



# Annual Report FY 07

# "Together", we did it!



Year One was a success; we not only established a charity, but we made an “impact”. The donors who provided financial and moral support, and the staff of Sauti Moja, all of whom are volunteers, made a difference in the lives of people in desperate straits. Together, we have cause to celebrate along with our beneficiaries, such as the widow in northern Kenya and who expressed her gratitude to us, saying,

**“I wished I could thank those who assisted me. I rejoice and am overwhelmed with joy.”**

On a personal level, it’s been an incredible privilege to sit in homes and participate in community meetings, listening to personal stories of despair, previously, and of optimism, now. These testimonies continue to confirm how “a little” in a small agency like Sauti Moja “can go a long way” in meeting desperate needs, stimulating hope, and strengthening community. I hope this report and the included stories exhibit these achievements, and that you can share in the satisfaction that we’ve had over the past year. As Co-Founder of Sauti Moja, I join those who benefited from the combined effort of donors and staff, and express my gratitude to all.



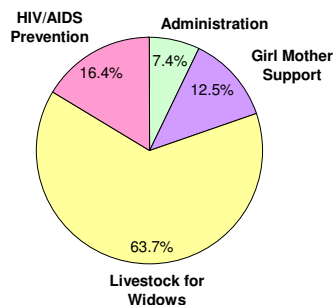
*Community meeting in Marsabit, Kenya.*

**“We have an effective and efficient partnership – compassionate Canadians; professional, dedicated volunteers; and most importantly, eager individuals, families, and communities striving to better their livelihoods.”**

This report will firstly provide an overview of our financial accomplishments; then, summarize several projects and the outcomes in four “stand alone” fact sheets, and lastly, introduce two new projects that Sauti Moja will be undertaking in the next financial year.

## Finances

Sauti Moja’s income in Year One, which ended June 30, 2007, was just over \$50,000 – a little above our target! Of total receipts, Sauti Moja expended about \$31,000; the under spending approximately reflects timing deadlines for project decision-making and the proportion of donations made later in the financial year. This under spend is currently being used for on-going project activities.



We told donors that <10% of their contribution will be spent on administration, including fundraising, in Canada. We are pleased to report that we managed to keep that to 7.4% in Year One. Maintaining low overhead costs is a core principle for Sauti Moja, which ensures that your money is used most effectively to assist people and communities - we remain steadfast in this commitment

Cost of livestock was higher than projected, as after the drought, there was short supply of high-quality donkeys and goats, and there was a high demand for purchasing camels. This increased prices by about 40%, thereby wreaking havoc with our budget.

Sauti Moja will continue to set modest financial targets, as our first commitment to donors is quality, not quantity. However, now that we have the structures, systems and staff in place for on-going activities, our financial target for Year Two is \$100,000. This year, we will place increased effort on fundraising.

**Your ongoing help to mobilize supporters will be valued!**

# Camels for Vulnerable Widows



For Northern Kenya, the drought of 2005-2006 was the most severe in several decades. Livestock perished in large numbers, destroying the food supply of pastoral (nomadic) peoples, who have traditionally survived on a diet of milk, some blood, and occasionally meat. In the lowlands of Marsabit District, almost all the donkeys, >80% of the cows, and about 60% of the sheep and goats died. In contrast, almost all the camels survived the drought, though too few families were fortunate enough to have them for food and carrying loads. This recent demonstration of the drought hardiness of camels, and their dependability has reinforced the Rendille expression that, “a camel is one half of God”, which reflects the important role of camels in the survival of families and communities.

## **Sauti Moja provides camels to widows and single mothers to help them recover from a recent drought, regain dignity & hope, and reduce future vulnerability.**

We in the West are relatively untouched by the effect of our consumption on climate change and weather extremes, but drought has created despair for many Rendille and Samburu families, especially families headed by widowed or abandoned women. Since the drought, families have mostly survived on short-term food aid, but when this ends, hunger and suffering will increase. Families left with only a few livestock have no expectation of a brighter future without help.



