were seen under the observation of the doctor for acute illness and routine reviews. The doctor also made arrangements for attending rounds a couple times a week on the pediatric wards at Kenyatta National Hospital. Opportunities also existed to spend time at the outreach sites providing treatment for acute illness and HIV testing and counseling. There are also opportunities to go with the home-visit teams from these sites.

As a first time overseas traveler, the experience was an enjoyable, comfortable introduction to working in a foreign (but not too foreign) environment. The majority of the experience was very much a “medical student” experience with more observation than hands-on work. This is definitely not a “bush medicine” experience.

They prefer more long term commitments from volunteers (3-4 months) but are usually willing to accept medical students for 6-8 weeks. Housing is usually available on-site at the orphanage, depending on the number of volunteers at the time. Meals are also provided, but most volunteers end up cooking some for themselves. A nominal fee (~$100) may be charged for housing but is not consistently applied.