This summer I spent 6 weeks working with a non-profit organization called Comfort The Children International (CTC) in Mai Mahiu, Kenya; a small town located about 60km north of the capital city, Nairobi. The Mai Mahiu township was originally a truck stop/ brothel along the Nakuru highway; a main highway that extends deep into northern Kenya. The town population is roughly 7000 and the majority of the people living there experience a variety of hardships. Poverty, illness, and crime have an overwhelming and undeniable presence within the community. Lack of resources and education has been a problem since the town was started.

CTC’s vision is to help Kenyans build and manage the sustainable infrastructure necessary to meet the challenges of everyday life. CTC’s logo is the handprint. The CTC website (http://www.ctcinternational.org/home) says it better than I could:

“The hand serves as a reminder that we are all human, all connected and all interdependent on one another. The hand also serves as the template for our 5 initiatives: education, environment, economy, health and community. Like the fingers on a hand, all 5 initiatives are interrelated, reminding us that what we do through one initiative directly impacts all other areas of the community. This is why CTC’s approach to community development is holistic, recognizing that we cannot adequately address one area without addressing all areas equally.”

The variety of projects CTC is involved in is incredible. They do everything from educating primary schools about the environment, to providing widowed women with job opportunities in skilled labor. Above all, CTC propagates hope because they (we) believe it is crucial to change.

My initial job was to capture the energy and fruit of these projects on film. CTC received me warmly when I arrived and they were glad to have an intern that knew a little bit about the context of Kenya, and Kenyans, prior to working there. I learned quickly that making videos was a lower priority and had very little to do with the duties CTC needed me to accomplish. I ended up finding myself doing a variety of tasks, including leading short-term teams, negotiating shipment orders, setting up a sponsor for the local soccer team, website editing, interviewing staff applicants, reorganizing office systems, setting up internet workspaces, teaching in primary school classrooms, and having the privilege of working along side many Kenyans who were passionate about seeing change in their homeland.

The experience was a blast of emotional and physical energy, something I probably could not have continued indefinitely, but what a delight to be apart of. The chaotic constructiveness that I witnessed was priceless. I stretched myself in ways that should have shredded me, but at the end of the day I was usually still full of substantial joy, not because I have noble character and a “good attitude”, but because being intimately involved in bettering peoples lives gives you that feeling like, “yes, this is where I am supposed to be and this is what I am supposed to be doing.”