

MERCY ATIENO SIDHO

DOB: JUNE 23, 1996

(UPDATED 03/15/17)



Mercy's father died in 2001 and her mother in 2003. Her grandmother died of AIDS and an uncle was murdered in a knife fight. There was a serious tribal prejudice against the family. For these and other reasons that are not entirely clear, the family was regarded by the community to be under a curse. As a result, when the mother died, no one came to help, leaving Mercy, then 4 years old, to care for her two younger brothers. The children were given the most perfunctory care but their health had already been severely compromised by their mother's inability to care for and feed them.

News of the parent's death finally reached the ears of a distant cousin living in Kibera, an immense and appalling slum. He and his wife scrimped and saved for over five months to get the \$17.20 needed for return bus fare to Mombasa to get the children. When the aunt finally reached Mombasa, she found that the youngest two had died of malnutrition and Mercy was gravely ill. Mercy was taken in and living in a mud brick shanty 10 feet by 12 feet with her aunt, unemployed uncle, and seven other children. They ate one meal a day comprised of rice and a small dried fish. All of this was a tremendous improvement for Mercy, but best of all, she felt loved.

Every Saturday the entire family walked 10 kilometers to a Quakers Church where they received a hearty meal and attended Sunday school. Mercy's sweet nature and intelligence moved the Quakers. These Quakers had heard of a new home of refuge for children orphaned by AIDS that was firmly founded on strong Christian principles – Providence Children's Home. They made application for her to Providence and she was swiftly accepted.

During the 2007 post-election disturbances, Mercy was with her aunt and could not get back to Providence. No one knew how to reach them. Finally, after being missing for nearly eight weeks, Mercy turned up at the Providence doorsteps. She had been able to get a ride as far as downtown Nairobi with a trustworthy woman. Then using all the coins collected by family and friends (about 58 cents) she got as far as Ngong where she walked the six additional miles to Providence.

At Providence, Mercy blossomed. She finished high school in 2015 and later joined Ashley's Beauty Training College for hairdressing. Mercy really excelled in this field because hairdressing is also a hobby and something she loves doing. She is already done with her Diploma course and is one of our first young ladies off on her own working in a Beauty Parlor in Nairobi. Her main specialization as a hairdresser is hair coloring, braiding, hair weaving and barbering among others.