



Newsletter: March 2007 - Douglas McFalls

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The difference ADEA has made:

“Before working with ADEA I could only afford to educate 2 of my 4 children, now they all go to school. I was also able to buy a field for farming – I had none before.” Yohana Fostino (age 32-married-4 kids-lives in mud hut in Madimba- father was a carver-travels 2 hours by bicycle each way)

“Because of my ADEA training I am in greater demand by other carving buyers.” – Ernest Paulo (age 31- married-4 kids remaining [one died of malaria last year] – lives in mud hut in Madimba – his father is a carver – travels 2 hours by bicycle each way)



PICTURES FROM OUR FIFTH SKILLS TRAINING SERIES
Douglas and Philipo instructing Painters, Tailors, and Carvers

“These ADEA workshops have helped me to expand the way I consider what I am able to produce.” Venancy Posenti (age 38- married-4 kids-lives in mud hut in Ziواني, father also carvers-traveled 2 hours on bicycle to workshops)

“It was wonderful to have place where carvers can work together. I enjoyed the new ideas and the shared experience.” Charles Joseph (age 52-married-9 kids-lives in mud in Ziواني, father was not a carver)

“Before coming to the ADEA workshop we carved without challenges – now we are using the challenges we were given to reconsider our own work.” Anthony James (age 37-married-both children have died-lives in mud hut in Tangazo-traveled 2 hours in truck bed)

“Being challenged and having expectations placed on me has stimulated a greater interest in my carving work. I feel I gained skills because I was challenged. I will remember the challenges made by ADEA and challenge my own work.” Santos Joseph (age 24 - married-1 kid-

father & grandfather carvers originally from Mozambique-lives in mud hut in Tangazo- traveled 2 hours in truck bed)

Above are a few of the comments received from the artisans who participated in our 5th skills training workshops at ADEA in Mtwara, These workshops inspire creativity and have expanded not only how artisans view their art, but how they live their lives. Tailors, painters, carvers and basket weavers come together to learn new skills, try new designs, take risks and challenge the way they have traditionally worked. This happens not only because of Philipo's and my instruction, but also through their group interaction and shared learning process. The only mistake they can make is to not try something new. This year we had 17 new participants. The majority were carvers from villages as far away as the Mozambique border (2 hours by truck). The creativity and outstanding work produced was very encouraging. We worked with 24 carvers - 12 of them new to ADEA. We focused on wine stops, pendants for necklaces and animal figures for painting. In our tailors group, we were joined by three new women, making a total of nine. Five of these women have been with ADEA from the start (anyone remember ChekaCheka?). After 3 years, I no longer have to expend great energy pressing for the highest quality work; the seasoned tailors now instruct the newcomers on standards expected by ADEA. We focused on potholders, ruffled skirts and bathrobes (all wonderful new products). Our painters were joined by four new painters. We focused on painting gourds and painting the animals produced by our carvers in bright, bold colors and designs. The carvers used softer "white" woods for the pieces that are to be painted – relieving some of the demand on exotic woods – ebony and mahogany. Though the painters proved the greatest challenge (because many of them now have ample work and hesitated to take time off for workshops), in the end we have a beautiful collection of painted animal figures – some have already been paid for by visitors to ADEA. The basket weavers (2) focused on weaving with gourds to produce more interesting and decorative pieces in the spirit of "Africa".

All the artisans wished the workshop had lasted longer. Due to limited funds and the larger than expected number of artisans we only could offer 5 days per each artisan group. But as I learn more about fund raising, and as ADEA gains greater recognition, that should, hopefully, change. The workshops culminated with an open-house reception to showcase the results of the artisan's labors and get feedback from the expatriate community in Mtwara (i.e. our local shoppers).

The funding for this year's workshops came from the University Presbyterian Church World Market committee – to which we are grateful!



OK. Now, let me take you back to early March – as I passed through Dar es Salaam before returning to Mtwara, I discovered that the name of ADEA is spreading. ADEA products are now sold in an increasing number of venues: 4 in Dar, 3 on Zanzibar, 1 on Kilimanjaro, and 1 in Arusha, and a new shop in Moshi. June 2 & 3 we will participate in an open market (Makutano) event where gift/craft producers are invited to sell their wares. This is an excellent opportunity to meet buyers and show new products.

