We drove slowly along a route that continually challenged the ability of the four wheel-drive vehicle to pass as we clung to the side of the mountain. We were in the Mbooni District, Kenya, to visit the homes of children – orphans – who had been identified by their communities as being most in need. Finally the road defeated the vehicle and we had to get out. We walked for thirty minutes – down the side of the mountain and up the next until we arrived at their home.

When we arrived Faith was sitting beside her grandmother. Faith, 6, had faint memories of her mother who died in 2006 when she was 4 years of age. From that time she has resided with her grandparents and her aunt. Her grandfather is 72, her grandmother, 70. Neither is well. In fact it is often left to her aunt Rose who lives in the compound, to take care of everybody.

Faith shares a bed with her grandmother. There is no mattress, no pillows, and one very worn blanket to share between the two. After school, around their home Faith is responsible for helping with cooking and chores and getting water. The nearest water source – a small spring used by the locals for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and for livestock – is over a kilometer away. This is a walk that Faith makes many times a day, each time carrying back a container of water. If she were older, or bigger or stronger, she
could take less trips, but she’s small for her age.

What isn’t small is Faith’s heart or her desire. Despite everything she has lost and the hardships she continues to endure, she has dedicated herself to her studies. In school she finds structure, support, and hope for the future. Last year she was 2nd in her class of 67.

She tells us how much she enjoys school, how she loves to learn, and that she’s already decided what she wants to be – a doctor. When she first told me that I thought – “Isn’t that cute . . . a little girl in Grade One wants to be a doctor.” Then she explained it to me. She said when she becomes a doctor she will save lives so other little girls won’t lose their mothers.

When you talk to Faith you know that she’s only a little girl – a six-year-old girl – but inside she seems so much older. What she’s gone through has made her grow up fast. Faster than anybody should ever have to grow up. And with that growth has come a calm and a wisdom and a silent determination.

Faith could be sad or bitter over all of the things she’s lost or never had. Instead she’s grateful for the opportunity to go to school. She knows that all her hopes and dreams for a better future can be found within the walls of that little building.

Faith is more than a name. It’s a statement of belief, a sense of hope, even when there’s nothing to support that belief – you simply have faith. Why does a little girl who has gone through so much, who continues to struggle daily, believe that she can become a doctor. Faith.

Story submitted by Canadian Global Campaign for Education

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