Nolaso is a “white widow” – the literal translation for a woman abandoned by her husband. She has three children. The middle child goes to nursery school, while the oldest - a seven year old son – cares for their five goats and sheep, which are the only livestock left after the drought decimated their previous herd of more than 40 goats and 5 cows! Like other women Sauti Moja helps, Nolaso told us that every day she waits to see who might have extra milk, which she then begs for her children. When asked about the benefit of a camel, she said that she never dreamed of having a camel to help her with her work, as such an asset has been far beyond her grasp. She told us that the camel will benefit her for years to come, as it will become the property of her oldest son, who will care for it and for her.

**“I will no longer have to beg from neighbours to feed my son. I will be a full, respected person again.”**

Mare is a young Rendille widow. She was the second wife to an elderly man, who promised her 100 goats upon his death. Unfortunately, after her husband passed, the first wife and her relatives prevented Mare from receiving any inheritance. Now, she and her son survive on relief food and the milk they can obtain from neighbours. In contrast to Western societies, she can not escape poverty and singleness by remarrying due to strict cultural customs. She is excited about the camel she received from Sauti Moja. When asked how it will affect her life, she said it will allow her to be self-sufficient, care for her son, and regain dignity within her community.



# Donkeys & Goats for Vulnerable Widows



For Northern Kenya, the drought of 2005-2006 was the most severe in several decades. Those pastoralists living on the lower slopes of Marsabit Mountain were left particularly vulnerable, as they generally subsist with a small livestock herd and cultivation of small fields. The on-going drought has left many with no crop and numerous livestock deaths. It was particularly destructive to those who have only a few animals, as these people heavily rely on them for ferrying water, milk and meat, and cash income. The widows and abandoned women with no livestock, yet sole responsibility for caring for their children, have been left most vulnerable, and have the least chance of recovery from the drought.

## **Sauti Moja provides a female donkey and four female goats to widows in order to help them recover from drought, care for their families, and regain dignity and hope.**

In contrast to those of us from the West, many families suffer the effects of our excessive consumption on climate change and weather extremes. For example, the drought has created despair for many Borana families in Marsabit District, especially families headed by widowed or abandoned women. Since the drought, families have survived on short-term food aid, but when this ends hunger and suffering will increase. There is urgency in providing assistance to female-headed households with no hope for a secure future.



For Borana women, overwhelming workloads characterize their lives. They struggle to milk and care for livestock, prepare food for their families, clean their homes, fetch water and firewood, and often, conduct small business activities for cash income. This often has negative health implications and also impacts their access to social and educational opportunities.

For many women, fetching water is the most time and energy consuming task, leaving little capacity for other activities, including child care. Often, the girl children are also engaged in this household duty, so are unable to attend school. During dry season, Guyatu, a widow with seven children, walks 8-12 km every day to fetch 20 L (about 50 lbs) of water to meet her family's needs.

**“Our backs, which have been wounded by carrying water, are being healed.”**

Buke, like other Borana widows, shows the Sauti Moja team the donkey and goats that she has received. The goats provide milk for the family, and the male offspring will be sold to provide for health care, clothing and education. With the assistance of a donkey, she only has to fetch water every other day, so is less exhausted. Now, Buke also has more time for other duties, and emphasized that now she has stress. She does not have to make a daily choice among begging food from neighbours, making and selling charcoal, and fetching water.



