



Newsletter: July 2007 Douglas McFalls

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Forgive me friends. There is so much going on, that I have fallen behind on these newsletters. In this newsletter I am going to catch you up on the wonderful developments related to our Maasai school in Lemong’o, Kenya.

Back in March, Tipape (our Maasi school director), several members of the Lemong’o school committee and I were sitting on stones in the shade of a tree one hot dusty afternoon. We were contrasting the state of their community to America. Amadeus ask me, “Why is Africa so far behind the rest of the world?” I shared with him what I had learned from various readings (particularly Jared Diamond’s, Guns, Germs and Steel). “It is true that most of Africa is behind the West technologically and educationally... But wait!” I said, “With our new school, which uses the same curriculum that is used in America, Sweden, South Africa and other parts of the world – this community will not be behind educationally, but instead be equal to many students all over the world!”



This was a wonderful realization, and made us value our school project even more!



Measuring for uniforms – Student Documentation Pictures - Tipape w/school committee leaders – me in uniform

In my February Newsletter I told you about our plans to launch our first preschool in Lemong’o, Kenya with the Maasai – and Tipape Loomu as the director. Well, it has happened. Through the generous contribution of curricula from a donor in Dar es Salaam, twenty girls and boys began preschool. We used the local church building to hold classes. It was decided to have uniforms,

and that they would be in the Maasai style to emphasize that being educated does not mean losing their identity and traditions.

Here is some background on this project and the Maasai community: Caught between Westernization and their traditional ways; these Maasai are at a crossroads. For centuries they have maintained their rich culture and herding lifestyle, but now vast portions of their land has been confiscated for game parks (Tsavo West and Amboseli), and growing national populations in other areas are encroaching on their land and introducing new diseases that are killing their remaining cattle. Though traditionally resistant to formal education, in desperation this community now believes that it is needed if children are to survive in a world beyond herding. (I have attached the responses of some Maasai parents regarding their views on the value of the school.)

We estimate that 85% of the children in Lemong'o are not attending school. Tipape Loomu (the project director & a local Maasai) and I are working together to bring formal education to his community that previously had no school. Maasai families require the help of their children at home and for grazing goats and sheep, so the curriculum we have chosen is flexible and allows children an irregular attendance pattern, without undermining their learning. Maasai families require the help of their children at home and for grazing goats and sheep. We are using the ACE program (Accelerated Christian Education) because the community is Christian and have chosen this. There are other schools in Kenya and Tanzania using this curriculum, and there are national ACE representatives to assist these schools so they will not be dependent on me.

The school committee is an amazing team of passionate and eager leaders and parents. They have the responsibility of overseeing the school, and adding Maasai activities because there is currently no such thing as a Maasai curriculum. We are collecting artifacts for the purpose of having a school museum. The vision of the school is to allow the Maasai culture to evolve, not deteriorate, in the wave of Westernization and globalization that is sweeping over Africa.

Currently we are using a church building for classes. But five classrooms are nearly completed that will hold 150 students! The resources to build were contributed by an Irish organization and AMREF, a water project working in the area. The community had previously built a nursery school of raw timber, earth floor and a tin roof, where the children sat on stones. This will be an exciting upgrade. Our challenge now is to pay for the tables, chairs and curricula and the teachers to use them. In June the children of the University Presbyterian Church Day Camp in Seattle raised nearly \$3000 towards curricula and other needs. I am very enthusiastic about this project! Our goal is to add 30 students to the school per term as soon as the buildings are complete and furnished.



Now I am making plans for my return to East Africa on September 26th. I will be dividing my time between the two ADEA (USA) programs: the Maasai school in Kenya and The Center for African Development through Economics and the Arts (ADEA in Tanzania).

In Tanzania the ADEA program will continue to expand the educational strategies that have proven successful of skills training workshops, business training, creative thinking and market access (including using thespians in instruction) – with greater emphasis on artisan participation and greater artisan responsibility (resulting in greater independence and economic return for them). Also our new initiative, MaKuYa (Makonde-Makua-Mayao tribes) Traditional Performing Arts Festival which will be launched in October as our first “tester” festival in Mtwara, Tanzania. If ADEA can secure the funds, Emil Karunaga Matthews, will be hired in March of 2008 as the new Tanzanian director, along with his wife, Jane (picture on right). Emil studied at the Dodoma School of Rural Development and is currently studying in Holland. Along with management we will document the unique success of ADEA to explore if the success we experienced with the artisans of Mtwara might be repeated elsewhere. Having a woman in leadership will allow us to better address the unique needs of women in a society where men and women are very distinct. It promises to be a wonderful and challenging year ahead.



My next email will be a support letter that more clearly lays out the specific need and goals of these two projects and communities. I have always avoided fundraising, but have come to the point where it is a must if I am to continue my work in Africa.

Thank you for your continued interest and support. It is encouraging and appreciated

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