



Newsletter: June 2008 Douglas McFalls

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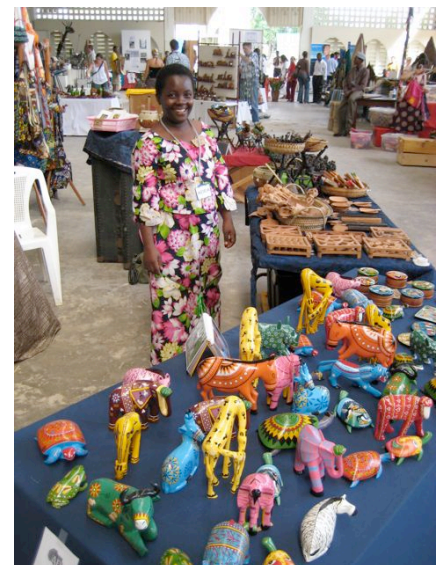
JUNE 2008 NEWSLETTER – I'll make this a short one.

“So this Swahili woman walks over the rack where we hung all the clothes. She was eyeing one of our bathrobes – the ones we make from the Tanzania khangas. She looked over the robe, looked at the price, (which was 20,000 Tanzanian shillings) and she asked if she could pay 12,000 Tsh. I said, ‘No’. She hesitated then walked away. Forty minutes later, she returned to the same rack, and studied the robe again, and again walked away. She returned yet a third time, this time she bought the robe.”

This was the observation of Sarah Ligombadi. Sarah is one our tailors, and one of two artisans who joined me this year at the May Makutano Market in Dar es Salaam. She discovered that quality and good design can sell itself and people will pay for it.

ADEA has been participating in this market for nearly three years now (twice annually), but we decided this time that we had funds enough to include two artisans from ADEA. This was an excellent decision. Sarah and Charles Msoga (a painter) learned a great deal from the experience: buyer attitudes, the importance of display, the importance of attention to buyers – but not too much attention, the importance of being quick so shoppers can get to other shops, and how to deal with a variety of customers. Also, they learned about the competitions: what others are selling and how. Best of all they were able to come back to Mtwara and share with the other artisans in Swahili and from an artisan perspective about this market outside of Mtwara. I also took them to the three shops in Dar es Salaam that regularly sell our products. Here are some of Sarah and Charles's comments:

- 🌿 We learned to speak with customers.
- 🌿 Some people want to bargain – but we told them no, and they bought things anyway.
- 🌿 It is important to move products around during the day. Why? Because when people pass again they see new things.
- 🌿 Place dark items on light surfaces, and light items on dark surfaces.
- 🌿 Always clean up after customers leave a table (example: wine stops, painted coconut shells and greeting cards).



- 🦋 Hanging clothes makes them more visible.
- 🦋 Customers don't like sales people to be too close. No pressure.
- 🦋 Another vender said that our bags were sewn the best.



I was very encouraged by the success of our efforts and appreciated their help. I don't know if I'll be here in November for the next market – nor do I know Philipo's schedule so far ahead, but it is good to know the artisans will be able to manage the market more and more themselves each year (and thus make better returns for themselves). We will form a committee to get everything set for the November 22 market by October 31. With our business picking up, and orders growing, planning far ahead is crucial.

Sarah and Charles were selected because they have basic English skills. All our other artisans have negligible English (Swahili is the national language – a lovely but difficult language) and this is crippling for them. Tomorrow I am encouraging the artisans to meet 3 days a week (8:30 – 9:30 a.m.) just to practice their English together. They need to get started this way because the ability to commit to formal classes is a challenge for busy artisans with work and family responsibilities. I hope it will catch on like wild fire. We shall see.

Now we are crazy busy preparing for our traditional culture and performing arts festival: MaKuYa. We received the funds needed and now we must work, work, work. I'll tell you about that in the next newsletter. Or visit [MaKuYaFestival.blogspot.com](http://MaKuYaFestival.blogspot.com).

But to whet your appetite, this is a fun tidbit I learned this week as we interviewed village elders about traditional village life in one village (this was not the norm!). In the village of Mtimbwilimbwi we learned that formerly, for a man to get a wife, he must seek out a pregnant woman and court her, if the child she delivers is a girl, they will marry, but if it is a boy, he must seek out another pregnant woman!



Thanks for your interest and support – I've got to run - Douglas