I chose to fly into Mtwara this time, to avoid the 16-40 hour bus ride. The road is improving daily, but is still harrowing (I think the problem now is the busses more than the road) and rain is always a threat at this time of year. The boats have stopped operating. I was happy to settle back into my Tanzanian home. I truly feel blessed; after 4 months of no electricity in the region, half days began the weeks before I returned, and 5 days after my arrival we had full days of power!!! That means fans, more regular water, lights, computers, and a refrigerator; thus, a simpler way to live and be productive. (With lights I am also able to locate the midnight tormenting mosquito that occasionally finds its way into my bed netting.)

In Mtwara there are still roaches, geckos, ribbons of ants, daddy longlegs and a few rats, plus, an occasional stray chicken, goat and cows – but these don't trouble me much anymore. The days are warm and humid, and the rains are occasionally heavy. I have mastered the routine of moving outside furniture, clothes and towels under cover within seconds of when the beating of the rain on the tin roof begins. On the positive side, shrimp is \$3 or less a kilo, squid (calamari) \$1 for 4, tuna is \$.80 a steak, papayas for .25, and pineapples for \$1 (I missed the mango season). These are town prices, the villages charge half this!

Back in the ADEA office, we set up a "painting gallery" in March. This gallery is a place where the painters are able to produce larger pieces on canvas to sell to visitors at higher prices. We painted the corridor walls, added an additional light bulb and lined the top of the walls with hooks. The painters are responsible to hang the paintings and to make labels for every piece that hangs noting the name, cost, artist and style of painting. The format and writing quality of the card must also be of a set high standard. The painters set the prices – they make the required signs – we provide the space – we get 20% of the sale price, and they keep 80%. Visitors are glad to have the gallery, and the painters love the chance at an occasional economic spike.

Last year ADEA received a 4000 Euro grant from the German Ambassador's fund to upgrade the room we provided for the tailors into a proper sewing center. Two rooms are now well fitted with a cutting table, stools, 3 new machines, 2 storage cupboards, baskets for fabric, lights, fans, glass in the windows, curtains, irons, ironing board and supplies making these impressive and useful rooms (the nicest in our office – nowhere else do we have glass in the windows). On their own, the women discovered the time-savings of splitting up tasks when producing things. The rooms are beautiful and are being well used. (Danke Mr. Ambassador).

ADEA is bustling and outgrowing its space. We must now consider if it is time for an ADEA Center, one with room to grow and better suited for our needs. (Where do 24+ carvers carve if it's raining?) Of course there is the issue of funds – but land may become available to us through the local government who is supportive of our work. We shall see.

Life, for the locals still has many challenges. On Good Friday, I was home sick with the flu. There was a knock at my door. It was Dismasi (a carver). He had “shida” (trouble); as he often does. A bit weary of his troubles, I made my malady known. But his trouble was grave. His baby was dead. His wife had come from the village to take their baby to the hospital that morning. I’d met her; she was looking for Dismasi when she passed my home. She was smiling then. Their baby died around noon. They said that the medicine they needed was not in the hospital that day. Dismasi had the money he’d received from the ADEA workshops – but that didn’t make a difference. The government hospital in Mtwara is known for not having a supply of medicine. It is said that it is sometimes taken by the doctors and sold in their private dispensaries. His baby was now dead. Life can be unnecessarily tough here. ADEA gave Dismasi and his wife some money to return to their village and bury their child - a very small compensation. As they walked away, I was reminded a fresh of the life struggles my East African friends face daily.

On a Spiritual note: Patience

Some days I risk destroying all that has been built here by wanting to “show them I won’t be messed with” when some artisans seem to try to take advantage of me. The “I’ll make you regret your attitude” mentality and the “I’ll leave this place, then you’ll be sorry!!” threats are so tempting. When I feel this way, I try to stop and remember what we are building here, and why I am investing so much of myself. When I am able to cool down, pray and consider things, their attitude is a sign to me that it is a good time for changes in our strategies. In fact, I realized that many of these artisans are now economically comfortable enough to become a bit cocky. ADEA is succeeding! Beside my door I have posted a sign that reads, “Remember where you are, and try to be a blessing.”

The Circle of Life: Not long ago, my Maasai friends and I were admiring the wonder of the long and awkward stick-bug. As we studied it a chicken came along and ate our bug. That night we ate chicken. (That night a mosquito took a bite out of me).

Small things:

Fried Papaya is so easy and so good: Butter, Papaya and lime (Baked Pineapple is also nice).
...Sorry nothing is coming to mind – I guess I’m getting used to things here.

I’ve had Internet challenges this time, so these newsletters are a bit behind – the next should come before the end of May. Thanks for your support and encouragement!

Douglas

Very important reading if you have interest or concern for global aid:

White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the rest has done so much ill and so little good. By William Eastman