



THE EAST AFRICA PROJECT

The East Africa Project Newsletter

September 2020

The prophet Elijah sat under a tree by the Brook Cherith, hiding from King Ahab and his shrew wife Jezebel. Already exhausted from standing up to the king and battling the prophets of Baal, he was unsure what was next. God had used the ravens to feed him, but the brook was starting to dry up. Things were looking bleak.

Just under 100 miles away as the crow flies, in the coastal town of Zarapheth, a widow was at her wits end. Her husband had died and left her a little money, but it had run out. She'd never run a business before and there was no money to start one anyway. The pantry was about to be empty. Maybe a few weeks' worth of flour and oil were left. Meat was a distant memory. Surely God had forgotten her, and she and her son would soon be dead from starvation!

Two people, strangers, 100 miles apart, food running out, depressed, discouraged, wondering if God had forgotten them. "But God!"

The phrase "But God" is in white letters on a blue bracelet given to me by one of my best friends. Mike has been battling cancer, neuropathy and failing kidneys for close to 5 years now. A lesser man would have given up. But Mike lives by the phrase "**But God**". "**But God** remembered Noah"; "**but God** will be with you"; "**but God** did not give David into his hands"; "**But God** will redeem me from the realm of the dead"; "**but with God** all things are possible"; "**but God** raised him from the dead". **BUT GOD**, spoke to the widow and then to Elijah: "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you."

It's a hard life in rural Kenya. The odds are stacked against you making it to middle age. Women do backbreaking work all day long. Men struggle to find work and when they do it's often grueling. Around every bend in the road you will see a Kenyan 'mama' standing bent over a pot of beans or washing clothes in a dirty bucket. Many people there live in 10 by 10 mud or brick houses with dirt floors. Cooking is done on open fires out in the alley way. Toilets are a ditch out behind the houses. Food is bought on the street from people who walked 5 km to the market and 5 km back, usually with the basket of fruit or potatoes precariously balanced on their heads. The reality of this life is that men are often not present in the family. They die young, leave to find work in the bigger cities, or abandon their family altogether because of the shame of not being able to provide for them. HIV/Aids is rampant in many parts of the country and carries a huge social stigma. Add in the dynamics of children born out of sexual abuse and the results are that there are hundreds of thousands of women in Kenya trying to survive and provide for their children by themselves.



The ladies received new bibles on our last trip!

Enter a little spitfire of a woman named Rebecca. Rebecca Khasoa is Richard Makani's sister and is an amazing woman with an amazing heart, both literally and figuratively. She's all of 5 foot nothing, but she is Headmistress for two primary schools 2 hours apart. The first school that Rebecca started over 10 years ago, Light School, is a little oasis full of laughing children tucked away on the outskirts of the town of Kakamega. Most of the children in the school live in a home without a father. Rebecca's story is long and complicated but suffice it to say she knows how difficult it is for women to raise a family on their own. She began ministering to the widows and single mothers of the children in the school. She meets with these ladies regularly, holding Bible studies and dispensing love and advice. Several years ago, Rebecca began to find herself dizzy and short of breath. Long story short, she had developed a heart condition that required surgery. God provided for her to travel to a hospital in Bomet for the surgery and while she is weaker physically these days, her spirit is stronger than ever before.

One of Rebecca's wishes was for a "women's center" where these ladies could meet, learn a trade, attend Bible studies, and generally support each other. We agreed to pray with her that God would provide such a place. Well, God is doing it again! God put it in the heart of several folks to help this group of ladies. We have now purchased land, put a fence around it, and have sent money to buy a "posho mill" for the ladies and build a structure to house it! A posho mill is a mill used in the grinding of maize to make maize flour, a staple food for most rural Africans. Quality maize flour is always sought after, because it is generally free from weevils and other contaminants, and it brings a premium price. The profit generated from the mill will be plowed back into the women's center and will provide a source of income for many of the ladies. We hope to have the mill up and running before the fall harvest. Now we are praying for God to provide the funds for a meeting center, with a concrete foundation, cement blocks and a tin roof.



