



Newsletter: February 2009 Douglas McFalls

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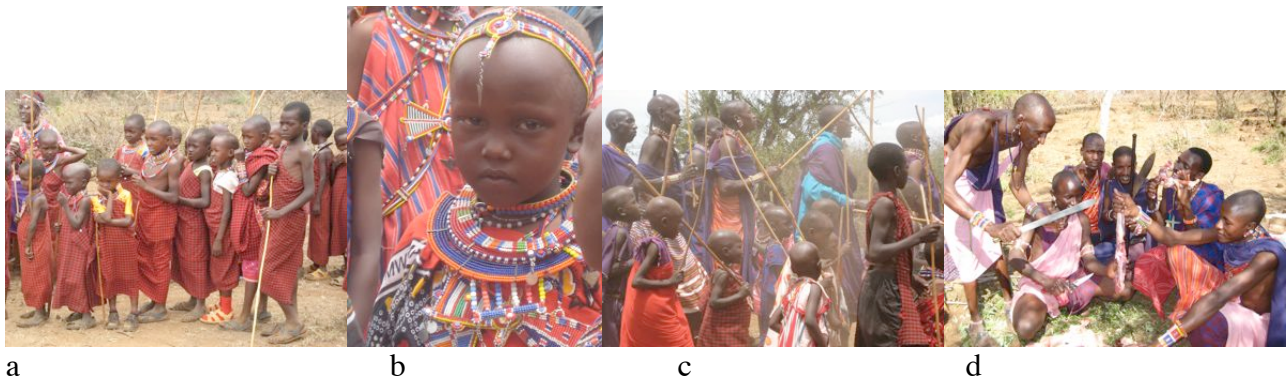
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February 2009 NEWSLETTER

SUBJECT: THE FIRST ANNUAL MAASAI BOMA SCHOOL CONVENTION



In my last newsletter about the Boma Schools I mentioned the bringing together of our two schools to launch the **FIRST ANNUAL MAASAI BOMA SCHOOLS CONVENTION**. On Saturday, February 7, we inaugurated the event and it was a huge success, with the greatest praises coming from the elders. One elder stated, “I thought my son’s generation would be the last to dance with traditional bells. What joy to see my grandson dancing in a Maasai way.” The excitement was palpable as the young boys ran beside their Moran (warrior) fathers imitating their moves, jumps and steps. And the girls watched on intently as the older and younger women competed for dancing endurance. Many were happily surprised to hear these children singing traditional Maasai songs. They said the Moran danced in ways they had not seen in years.

But along with the enjoyment of dancing, singing and feasting; chiefs, elders and even Maasai who now live in Nairobi, came to share about the importance of education in these days of hardship and change.

I was told that our efforts have literally launched a renaissance in the heritage appreciation among the Maasai. As our office gradually fills with traditional artifacts, Maasai elders are telling these items’ stories to the younger generations; and this recent event has now solidified their renewed interest in their Maasai heritage. Even the local Pentecostal church has acknowledged their error in discouraging traditional Maasai dress, and their churches are now full of red fabric and colorful beads. Though I don’t know if we deserve any credit for that shift; it is nonetheless very exciting!

As a result of these successes, we will attempt to make a festival a twice yearly event in July focusing on adult and warrior dances, songs and games – and in January focus on competitions between the schools including singing, dancing, wrestling, spear throwing, beadwork etc. In July we will invite people from the 10 neighboring villages in the spirit of a festival. Through this we hope to get access to funding that can improve our school grounds to serve the event and the students throughout the year. We will also take advantage of the gathering to introduce new advances in animal care, health, water and education.

So it seems I have entered the festival business.

