



Buke's donkey relieves her burden.

Donkeys are most helpful

While evaluating programs in November, Tim found that many widows consider their donkey to be the most valuable support they receive, as the animal reduces their workload. One widow was in tears, recounting how a **lion attacked and killed her donkey** while she was traveling to get water.

Another wept because she felt obligated to sell her donkey to pay for her deaf son's school fees. And women living with AIDS are also asking for donkeys to reduce their workload. Sauti Moja is struggling trying to meet this growing need.

HIV/AIDS program extended to Kenya

Agnes and Monica, women leaders from northern Kenya, traveled to Tanzania for training in Community Conversations, our successful approach to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care.

They will be initiating a project to address growing concerns about AIDS, and will integrate sexual and reproductive health education for vulnerable women — widows, single mothers, and school girls — into their strategy to combat this disease.



Agnes leads a conversation on HIV/AIDS prevention.

Education of deaf children

As Sauti Moja is committed to social justice for the most vulnerable members of pastoralist communities, we initiated a pilot project for deaf children in northern Kenya.

Most community members do not understand the causes of deafness, so **these children are marginalized and often considered mentally challenged**. Further, they are a source of shame for the family, as many people are reluctant to marry into families with deaf members. As special education opportunities are limited, we have taken several children from poor families to a school for the deaf. Their educational success will contribute to their independence and to changed attitudes about deafness in their communities.



Nkileti with her camel named 'God Provided'.

Widows in extreme poverty consider your help miraculous!

Nkileti is not only responsible for her own children, but also for the junior wife and children of her deceased husband. We wondered how widows like Nkileti were able to survive and care for their family.

Nkileti told us that she has five female goats loaned for milking, and these goats have had five kids, but due to the current drought there is no milk (She hopes that her benefactors will give her two or three of the kids). She earns a bit of income by making charcoal, which helps her buy maize for the family. She also begs food from others, though fewer and fewer villagers are able to help due to drought and death of their

own livestock. Any other food comes from aid. In November, her rations were only enough for a few days.

Widows like Nkileti often wake up wondering how they will provide for their family today. They hope God will provide relief. In appreciation of her good fortune, Nkileti named her camel **God Provided**. She does not distinguish between divine intervention and Sauti Moja's help.

Challenges

The drought continues

The UN reports that “millions of heads of livestock in northern Kenya could die because of drought unless urgent action is taken to mitigate water shortages and stem the spread of disease.” Molu Sora, Arid Lands Resource Management coordinator, says, “Fears of conflict are high at the moment, as desperate herders move away from their traditional grazing land, converging and congesting in the few areas with pasture.”

Tom Broughton, Sauti Moja’s livestock specialist who lives in Marsabit at the heart of the drought, confirms that **our beneficiaries are suffering from food and water shortages**. He is consulting government, other agencies, and community leaders to determine how we can best care for our beneficiaries and provided livestock.

Everybody’s trying to buy camels!

In 2006, we budgeted \$200 per head for camels. Now, a good heifer camel costs \$500. Why? They are simply the most suitable livestock for areas bearing frequent and severe droughts; survival is high, and camels usually continue to produce milk for the families that own them. **Better-off individuals and many agencies are buying camels**, and even Saudis are importing them to meet the meat demands of a growing European market. Providing camels to widows in desert areas is becoming so costly that we cannot help as many as we would like.

Punitive government

Progressive Members of Parliament favour allowing child mothers to return to government-funded schools, but the **President of Tanzania refuses to change the education policy** accordingly. This infringement on child rights is expensive for us. Private schools cost twice as much as government schools, and most parents are unwilling to help pay for a child mother’s education.

As an increasing number of girls seek refuge in our Child Mother Program, Sauti Moja is unable to access adequate support from sponsorship agencies, leaving us struggling to raise enough funds to meet demand. This funding shortfall comes as the first girl helped by this program, Ruth, has completed secondary school thanks to ongoing counseling, encouragement, and family mediation to prevent early marriage.

“I will never leave this man (Ngayook) behind!” —Ngayai

Sauti Moja programs depend upon community members who selflessly serve their community. One of those people is Ngayai, a traditional Maasai with several wives and herds of goats, sheep, and cattle. He has been a leader in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care since the community selected him in 2007. His focus is “Matunzo” — care for those weakened by AIDS. Ngayai serves with more fervor than most other home-based care workers.

Ngayai has impressed us with his support for Ngayook, a man who, along with his wife and child, battles daily with HIV/AIDS — a battle that has taken the lives of two other wives and their children. Ngayai often offers to share food and water with Ngayook’s family, and sends his children to help care for Ngayook’s livestock.

When Ngayook’s deteriorating health nearly stole his eyesight, Ngayai came to his aid, informing Sauti Moja of the problem. Then **he spent three days traveling with the nearly-blind man to seek medical treatment**. Ngayai acted with no hesitation, stating: “I will never leave this man behind.” He acted out of compassion, and received no compensation for his support.

Ngayai is a wonderful example of changed attitudes resulting from the Community Conversations approach. This man has transcended the negative gender and cultural stigmatization associated with HIV/AIDS. To other traditional men in his community, Ngayai is a model of compassion, standing in marked contrast to other elders who want to chase people with AIDS from Mairowa.



Ngayai — a progressive elder.