“and my God will supply every need...”

The widow of Zaraheth and the prophet Elijah. 100 miles apart, yet God was preparing each to meet the needs of the other. The ladies of Kakamega and Christians in America, thousands of miles apart. Is God perhaps telling you “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”? Read 1 Kings 17:8-24 for the whole story but let me give the outcome away: “So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family”. And finally, the epilogue: “Look, your son is alive!” Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth!” **But God!**

Mt. Elgon – Ministry in a Pandemic

“Mt. Elgon is about an hour and a half’s drive from the village of Kitale. It would probably only take about 45 minutes were it not for all the potholes, construction detours, washed out roads and foot high speed bumps (as if you really need extra barriers to slow you down!). Once you pass the village of Endebess, you come to a cleared-out, rutted cow path that passes for a road and meanders up a 30-degree grade halfway up the mountain to a particularly special plot of land. This area overlooks an expansive valley with the Kenya-Uganda border in sight to the west, Kitale to the east, and miles of pastoral land to the north. It over this land that many tribal battles have been fought.

The ethnic conflicts within Mt. Elgon area take two forms. The first one is inter-tribal, mainly between the Bukusu tribe and the Sabaot, and the other is inter-clan, within each tribe. As in many areas of the world, the battle is over real or perceived injustice in land allocation, and many times has resorted to armed conflict. The most recent large-scale violence in the area occurred around the time of the Kenya elections of 2008. Country wide outbreaks of violence that initially were spawned by allegations of vote tampering and corruption spilled over and re-awakened long-standing tensions between tribes. On Mt. Elgon, hundreds of people were murdered, young men were rounded up and tortured, property was stolen, and women were brutalized. It was with this backdrop that God began to speak to Pastor Richard Makani and his wife Hellen about reaching this area for Christ.

Pastor Richard and some of the men he had trained began holding Bible studies and church services under the trees in the area. The people of the region said it was too dangerous to come there and build. Richard was not deterred.



Mt Elgon School of Ministry

After moving their service location some 17 different times, God provided a plot of land on a former battleground and began to give those men a vision for a place to train pastors to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. These pastors would then go back into their communities and share how Jesus shed His blood for the tribes in Kenya so they could have a home forever in heaven. They no longer needed to shed each other’s blood over a temporary home on earth. As God revealed that vision to Richard and his team, He also began to provide something no one could see coming!

The Kenyans have two sayings that we would do well to adopt. One is “Pole, Pole” (poh-lay, poh-lay), which means “slowly by slowly”. This saying reminds us that a hurried life is not a blessed life. God sometimes moves over time to remind us that He works at His pace, not ours. The other saying is similar, “Haraka Haraka Akuna Baraka”, which means “Quickly, Quickly has no blessing!”. God has now, slowly by slowly, turned teaching under the trees into the Mt. Elgon School of Ministry! I was reminded this morning as I read about Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem that God provides for His people when we act on his calling.

“How many of you crossed 2 rivers to be here today? 3? 4!” Four was the winner. One pastor had crossed 4 different rivers as he walked to the Training Center on Mt. Elgon. One man had walked over 20KM to be there. For over 5 years, pastors have been travelling up to 25 km on foot 2 days a week to learn Bible truth at this Center. First, God provided a simple pole barn shelter with a tin roof. Then, he provided a spacious stone building for teaching. Two years ago, we stood in the corn field next to the Center and prayed that God would provide a dormitory for students so they could come and stay for weeks at a time and learn. In February, we cut the ribbon on a new 2-story dorm designed to house dozens of students and teachers! Bible training that previously took 18 months to complete because they could only meet about 6 hours a day, 1-2 days/week will now be able to be accomplished in 2-3 months! Last month, God moved the heart of someone to provide \$75K in funds to match everything given towards building a kitchen and dining hall. The Mt. Elgon School of Ministry now has its first class of ‘on campus’ students! “Come and see that the Lord is good!”

