



Maasai Report

Newsletter of the Maasai Association

2004



(Picture of Merrueshi Primary School, 2004)

Building communities, making a difference, and creating a sustainable future for the Maasai people of East Africa



**2003 Goals Accomplished
Projects Updates & News**

The Merrueshi Primary School Project Has Been Completed

New Classrooms:

The Maasai Association has completed the construction of the Merrueshi Primary School. We added 4 new classrooms, built 6 teachers' houses, a kindergarten classroom, and a school kitchen. The Merrueshi Community has realized its ultimate goal of a full primary school. The children of the Merrueshi community, and from its vicinity, will now be able to obtain their primary school education without leaving their community to study in the outside world.

Teacher's quarters:

We built houses for 6 of the teachers, 300 feet from the primary school compound. Each of the 3 units has two independent houses. Each house has two rooms - a living room and a bedroom. A washroom facility has also been built at the teachers' quarters.

Kindergarten Classroom:

A new schoolroom for kindergarten has been built 60 feet from the Merrueshi Primary School. The schoolroom is big enough to accommodate 40 students. A playground is prepared for kindergarteners in their classroom compound.

Kitchen:

The old kitchen made of mud and sticks has been replaced with a new kitchen made of bricks. The new kitchen is spacious and has an excellent ventilation channel that meets health standards. The kitchen is also furnished with a large table, sink, shelves and a large window where students pick up their lunches.

With the completion of the Merrueshi Primary School, Maasai children will now be able to obtain their primary school education without leaving their community to study in the outside world. In addition, the children will now be able to help their parents with livestock management during the weekend, school breaks, and

holiday seasons. Being able to help parents while studying was not possible when children had to leave the community to attend school. This is just another benefit the new school provides to the community.

Merrueshi Water Project:



An old borehole facility has been completely up-dated and now functions efficiently with a new engine and pump. The new water system has the capacity of pumping the water up to 1000 feet, at a rate of 260 gallons every 12 minutes. The depth of the well is 430 feet. The community has piped water to the school compound, 600 feet from the well, supplying water directly to the school grounds.

With the completion of the Merrueshi Water Project, women of the Merrueshi community can now spend more quality time with their children, an important social aspect that was not possible before, when the water was 15 miles away. Also, the women of the Merrueshi community will now be able to collect firewood, and collect water in the same day. The women used to spend most of the hours of the day just to collect water from 15 miles away, and collect firewood on other days.

The Merrueshi Primary School and Water Project has improved the quality of life significantly for the whole Maasai community. The realization of Merrueshi Primary School and Water Project will be celebrated for many years to come.



Volunteer:



Kwenia, survey enthusiast, and Vern Hudgson, contractor from Seattle volunteered and conducted the survey for the Merrueshi well project. Vern's survey enabled the Merrueshi community to select the pump ideal for their needs. This is just one of the many ways that individuals can contribute to the Maasai Association.

Merrueshi School and Water Project's Opening Ceremony:

The Merrueshi community held a public ceremony to officially open the school and the borehole project. Three hundred people attended the ceremony. The attendees included villagers from various Maasai communities, government officials such as a Minister of Parliament along with his friends. In his televised statement, the Minister of Parliament urged the Kenyan government to post teachers at the Merrueshi Primary School. All who attended were filled with excitement and pride at the achievement of completing the Merrueshi Primary School and Water Project.

The success of the Merrueshi Community Development Project was of paramount importance, as it is one of a kind in the history of the Maasai people. Many people were in tears while others were overwhelmed with joy in the accomplishment of the project.

"I realized anything is possible so long as a person is alive and healthy. I never thought that people from the outside world would care about us because we are so different and isolated... I hope our children will grow to respect and appreciate this gift (referring to the school), and the people who helped us. I thank the people that helped us very much," said Maante, a village woman.

On the following Monday the school was overwhelmed by families rushing to register their children. The teachers in the school feared that the enrollment could exceed the school capacity very quickly.

Media Attention:

The ceremony won media attention from the **National Television** and the **Daily Nation** newspaper. These are the leading news media outlets in Kenya. The **National Television** broadcast the story in the evening of Saturday January 10, 2004, while the **Daily Nation** published the story on the same day. Media attention was a big surprise to many villagers of the Merrueshi community, as this has never happened before.

