



Update: July-Dec 08

Highlights

We successfully lobbied the government to allow child mothers to return to school!

After consecutive meetings, the Tanzania Government has agreed to special exceptions for child mothers enrolled in the Sauti Moja-LOOCIP project in Longido as well as agreed to review the law that prohibits pregnant girls from ever returning to public schools. In January, ten Maasai girls, who had been chased from school, who faced abuse at home for their pregnancies, and who would have been forced into early marriage, are now shopping for school supplies with renewed hope of fulfilling their school and career aspirations. It's hard to express the magnitude of this achievement and its potential impact. Congratulations LOOCIP!



SM Treasurer, Jo Allgoewer, with some child mothers

Board members and donors visited our projects!



Ernie Fuller with a widow recipient in Kenya

Board Chairman, Ernie Fuller; Treasurer, Joanne Allgoewer; and supporters, Carmen Trueb and Duane and Joan McCartney, toured Sauti Moja's projects and met our beneficiaries in Tanzania and Kenya. Everyone left with a better understanding of the projects, the people, and their challenges. It was a fulfilling and fun time for all of us! We especially thank Duane and Joan for submitting a review of their trip and our work to the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, which published the article and photos on Dec 31, 2008. This provided great publicity and is an encouragement to us. View it online at <http://www.thestarphoenix.com/Melfort+family+making+difference+Africa/1128239/story.html>.

Sauti Moja became the first agency to help a remote, vulnerable community in Kenya!

In September, we provided camels to a dozen widows in the remote village of Lontolio, which is made up of 'Blacksmiths', the least respected clan among the Rendille. Sauti Moja is the first charity to provide support there. The reception and words of thanks that we received during our visit in November was overwhelming. Sometimes, the impact goes beyond our understanding. Nevertheless, we were encouraged us to continue working with such marginalized communities. Seven more widowed mothers are patiently awaiting our fundraising for more camels.

"We are very grateful. During the initial meeting, we did not believe that this would happen. It has never happened before in Lontolio, so I was without expectation that God would help me. When the camel came, I was so happy." - A Widow from Lontolio

Other Notable Activities & Progress

- ✚ The Longido Early Childhood Education (LECHE) Project Coordinator, Sara Mollelian, was successful in applying for a grant from the Pangea agency in the USA. Pangea will sponsor two of our Teaching Assistants to attend a Montessori Training College for the next two years - Serewa, will be the first Maasai “warrior” to ever receive a teaching diploma in Tanzania!
- ✚ In Marsabit, many of the goats given last year have given birth to kids. So, based on our agreement with the community, these offspring will be given to a the next group of vulnerable widows selected by the community. We’re excited to see these widows cooperating with the community to help others in need! Every year, the livestock projects will expand in this way.
- ✚ Sauti Moja’s fundraising efforts with the Rotary Club have been fruitful. The Cambridge Rotary Club in Canada and the Arusha-Meru Rotary Club in Tanzania have committed to partnering with Sauti Moja and LOOCIP to assist two more Maasai communities in their fight against HIV/AIDS.
- ✚ Tim has developed helpful relationships with several individuals and agencies that provide legal aid to vulnerable women and girls in Kenya. As a result, a few of the child mothers that we work with in Marsabit will receive support for legal reprisal related to the sexual assault and exploitation that they have faced. This is an important step towards personal healing of themselves and their families. It is further integral to providing them a voice and ensuring that communities become more accountable for such.



A few of the many, many women still hoping for assistance in Northern Kenya

Challenges

- ✚ In our recent visit to Northern Kenya, we witnessed mounting impacts of drought and food shortages on the communities there. While our Livestock Restocking project assists vulnerable women to cope and become self-sufficient over the longer term, there remains an overwhelming amount of short-term needs for which we are not equipped to address at our current levels of funding.
- ✚ The Social Workers in Marsabit have recently shared with us that their biggest challenge, sometimes, is convincing new Child Mothers to accept our help. They face a universal reality that characterizes work with the most downtrodden: after abuse and demoralization by family and community, it takes a lot of love, trust, and esteem-building before the girls are prepared to risk taking the next steps for themselves. We admire the patience and perseverance of our volunteers in Marsabit – they have big hearts!
- ✚ The “global economic crisis” is a phrase that has been more and more common in the media. With recession fears and an ambitious budget, Sauti Moja is concerned that it may not achieve many of its program goals for this fiscal year due to donor concerns about financial security. Already, we were forced to postpone some projects due to donors’ apprehensions. We hope our supporters will continue to appreciate the scale of need and precariousness of life every day in sub-Saharan Africa despite temporary financial insecurity in the West. The most vulnerable need us to expand our donor base and ensure that core supporters remain committed.

“We have seen the camels given to others, so now have faith to receive more camels. Do not forget us! We have seen life and want to see life going on. Many others are poor like us, and beyond here, in places that you cannot reach easily. Make your friends to know us.” – A Lontolio widow awaiting a camel