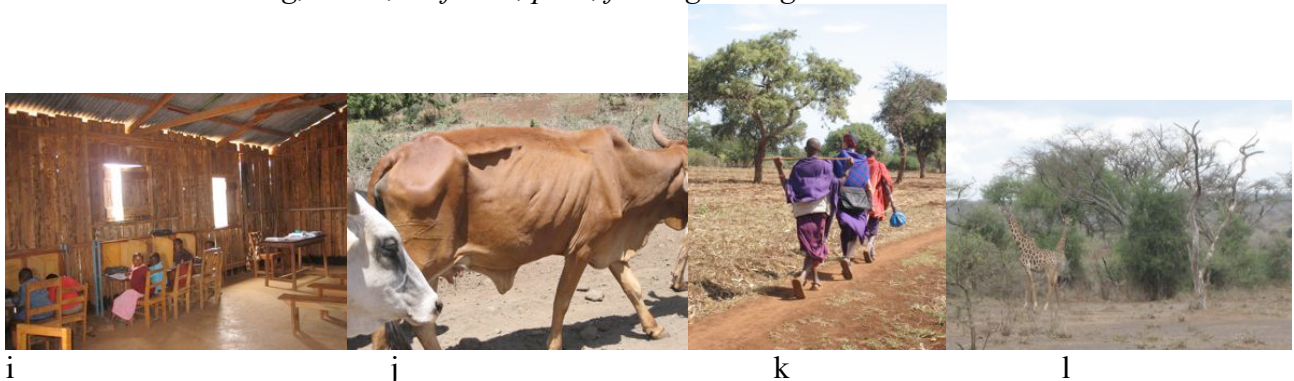


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| e | f | g | h |
| a) Lemong'o boys wait to perform | | e) The teachers prepare the children to present | |
| b) Preschool girl waits for the event to begin | | f) Three generations of women | |
| c) Boys try to dance with their fathers | | g) Top students receive a small award | |
| d) The fathers slaughter goats for the feast | | h) Girls presenting while mom stand behind | |

Here is an excerpt from a recent email I received from Tipape Loomu– our Boma School Director:

Our Annual convention brought a new spirit of togetherness and cooperation among the parents in schools and for both communities to learn to work as a team rather than just being Lemong'o or Esukuta. The fact that it was a Maasai function did not deter non-Maasai parents to attend in Maasai attire. This brought much hope for me, in a Kenya divided along ethnic lines. The speakers emphasized on zero tolerance to political divisions in projects like education in a community young in development like ours. We learned again to share and being organized with food especially in this season when one will thank the Lord for having even a single meal in a day.

Right now, our main challenge still remain teachers, books, buildings and furniture. And also other school needs including, water, uniforms, pens, feeding among others.



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i) 2nd graders in the church/school building at Lemong'o
j) Hungry and thirsty cows

k) Walking through the parched fields (I'm in the middle)
l) Giraffes on the roadside

DROUGHT: In my last newsletter about the Maasai the rains had just begun, and we hoped that that would be the end of the drought that has plagued the area. But sadly, those rains were the last rains that Rombo has seen since. On this return visit, the cattle were being brought in from the parched bush to eat the dried crops that failed to produce any yield at all. Times are hard in Rombo without reliable water. I heard of two farmers who look their own lives in despair of not being able to pay back the loans they took for seeds. Tipape's brother took their cattle into the legally "off limits" Tsavo West game park in search of water and food for their small herd (This was traditionally a Maasai watering area – providing a year round supply of water, until the Kenyan government confiscated these lands for the purpose of a Game Park for tourist). His brother was captured, beaten and spent two nights in prison. Life is very hard in Rombo, now more than ever.

There is so much to do and consider! Not just schools but economic development activities to relieve the burden on cattle and water.

A NEW SEASON OF ACTION! Since my last visit to the Maasai have come to a state of frustration that I believe is leading me to new action. To put it "biblically", it's time for the leadership team and me to move on from milk to meat. I know that what we have achieved is substantial, wonderfully community grounded, and to-date, proven an effective system for the place we live and with whom we are working. But now that we have proven ourselves, I feel the drive to push farther and to dream bigger. Seeing the hungry families doing their best to "swim in unknown waters" of post herding life, I am feeling it is time! Just as an example, I spontaneously put together a spreadsheet costing out enough curricula for 200 annual sets (to be put in notebooks and reused) from preschool to 7th grade. The amount came just shy of \$800,000. And there are campuses to build, teacher training to be done, visiting teacher programs to establish, festivals to launch, alternative economic initiative to explore, water sources to find, advanced training for the leadership to fund, learning centers to be designed...and so much...so many wonderful considerations for the future! Oddly, I am more excited than discouraged – I have been reminded lately that I believe in a God who's capable of doing the impossible. So what does that mean 2009 and 2010 will look like for me – I'll keep you posted!

Thanks to all of you who support me even just by reading this newsletter. I expect that I will be more specific about our needs (and mine) in the future. [Here's one, it costs \$500 a month to keep the school going currently. We are set though this month. – Contribution information is at the top of the page.]

I hope you and yours are all doing OK in the challenging economic times.

Douglas

PS. My Seattle friend, Pam Hathaway recent visit inspired the convention launching. Now she has returned with a new energy for life and helping here in some way. Ever thought of coming to Africa? Who knows what sort of blessing you will be. We are also planning to develop a visiting teachers program for as short as a week or as long as a term. So consider a visit. It would change your life and I'd love to see you!