



Update: Jan-Apr 2008

PLEASE NOTE: In May, Tim and Corey will travel home from East Africa for the Annual Board meeting, as well as to meet with donors and organizations that provide desperately-needed support. If you have recommendations, or if you know people who may be interested to partner with Sauti Moja, please contact us. We will prioritize meeting with your extended family and/or community to present stories of our beneficiaries and their needs, so let us know, asap, if you wish to facilitate that.

Yellowknife's Stanton Regional Hospital supported widows in Logologo

In December 2007, the staff of Stanton Regional Hospital, raised funds for Sauti Moja. This enabled us to initiate a new project that will eventually support about 50 widows in Logologo, a Rendile village located in the Kaisut Desert about a one-hour drive south of Marsabit. In February, Sauti Moja established collaboration with local professionals who now volunteer with us but are associated with a local NGO, the Pastoralist Education and Training Initiative. This year, we are providing goats to a number of the widows, such as Ntason (below); this will augment their income and provide milk for their families. In the future, we will support widows to establish small businesses, such as production and sale of vegetables locally and in Marsabit.



Ntason is a charming, vivacious widow of about 30 years old with six children ranging from <1 to 17 years of age. Our staff reports that she was married at an early age, perhaps as young as 10, to a much older 'husband'. When he died, he left her a few cattle and goats, but the cattle died in the last drought, leaving her with only a few goats. The milk and income from these goats is not enough, so each day, in addition to meeting the needs of her own family, she supplements household income by carrying water and fetching firewood for others. Still, with six dependent children, she is a very impoverished woman. And, in Rendile culture, a widow can never remarry, which leaves her economically-insecure. Assisting her now to re-build her herd will provide additional security for her old age.

Other Activities and Progress

- Recently, we collaborated with the public health nurses from the Ministry of Health to assess the health of pre-schoolers enrolled in the LECHE program. This provided hands-on training for our teachers to monitor nutritional status of pre-schoolers. We found that most children are underweight and a few are quite malnourished due to family poverty and/or poor child care. We are starting school lunches in Oltepesi, as well as investigating how to help families of the most-malnourished children.
- Sauti Moja, in collaboration with the LOOCIP agency in Longido, hosted McGill University's 'Canadian Field Studies in Africa' Program. We facilitated their learning about Maasai culture and livelihood, and the socio-economic, educational, and health challenges facing the community. The money contributed by McGill will assist our early childhood education project (LECHE) in Oltepesi. We are currently discussing hosting a similar field studies program with a university in Holland.

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- The ‘Community Conversations’ methodology has resulted in our Maasai communities expanding and initiating its action plans to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic – increased engagement of community members in sub-villages; promoting safe behavior of young men from the community who work in high-prevalence areas, like Arusha city; conducting education programs in local schools; providing transport to hospitals for ARV medication; and training young men on the importance of condom use. These community action plans are being carried out under our guidance by the local facilitators whom Sauti Moja has trained.
- Child mother advocacy and mobilization activities have been conducted in Tanzania. We have built relationships with the District Education Office in order to advocate and mobilize his support for young school girls who have been expelled from school due to pregnancy. Though there is sympathy, it is an uphill battle, as girls who have been expelled from secondary (high) school for pregnancy reasons can never return to a government school; currently, their only hope for continuing their education is in a private school. The first girls to participate in our in-house counseling and support project are arriving in April.
- We extended the Restocking program to Longido, Tanzania. There is a desperate need among Maasai women ‘Living with AIDS’; in addition to stigma, they face nutritional and economic challenges, so we are providing several with a donation of female goats. This will assist these mothers with milk that will help them to maintain their and the children’s health, as well as contribute to the effectiveness of their anti-retroviral (ARV) therapy. In addition, they should realize some family income from milk sales.
- Sauti Moja provided technical support to research on childhood education in Longido District. It was funded by SNV, an agency of the Netherlands government. The findings have enhanced government and others’ understanding of the challenges facing the education sector, as well as raised stakeholder awareness of the marginalization facing the Maasai. In facilitating this, we have contributed to increased mobilization of government and donor resources for educating Maasai children.
- During a February trip to Marsabit, plans were made to assist several more child mothers, such as Dohatu (photo right). Dohatu has just turned 14, and is mother to two-month old Qaballe, a beautiful and healthy little girl, the result of sexual exploitation by an older man. Dohatu is the youngest and only one of seven siblings who has ever attended school. She lives with her mother, an abandoned woman who works full-time supporting them on her earnings of about \$8/month - not enough for proper food, clothing and health care. They have no livestock or field, and their house is a badly-deteriorated mud hut. Dohatu’s mother cannot afford to quit work and care for Qaballe, as they survive on her meager income, so it seemed that Dohatu’s dreams of becoming a teacher were shattered! However, our public health nurses are now negotiating a solution for child care and additional household income which will enable Dohatu to attend a boarding school and pursue her dreams. We will soon appeal for donors who are interested in committing to long-term education and child care support for children, such as Dohatu.
- Students of Carlton University, ‘The Kili09 Team’, are fund-raising for a climb of Mount Kilimanjaro. Their target is \$15,000 in support of Sauti Moja’s HIV/AIDS prevention and care activities in the Maasai communities of Tanzania.