**“I am blessed, and life is no longer the same...my life has turned around.”**

# Support to Child Mothers - Kenya



Within the pastoralist communities of East Africa, there is a large variation in the attitudes toward sexual relations among unwed youth and toward pregnant girls. Within Northern Kenya, several ethnic groups maintain very conservative responses to pregnancy in young girls. Despite the fact that most of the pregnancies result from rape and other forms of sexual exploitation, a pregnant girl is often cast out of the community, facing abandonment from friends and even family. In these instances, girls are usually forced to run away to larger town centers in hopes to find some refuge and means of support. They beg from acquaintances and relatives, they work as a poorly-paid day-laborers in horrible conditions, and often, they have no other choices but to exchange sex for money. If they marry, it will often be to someone who does not respect them. They and their children carry the stigma of unwed pregnancies throughout their lives, and remain some of the most vulnerable people to poverty, HIV/AIDS, and poor health.

**Sauti Moja assists girl-mothers in Kenya to regain self-esteem and a sense of hope by providing psycho-social support, helping rebuild family relationships, and supporting them to return school or start a small business.**



Martha and Clara, two public health nurses who volunteer for Sauti Moja, support a child mother, Grace (right). Grace was impregnated by one of her school teachers when she was 14 years old. When her pregnancy was discovered, she was chased from home and forced to reside in Marsabit town. She suffered a terrible pregnancy, and nearly lost her life due to not only pregnancy complications, but also depression and hopelessness. Fortunately, the life of her child was preserved, whom Grace continues to support and care for. Grace's dream was to return to school, so our Sauti Moja volunteers set out to make it happen. At first, there was no opportunity, as the schools said she was "a bad example to the other girls". However, with perseverance, they got her into a good secondary school. Grace has worked hard, becoming #4 in her class! She's doing incredibly well and breaking new ground for other pregnant girls, who have a similar history of abandonment, abuse, and hopelessness.

**"Through this opportunity I can become healthy again and support myself. It will allow me to care for my daughter and provide her opportunities"**

Nasibo (standing to the left) was only 13 when she was sexually assaulted, became pregnant, and had to leave school. Due to her tiny physique, she required a caesarean section, but the sub-standard medical care led to her child's death and nearly her own. She has fought infections and struggled to recuperate from physical and psychological trauma over the past two years. Sauti Moja became aware of her plight in March 2007, and since then, our volunteers have been providing psychological support and determining the best way to empower her. In June, Sauti Moja invited Nasibo to participate in a micro-business training workshop, and then provided her with a small grant to start a business. Recently, Nasibo proudly showed us the small shop she started with Sauti Moja's grant and excitedly recounted the profits that she had already earned.



# Strengthening Communities to Fight HIV/AIDS



Due to a host of cultural factors, as well as factors related to political marginalization, the Maasai remain some of the most vulnerable people to HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. Among the Maasai in Longido, Tanzania, Sauti Moja is conducting a project entitled, Community Conversations, which arises from the research conducted in Longido by Sauti Moja's Africa Program Manager, Corey Wright, in 2003. It includes a unique methodology originally developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Corey became a certified trainer in this methodology in Zambia in 2005. In cooperation with its partner agency, LOOCIP, Sauti Moja is accompanying communities through a multi-stage process of learning, action, and change. Through the use of numerous participatory tools that stimulate reflection and dialogue, Sauti Moja is helping the community understand the nature of the AIDS epidemic and identify the factors that are contributing to its spread. Sauti Moja will continue to support the community, as they prioritize the most important issues, create plans, and take action.

**Through fostering community dialogue, planning and community action, Sauti Moja hopes to surpass the typical HIV/AIDS initiatives that tend to be individual-focused and treat people as “objects of change” rather than as “agents of change”.**



Corey Wright is shown with LOOCIP staff member, Elifadhili Ngeresa (far left) and Sauti Moja volunteers, Penina Ngayok and Neema Edward. Elifadhili, Penina and Neema are three of the twenty local leaders (men and women) and youth who have been trained in the theory and practical application of Community Conversation methodology, since November 2006. These trained individuals have become the backbone of the project, taking on the leadership and responsibility to conduct community meetings where communities discuss HIV/AIDS, plan strategies to address the epidemic, and initiate actions that ensure the survival of their community.