Changes as a result of the Merrueshi Primary School Project:

The children moved from:

- Conducting studies under a tree to studying in a classroom
- Writing on the ground to writing on paper
- Sitting on rocks to sitting at desks
- Conducting studies in boarding schools, in the urban area, to conducting studies in the community

Changes as a result of the Merrueshi Water Project:

- The villagers of the Merrueshi community changed from collecting water 15 miles away to collecting water within 1 mile of their homes
- The children no longer come to school carrying 2 gallons of water; they now carry only their books and get water at the school compound
- The people, livestock, and wildlife changed from drinking dirty ground water to having clean water all year round

Benefits of the Water Project to the Community:

- A complete new engine, along with tools and extra spare parts
- A complete new pump unit
- Clean, safe water

The Maasai of the Merrueshi community thank **Friends of the Maasai Association, Microsoft, and the children of St. John**, Virgin Islands, for their generosity. Our appreciation exceeds what can be put in words. Thank you greatly! We will cherish this golden achievement for many years to come.

Looking Ahead - 2004 and Beyond

Goals for 2004 and Beyond

- Maasai Secondary School
- Oloikarere Well Project
- Merrueshi Boarding Facilities
- Waterholes and Dams Restoration Project

Oloikarere Well Project

The Oloikarere Community is located 90 miles south of Nairobi, Kenya, 30 miles east of Mt. Kilimanjaro, and 4 miles from Chyulu National Park.

As in the case throughout the Maasailand, clean and adequate water supply is a critical need in the Oloikarere community, and the villagers have no means of putting a well in their community. The people, livestock, and wildlife have to travel 8 miles to the Merrueshi community for drinking water.

In the rainy season, for example, residents of Oloikarere community depend on groundwater (see pictures in the website under Oloikarere water project), which is not safe for drinking or washing with. The absence of a clean and adequate water supply imposes an enormous threat to the health of the entire Oloikarere

community. The Maasai Association is seeking funds to drill a well, and buy an engine and a pump for the Oloikarere community. The new well has a potential of meeting the needs of 500 people, 1,000 livestock (cattle, goats, and sheep) and large numbers of wildlife, which are in the hundreds in Oloikarere community. A well will bring a bright future to residents of the Oloikarere community.

Conservation Project:

Natural Waterholes & Dams Restoration Project:

The Maasai Association is the driving force behind the Natural Dams & Waterholes Restoration Project in areas of southeastern Kenya. This project is aimed at renovating and restoring natural dams and waterholes that were originally made by elephants. The waterholes and dams have been there and been used by wildlife and people for decades. The water catchments play a vital role in the savanna, and are in desperate need of restoration. The requirements for this project are as follow:

- A rented bulldozer
- Tree planting

Maasai High School Project

There are less than a handful of secondary schools in the Maasai region, while college facilities are unheard of. Maasailand has the highest primary and secondary school dropout rates in Kenya -- mainly because of lack of local schools in the region. Many Maasai children start their primary and secondary school education late because schools are so far away from their communities.

The national education statistics show that a limited number of Maasai children have completed secondary school, while even fewer of them have had a chance to attend college. Education is one of 3 most critical needs, among water and health clinics, in the Maasai region today. It is our hope to educate the Maasai children so they can become agents of their own change rather than victims of change. High school education will benefit the Maasai children and their communities significantly. Our hope is to have the Merrueshi High School built by 2006.

Needs for the Merrueshi High School Project:

- Four classrooms
- Library room
- Staffroom
- A kitchen for students
- Four teachers' houses
- A water tank

- Dormitory facilities
- Desks and tables

Merrueshi Boarding School Facilities:

Twenty percent of students in the Merrueshi Primary School walk an average of 6 miles to school from outlying areas. Some are walking 10 miles to attend school. As such, it is our hope to build two dormitories, one for boys and one for girls, in the school compound that will allow us to accommodate the commuting students. The dormitories will also make it possible for more Maasai children to attend school. Many children, desiring an education, are still in the villages; they cannot attend school because of the distance. The goal of the Merrueshi Primary School is to educate 350 Maasai children by 2006. It is believed that this goal is possible, only when the dormitories become available. It is important to note that in December 2000 the school had 60 students. That number has increased today to 170 students.

Needs to realize this project:

- Two dormitories
- Sixty beds

What can I do to help as a devoted Friend of the Maasai?

You can help us in many different ways. Members and non-members alike can help us by organizing a fundraising event in your local community; giving financial donations; giving in-kind donations; volunteering to help on a specific project; or referring someone you know to help our organization in any capacity that she or he can.

Persons and groups have contributed skills and knowledge in many different ways. Please do what you can because everything helps. We currently need volunteers to help us with marketing and proposal grant writing. Contact us if you can help, or know of someone interested in volunteering to help with these needs.

Visit our website www.maasai-infoline.org to see excellent pictures of the well and school project.

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