It has been our goal to come alongside indigenous ministries to help further their work.

Pastor Richard remarked that the teaching from Bellevue teams and others over the years has really helped them reinforce the curriculum they had been teaching. For many of the Bellevue team, the time spent under men like Adrian Rogers and Steve Gaines prepared them well to share what God has taught them. Martin Luther said, "we are all mere beggars telling other beggars where to find bread". The opportunities that God has given us to share His Word and His principles have been priceless. But the story is just beginning!

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Kenya imposed a strict curfew and lockdown. From sundown to sunup, no one was allowed outside. Transportation was limited, supply chains were disrupted, and food became scarce. Many people in Kenya live day-to-day. If they don't earn money that day, they don't eat. As movement was limited and goods in short supply, many jobs were put on hold. People depending on daily wages were evicted, One pastor said "With rain fall, bad roads in the villages with limited hours cut by curfew, no open markets, those who survived by doing side small business are finding it hard to fend for their families." So what did Richard do? Read this!

"Last week we were able to give food to 350 households in the Mt. Elgon region (near the training center). We also gave each household one Swahili Bible. Before we gave the food. I preached a simple Gospel message from John 3:16 to more than 1,000 people who came from those families. About 1/2 of the people trusted Christ as Savior. We entrusted each team of two trained disciples with 10 households for personal follow-up. These disciples will have time with them once per week, in each household, teaching them and helping them learn how to read their new Bibles. We had all of our pastors, the local government administration police and community leaders who were of great help in making sure of the social distancing. It was a miracle to see all who gave their life to Jesus. Each name was recorded by our pastors for following up. The devil was not happy with us. He tried to attack us on the way back home. We had two flat tires before reaching the tarmac (paved) road. We were blocked by a tractor that was stuck in the mud in the middle of the road. We had to turn off the main road and find a new path. It was a miracle to climb the mountain and try to make our own road in the bush, passing through the rocks. It took us an extra hour to reach the tarmac road. We were worried about the daily police roadblock at 7 P.M. (curfew). Praise God, we were right at the door of our house at 7 P.M."

This is why we do what we do! "This" is "Jesus with skin on". "This" began with simple obedience. God told Richard to start preaching under a tree on Mt. Elgon 10 years ago. And now it is producing fruit. Keep praying for the Mt. Elgon School of Ministry. Maybe one day God will raise up an Adrian Rogers, a Steve Gaines, or a Richard Makani! "Bwana Asifiwe!" ("Praise the Lord!")



Pastor Richard handing out bags of food on Mt Elgon



Filming for "Restore: Savings" begins

- This curriculum was created by the Chalmers Center and helps congregations to start savings groups as a church ministry. The purpose of this curriculum is to encourage, inspire, and teach members of savings groups as they experience Jesus' reconciling power in all areas of their lives
- Training videos for the Facilitators are complete and weekly sessions are being filmed.
- Ladies from our mission teams are teaching the sessions.
- A new video online course website is being developed.

Current Project List

- ~~\$12,000—land & fencing for widows center~~ – PROVIDED!
- \$15,000 for a meeting center on the widow's land.
- ~~\$5,000 for a Posho Mill, concrete foundation and temporary shelter~~ – PROVIDED!
- \$5,000 for block walls and metal roof for the mill room.
- \$1,650 for a laptop and projector to show training videos.
- \$1,000 for chairs and tables for the widow's center.
- \$350 – 1 year license for our accounting software
- \$100 – 10 bibles for Mt. Elgon School of Ministry
- \$50 – 1 month of website hosting & video editing service

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Do you know what this is? Do you wonder how this will be used to improve the lives of widows and single mother in the village of Kakamega? Read inside to see how God is using a Posho Mill to meet needs in Kenya.

