

M.A.A. « Maasai Aid Association »
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Activity report for 2007

Dear members and friends of M.A.A.,

This report gives you in detail all the activities carried out by MAA during our 4th year since its foundation. As you can read, we carried out various, challenging projects.

By the end of 2007, M.A.A. provided school sponsorships –grants, to 200 needy children in Kenya, in majority girls from Maasai ethnic group.

The first characteristic in MAA's actions is the continuity and the constant support given to Maasai villages we are working with. Our support was especially appreciated in Narok and Kajiado Districts of Kenya.

Projects and realizations

Here are the implemented projects :

- The number of sponsored pupils by MAA in all education levels (from kinder-garden, primary and secondary schools) has progressed from 90 children in 2005 to 200 children in 2007. Majority of these pupils from Maasai origin comprise (90%), (85%) being girls.

This encouraging result has been achieved thanks to private donors who take nominatively a child under their protection (paying for her food, school fees, uniform etc). Every Godfather/Godmother is informed about the sponsored girl and receives once every year pictures and school report on her progress. We greatly thank BNP Paribas Foundation for providing school sponsorships through MAA.

- One year after constructing a dormitory and school kitchen beside the primary school of Iltumtum village that caters for 50 Maasai children living far from school, we decided to further help this project. MAA came up with an idea of providing a yearly food plan to 12 girls from nearby villages, while they board in the dormitory during the week. Indeed the Kenya government provides all District schools with a day meal for every pupil, but this is not enough while boarding in the dormitory. Because many parents are unable to afford the other two meals for the day, MAA provides these meals to these girl pupils in order to encourage them to learn and to protect them from early forced marriages.
- **Two new classrooms were successfully constructed by MAA for Elerai Enkare Primary School** in Rombo / Oloitokitok area of Kajiado District). The principal sponsor for this project was the State of Geneva, Service of International Solidarity which covered 50% of the provisional budget. A generous private donor, as well as several municipalities in Geneva Canton have contributed financially to this project. The two class rooms (50 m² each), completely furnished are able to host 80-100

additional pupils in Primary School. We give our sincere thanks to all sponsors especially the “UN Women Guild” in Geneva.

- During 2007, MAA has intensified its preventive action regarding FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) among Maasai community. Ways in which MAA is fighting against FGM includes giving information campaigns in villages and schools, awareness dissemination by seminars and workshops, and encouraging alternative solutions in Kenya and Switzerland.

Precisely, during 2007 MAA :

- Has organized more than **10 seminars and workshops reflecting the bad effects of FGM. These seminars and workshops have been attended by more than 800 women and men in Kenya.** We conduct our seminars especially into small rural villages, in churches, in schools, sometimes in the meeting point of the village, under trees.
- On 24th of March 2007 MAA held in Geneva Switzerland a **diner meeting** with religious and community leaders. This reunion was destined to **the immigrant of Somali women community of Geneva.** 25 Somali women attended this event, where FGM information was given simultaneously in French and Somali language, thanks to the help of DARYEEL – a Somali association in Geneva.
- MAA is supporting financially **7 Maasai women cooperatives in Kenya registering 20-50 women each.** The members of these women groups are Maasai mothers committed NOT to cut their girls. The decision to create women groups was taken by the mothers after they had attended our seminars and because they are determined to change the bad tradition. They prepare traditional Maasai beadwork in the villages, send it to MAA (Switzerland) where they are sold in every event we organize along the year. Once or twice a year MAA sends back money to the women cooperatives in Kenya. By doing so, MAA rewards the commitment and courage of Maasai mothers who often undergo domestic violence and physical abuse because of resisting to husbands pressure and wanting to preserve their girl's body integrity.

Finally,

- Between **November and December 2007, MAA held 4 alternative ceremonies in 4 different parts of Kenya, allowing 170 girls to escape from the ritual FGM.** Our staff and local trainers held alternative “Rite of Passage” ceremonies in schools and churches. These ceremonies allow girls from 12 to 14 years to go through another ritual, similar to the “traditional circumcision” avoiding the “cutting part”, mutilation and bleeding. These initiations lasted 2 days in every village :
 - The first day of the seminar comprises of a workshop for the initiates and their parents, and
 - The next day is the celebration ceremony for the whole village just like in the traditional circumcision ceremonies.

The testimonies from these ceremonies are very encouraging. Village people loved “the other way”, and the feed back from parents and teachers is more than positive. Everyone enjoyed the ceremony, the girls sang and danced ritual songs and dances, performed traditionally by the mutilated girls and their mates. MAA offered T-shirts to all girl graduates with the wordings: “**I am a free FGM generation**” as well as certificates of graduation.

As a result of this first positive impact on replacing FGM ceremony with an alternative ritual, MAA is wishing to multiply by 10 next year the operation. We hope to find the funds necessary to extend the concept in more villages and schools. However, FGM issue is quite taboo in Western countries as in Africa, thus making it difficult for us to get funds for this purpose.

- M.A.A. participated as usual at the « **Fête de la Musique** » 2007 organised by the City of Geneva on the summer solstice day. This local musical event lasts a whole week-end taking place in the middle of the old town. MAA participates every year with a stand selling Kenyan food, Greek food and Brazilian cocktails (all the nationalities of MAA committee members). Eating chapatis and Muchuzi and drinking Caipirinia (Brazilian cocktail) is a way for the Swiss public to enjoy the feast and at the same time help us with funds for the children projects in Kenya. The committee members worked tirelessly for 3 days and nights, under the “music fever”. We thank all the volunteers who helped us to make it a success.
- MAA paid the **orthopedic surgery operation to 3 small Maasai children**, suffering congenital infirmities (no legs, a club foot, a one handed girl). The surgery took place in Kijabe Hospital, by the Dr Tim Mead – CURE Kenya.
- The well known Brazilian photographer **Erico HILLER** followed the FGM campaign in Kenya during May and June 2007, accompanying Annie through the village seminars in Rombo. Thereafter he realized **an article published in MARIE-CLAIRE Brazil** (October edition) about FGM bad tradition and how Maasai women are coping with it. He also describes MAA role in FGM eradication and sensitization. The response from the Brazilian public was very positive. Many were shocked to learn that not far from us an ethnic group is still practicing dangerous traditions that can have severe bad effects to a woman’s health. As a result of our collaboration with Erico, we published the **calendar 2008 “Maasai women portraits”** in 100 examples only, which sold out very rapidly. The photos were offered by Erico to MAA.
- Two committee members, Annie and Judith travelled to Kenya in the course of the year to supervise our projects and meet collaborators and beneficiaries..

To all our donors, we say thank you from the bottom of our hearts for trusting and supporting MAA actions. Our special thanks go to:

- International Solidarity Service (State of Geneva)
- Town council of Présinge, Lancy, Satigny and Chêne Bourg
- The Geneva UNWG (UN Women Guild)
- The BNP Paribas Suisse Foundation
- All the members and donors for their support.

Special thanks to our principal Kenyan collaborators: Mrs. Alice Seleyian and Mr. Joseph Nkanoni Ole Lempira for their commitment and excellent work.

1 February 2008, Geneva.