

# My Kenyan Consultation Experience

*By Leslie Brown, LCMHC*



While on safari in Kenya my family and I visited a Masai village. With permission from the leader of the tribe, we were able to take pictures. As the chief was showing us one of their mud huts, a child peeked his head around the corner then sat down at the edge of the hut and gazed up at me. Seeing a child wrapped in an old blanket out in the African countryside touched my

heart. Would he be raised within a community that cared about his emotional and physical health?

The next week I had already made plans to consult with Kenyan EMDR therapists. Prior to my trip, I spoke with Carol Martin, the Executive Director of Trauma Recovery, EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Programs. I was aware that over the years, Trauma Recovery/HAP sponsored trainings for Kenyan clinicians. I called to ask about any potential contacts I could connect with while there to help in any way I could. She was able to connect me with Alice Blanchard of EMDR Kenya and we were able to work out some time for me to provide consultation to local EMDR therapists.

I was concerned about interacting with clinicians in a country full of cultures, tribes and religions that were unfamiliar to me. A few days later an opportunity to consult fell into my lap. It was with a native Kenyan woman who has been running a Nairobi orphanage for over 30 year. As a pastor, she was also very aware of developmental trauma. She intuitively spoke about adaptive information processing and the AIP model

even though she had no EMDR training. She described unresolved trauma in terms of body sensations, cognitions, emotions, and images. We were able to cross cultural boundaries in the language of EMDR and trauma resolution. After our time together, she expressed a strong interest in bringing EMDR therapy to her orphanage. I now felt more at peace in working with therapists from different countries, cultures, religions, languages, and tribes because I knew I could consult with the same language about a therapy that heals.

During my three days consulting with EMDR-trained therapists in Kenya, I found that these therapists were thirsty for a deeper understanding of EMDR therapy and were not afraid to ask for it. Many came at great personal expense. One therapist was preparing to treat the victims of the recent Al-Shabaab terrorist attack at a Christian college in Northern Kenya. One therapist was trying to figure out how to bring EMDR to Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp that serves more than 350,000 displaced persons, mainly Somalians. Another therapist was a surgeon who wanted to learn how to address the trauma aspects in his medical practice. Many were just trying to better understand how to treat complex trauma, like the rest of us. My consultation opportunity exposed me to wonderful EMDR therapists who were open, accepting, caring, and exceptionally grateful for more learning. This experience, for me, was the crowning piece to a wonderful experience in Kenya.

Preparing for an African vacation, contacting Trauma Recovery, EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Programs, and connecting with Alice Blanchard of EMDR Kenya all lead me to the discovery that EMDR therapists have a natural connection. It is through providing EMDR therapy to people all over the world both those who are either helping to heal unresolved trauma and those who are benefiting from it.