

CHANGING A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS INTO A HUMANITARIAN OPPORTUNITY

The food relief that ADEA is supplying the Maasai of Rombo, Kenya, has not ended; in fact, it has expanded from 85 families (600+ people) in 2020 to 200 families (2000+ people). The COVID-19 lockdown was replaced by a more devastating challenge – a drought. The severity of this drought is being compared to the drought of 2007-9, when most families lost 100% of their cattle. My friend Grace had 200 cows in 2007; by the end of 2009, she had only one. Her story was not unusual. During that drought, families survived by eating their dying cattle. But this time, there are few cattle left to eat. These families have no food, and nothing is growing – not even grass for the few cows and goats that remain. In their humility, these Maasai are stretching what had been two-week rations of beans and corn in 2020 to now last three weeks. We would like to be able to provide food each two weeks again. Each distribution is costing \$9500.

Here is a video of them sharing their situation and plea. https://youtu.be/Ezq6D_AoFNE

ADEA has been able to cover the cost of these unexpectedly large, expensive food distributions through previous generous donations, but now those funds are finished. Therefore, we are reaching out to you again.

BUT WAIT! There is a humanitarian opportunity in this humanitarian crisis!!

Never before this food distribution have so many women--grandmothers, mothers, and daughters--representing every family in the area come together faithfully every three weeks (over 400 women). So, let's turn something bad into something good!

This Maasai community has been in economic decline into deep poverty since the 1980's when they were removed from their land by the government, which used the land to establish a game reserve. Without adequate land, the traditional cattle-based life of the Maasai has continued to collapse. In 2005 they reached out to ADEA to help start schools for their children.

Now we have a unique opportunity to ignite some positive change for an upward trajectory and a better future.

Literacy: Our Maasai program leader estimates that only 2% of these adults can read. ADEA is developing early-literacy textiles. We have tested prototypes in schools and villages. People (young and old) love them, and the textiles are effective. Here's our chance to get these women and their families reading in our fun and innovative way!! The social incentive of gathering every three weeks is invaluable.

Hearing the women's voices – Conversations over needs and equity: Crisis often results in cultural change. The Maasai culture is extremely male-centered. But with so many men away looking for money for their families, women are taking on more responsibilities. These food distribution gatherings are a chance to hear the women's concerns, hopes, and ideas related to the present and the future. In Melinda Gates's recent book, The Moment of Lift, she discusses the importance of hearing the concerns of women. Societies improve when women are elevated toward equity. But this needs to come from their wishes. (If you have a connection to Melinda, I would be thankful for an introduction, as this is the type of movement she is supporting). Specific issues to be discussed are access to water, child brides, contraception (these families average 8.5 children), and possibly female circumcision (FGM), among other things. Maasai women of the community (young and old) will be leading these conversations on topics of their concern.

Home gardening production: In October 2020, ADEA and PMD rented an acre of land. Three of our Maasai team farmed for the first time under the supervision of Master Gardener Dara Finnegan. Our team learned much unique to planting in Rombo (including that elephant dung is the best garden fertilizer – and we have it in spades). We are developing a modular roof, water catchment system, and fenced garden that we hope to ultimately give to every family to grant them some agency, food security, and income to feed themselves through the dry season.

Rombo Maasai - Story Corp: StoryCorps' mission is to preserve and share humanity's stories to build connections between people and to create a more just and compassionate world. Here is a chance for us to record the stories of these Maasai to share with you. Video is a powerful way to humanize people. And that's what we want to do.

Our primary aim is to keep these communities alive (literally) with food distribution (and \$9500 is needed to do just that)– but we also have the chance to do much more. Please consider supporting this work and this unique humanitarian opportunity!! I expect to travel to Kenya by the end of August to join in this work.

"He who has mercy on the poor, happy is he." Psalm 14:21b

Many thanks - Douglas McFalls - ADEA Director

You can contact me at adeadouglas@gmail.com if you have any questions.

For more images visit: <https://www.facebook.com/douglas.a.mcfalls>

Contributions are tax deductible and can be made at www.MaKuYaMuseum.org

