A Teacher Begins Her Career in Maasailand

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I am a Maasai woman of Ngorongoro. These are my thoughts as I go to begin teaching Maasai children at my first posting as a Maasai teacher.

Generally Maasai parents do not want their children to go to school. They believe that schooling has no value and that it interferes with learning the important things in life, like the whole range of knowledge necessary for the care and pasturing of cattle, goats and sheep. Parents say also that attendance at school often makes difficult or impossible a child’s participation in the rhythm of celebrations, ceremonies, and rites of passage that are so important to becoming a knowledgeable Maasai adult.

**Education:**

**for boys – maybe, for girls – no**

Parents often prevent the children from attending classes. Kids are often kept home so that they can help with the work including, for the boys, taking the family herd to pasture, and for the girls, going for firewood and water, and caring for the younger children.

Teachers too are often obstacles to Maasai students profiting from their time in school. In Maasai country there is often little access to medical treatment and travel is difficult, making food and other necessities difficult to get. There is little incentive in Maasailand for teachers to work at being good teachers. About the only motivation teachers experience is the often-haphazard efforts of the education department to check on them. Teachers frequently take the attitude that if the parents do not care about the education of their kids, why should they?

Many children themselves acquire a bad attitude toward school because they are told by their parents that it will be a very bad thing to pass grade seven and thus get a place in secondary school. Often they are even strongly forbidden by their parents to pass. Thus some children become frightened of school in fear of their parents.

**My particular focus**

As I begin my career as a teacher and prepare to travel to my first posting as a Maasai teacher among my people, I want to focus on the following things:

Firstly, I want to build a good relationship with the parents of my students so that through conversations and meetings they will come to understand that entrance into secondary school for their child will not be a family disaster, but will help the family and the Maasai community. To this end, it will be important for me to convince parents that the children must attend school each school day.

Secondly, I need to work with the children themselves, showing them how education can bring a better life for themselves and their families. Already, we have many examples where this has happened. I myself am an example of a person who has already personally profited by my education. I have already been able to be of help to my mother and father, and I will be even more so in the future.

Thirdly, I want to find help for deserving students for school fees and other expenses so they can take advantage of being chosen to continue their education in secondary school.

Lastly, we need more schools in Maasai country, especially primary schools. In numerous places children have no chance to go to school, because the schools we have are so far away. Having to walk miles and miles to school is often the reason children do not come to school every day.

As I begin my career as a teacher, keep me in your thoughts and prayers.