



Quarterly Update

Greetings and Happy New Year!

January 15, 2007

Sauti Moja enters 2007 with enthusiasm and optimism based in the support from donors, the progress realized in our Second Quarter, and the response of partners and community members. Specifically, in this quarter, we were approved for registration, donors began to fulfil pledges, we conducted seasonal fund-raising, we formalized plans with volunteers and partners, and we began to implement projects. A bonus for this early stage was the enthusiastic response from beneficiary communities, which confirms that we, with your support, will be making a difference in the lives of the most marginalized.

Quarterly Highlight

We initiated the Maasai HIV/AIDS Project with a Training of Trainers conducted in Longido, Tanzania. This two-week training was facilitated in collaboration with our partner agency, LOOCIP. Twelve pastoral Maasai men and women were trained to implement UNDP's Community Conversation methodology in their home communities, where they will train other community members to help facilitate the project.

Participants were overjoyed with the potential of this project methodology to reduce vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. This methodology facilitates open discussion as a way of collectively learning and fostering mutual understanding and agreement. One participant commented, "This [meaning the Community Conversation methodology] is the way we must move forward. It respects the Maasai culture while also appreciating its corresponding challenges. It helps the community determine and understand the underlying factors that fuel the epidemic, and *allows us to formulate solutions*, rather than 'outsiders' defining the problem and imposing 'their' solutions".



A Small Group Discussion during CC Training

A key component of the methodology is participatory activities that instigate heated discussion and may lead to open conflict. One of the most prolonged conflicts within our training related to women and girls' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. At one point, the female participants adamantly asserted that lack of access to economic resources contributes to the vulnerability Maasai women and girls; they often have no option other than to exchange sex for money, gifts, or other forms of support. The male group members were adamantly opposed - "This may occur elsewhere in Tanzania, but not among Maasai women". The debate was heated with raised voices and a few tears. Leading the discussion, I felt hopeless at times, but after a grueling hour, the tide turned; the men's understanding grew, and they conceded their position. After hearing the arguments and experiences of the women, they agreed that this is occurring in the Maasai community, that certain cultural values and customs contribute to it, and most importantly, that women and girls access to economic resources is an important factor that must be assessed by the community. At the end of the discussion, I looked at them and asked, "Do you understand the importance and significance of what has just happened?" With smiles slowly spreading across their faces, they all looked at me and nodded. They had learned the power of open discussion and listening as a vehicle to progress and change. They experienced the essence of Community Conversations, and grew ambitious to bring the same experience to the broader community. After further training in February, they will eagerly begin leading community conversations in their own villages.

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Donations & Fundraising

On the financial front, we've had disappointments as well as pleasant surprises, such as that from a donor who encouraged her boss and co-worker to donate camels as Christmas gifts to clients and staff. To-date, we have raised approximately two-thirds of our program budget. Your financial assistance is much appreciated! Though we are enthusiastic about the progress, the uncertainty of if and when we will receive the rest of our budget requires that we phase in slowly and identify which activities to cancel or defer to next year. Please continue to tell others about Sauti Moja!

Project Activities

The following is a synopsis of the key activities that were conducted with partners in Kenya and Tanzania.

- Community meetings were held Samburu and Rendille villages in Northern Kenya to sensitize them to the Livestock Re-stocking Program and to identify women who will receive camels. The response confirmed the incredible need for this project and their eagerness to participate.
- Volunteer staff for the Girl Mother Project have met with community leaders in Marsabit to raise awareness and mobilize support for the project, as well as begin to identify the vulnerable girl mothers whom we will support.
- As noted in the Quarterly Highlight, the Maasai HIV/AIDS Project was successfully initiated in Longido, Tanzania.
- A major disappointment for us was the need to defer the Deaf Girl Project. We had initial agreement with the Ministry of Education in Marsabit and the Director of Marsabit Children's Home, but subsequent events and further investigation indicated that we were convinced that our plan would not ensure adequate support to these children with special needs. Further enquiry also indicated that the plight of deaf children is more serious and prevalent than previously recognized by ourselves and the education specialist. We are cooperating with others to develop an alternative for 2008.



Planning with some Marsabit volunteers

Plans for Third Quarter

- Management committees for the Re-stocking Project will be organized, and trained for on-going supervision and to ensure that female off-spring are passed on to the next most-needy household.
- Community meetings pertaining to Livestock Restocking will be conducted with the Borana communities and recipient female-headed households will be identified.
- Camels will be purchased and delivered to participating Rendille and Samburu villages while donkeys and goats will be purchased and delivered to the Borana villages.
- All child mothers will be identified, and discussions with them, key community informants, and our staff will determine the individualized assistance that should be provided to each. Some girls will return to school in late January, while others will pursue vocational training in a marketable field.
- Community sensitization meetings will be conducted in relation to the Maasai HIV/AIDS Project in Longido, and Community Facilitators from a Longido village will be trained in the Community Conversation methodology for subsequent implementation in their village.

Thank you for your ongoing support and engagement.

Sincerely;

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