**“This project will be different. It won't be simply another workshop, another seminar. It won't abandon us. It will walk with us, hand in hand, as we fight the epidemic”.**

The Community Conversations methodology focuses on stimulating dialogue between males and females that brings women and girls' vulnerability to the forefront of the community's prevention planning. For example, in one meeting, some women triggered a heated discussion by stating that women and girls' lack of access to economic resources increases their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. They said that, out of desperation to meet their needs and their children, women and girls sometimes accept sexual propositions in return for economic support. Although the male participants initially rejected this notion, they conceded their position after listening to the perspectives and experiences of the female participants! The meeting concluded with a commitment to addressing this issue in the planning and action stage.



## Fostering Healthy Early Childhood Development

Indigenous children from rural communities are often disadvantaged upon entering the school system, which usually leads to poor performance and early dropout. This perpetuates a cycle of marginalization, as too few Maasai are qualified for

positions of power that affect government services, such as health, education and agriculture, to their communities. Recently, Sara Mollelian, a retired Maasai teacher, returned to her home community of Longido, Tanzania with a vision for reversing this cycle of early school dropout and continued marginalization by providing a head start for children. Sara contacted Sauti Moja, communicating her passion for Maasai children and commitment to bringing free, early childhood education to remote communities. After several meetings in which the community, whereby it confirmed its commitment to this initiative, Sauti Moja embraced Sara's initiative, partnering with her to establish the "Longido Early Childhood Education" (LECHE) Project in communities which are marginalized and without similar services and opportunities. Through this project, Sauti Moja will contribute to healthy early development among rural children, increase success rates at school, and strengthen communities.



*LECHE founder and teacher, Sara Mollelian, helping a young student learn to use a Montessori tool.*

## Child Mother Support – Tanzania

Within the pastoralist communities of East Africa, there is a large variation in the attitudes toward sexual relations among unwed youth and resulting pregnancy in young girls. The Maasai of Tanzania are not as sexually conservative as many other pastoralist communities (such as some of the communities in Northern Kenya, for example). As a result, Maasai girls of Tanzania who become pregnant out-of-wedlock do not typically face similar abandonment, abuse and stigma from families or communities. Nonetheless, many still face immense hardship, especially those girls who discover their pregnancy while in school. In these cases, they face abuse from school authorities, discriminative school policies, police harassment, and then, they are chased from school. Upon returning to their homes, their problems are usually compounded as they commonly face the plight of forced, early marriage. In almost all cases, their hopes and dreams related to school and future aspirations are eliminated. In Longido District, where Sauti Moja conducts a few of its projects, there are no agencies providing support for these girls. Therefore, in cooperation with our partner agency in Longido, LOOCIP, Sauti Moja has agreed to help fill this gap in social services for pregnant girls. The project will seek to provide counseling support to school girls facing early pregnancies, facilitate access to pre and post-natal health resources/services, and advocate for the girls within schools and their families in order to prevent early, forced marriage and ensure that girls maintain their educational opportunities after the birth of their children.



*For a host of socio-cultural factors, early pregnancies are common among Maasai girls. In some cases, %40 of girls are chased from schools due to pregnancy.*

# Sauti Moja Volunteers



*Maasai traditional leader and HIV/AIDS Community Facilitator, Karoli Lesitei*



*Founder and Director of LOOCIP, Dr. Steven Kiruswa*



*LOOCIP Project Coordinator and HIV/AIDS Trainer, Nashipai Laizer*

Sauti Moja's professional volunteers make it the efficient and effective agency it is. This page pays tribute to some of the Kenyan and Tanzania volunteers that represent the foundation of Sauti Moja's work.



*Counsellors and Public Health Nurses, Clara Robe and Martha Bone*



*Community Facilitators, Bokku Gufu, Phillip Abdub, and Jillo Galgalo (left to right)*



*Community Development and Livestock specialist, Aaron Lesiantam (right)*