



Operation Bootstrap Africa

Dignity

Summer 2024 Edition

“If you choose to board this flight to Tanzania, be warned that you will never be the same again.”



I haven't been everywhere, but I have been around the world some. None of the wonderful places I've visited has touched me like Africa has- and I know I'm not alone. I hear time and time again from travelers that this is their 2nd, 5th, 25th visit to Africa. She (Africa) has a way of stirring your soul, calling you back again and again. Whether it's primal, spiritual, or something else, She calls like no other place, and won't let go until you come back.

On my last visit to Tanzania, one of the gentlemen traveling with us said, “I don't see poverty.” We had been in Maasailand for a few weeks, where we had visited many Maasai people. Most didn't have a need for clothes or money. They had no electricity, running water, or even windows in their homes; yet he “hadn't seen poverty”. The breathtaking beauty of the culture, the people, and the environment is so rich that when one reflects on it, poverty isn't an adjective one would use to describe what they are beholding.

There are many aspects of the Maasai culture that make my American sensibilities scream, yet I love the Maasai. It confuses me. When I board the airplane home it's not pity that I feel, but rather a great sense of honor to walk amongst and with the Maasai people. It's a spiritual privilege to hear the powerful stories and assist with education so they can make



the changes in their country and culture that they want to see.



Please consider joining us on an adventure that will open your eyes, your heart, and will challenge your understanding of our world. Education is the key to change in Africa. Allow Africa to change you.

-Jason Bergmann,
Executive Director of OBA

Please welcome our new staff member, Karen Rose!

Welcome Karen Rose, OBA's new Director of Donor Impact. Karen Rose has over 25 years of experience in non-profit development as a development executive, a consultant for various firms, and with her own firm—K. Rose Fundraising. She has acted in the role of Development Director for a college, a youth drop-in center, and a child advocacy center. She has also provided capital campaign counsel to a wide variety of organizations, including: private schools, churches, libraries, museums, and youth-serving social service agencies, including OBA for its Mark and Linda Jacobson Endowed Scholarship Campaign.

Karen resides in Minneapolis with her husband of 28 years. She has two grown sons: Isaac (24) is living and working in Dallas, TX, and Daniel (22) is a senior in college in St. Paul, MN. Karen enjoys the outdoors, hiking and biking, and hopes to take up painting soon. She is excited to join the Operation Bootstrap Africa team and looks forward to the opportunity to meet and inspire donors to help advance OBA's critical mission to strengthen communities in Africa through education, healthcare, agriculture and other locally-based projects.



A “True” Discovery Tour- Stacie Latimer



Mere days ago, my plane touched down in Seattle, following a journey nearly halfway across the planet. I joined Executive Director Jason Bergmann and fellow travelers on an Operation Bootstrap Discovery Tour. Such tours with OBA are carefully planned, and I can't recommend them enough. You share such experiences and adventures with fellow travelers, OBA staff, and partners in Arusha.

This was my second trip to Tanzania after having volunteered at a government school in Arusha for five weeks last summer. I joined the OBA group for the first week, then peeled off to be with “my” school while the rest continued on safari. I had the privilege of a small safari; so I knew the awe and wonder that awaited them (and boy oh boy, was there wonder! Three rhinos! The Great Migration still filling the plains of the Serengeti!) But can I say that the same level of awe and wonder on safari was with me at every visit to the OBA project sites? Yes. We sometimes visited 3 a day. Jason is a wonder—the real deal. He is humble and present, and has authentic relationships with the founders/coordinators/teachers at each site. They even ask after each other's families. Jason's deep investment in and belief

in each project is obvious. He showed up with a newly designed T-shirt for one school as an idea to boost much needed enrollment. He brought gifts for graduating Maasai girls, bottles of bubbles for children in foster care, and a full suitcase of books for 3 children who have recently become orphans. OBA, projects, travelers - we are all lucky to have Jason alongside.

My time in Tanzania last July was one of learning. Learning of people's lives, their strength, their welcome, and their pride in being Tanzanian;

however, I didn't feel much hope. There are so many hardships to face and so few resources available. Someone might need surgery, but go to a hospital, learn of the cost, and have to return home. Many students who attend government schools without access to English instruction have their education end at age 13. My school of 750 students was without food. (Gratefully, and with OBA's help, I was able to fundraise enough to continue a feeding program there.)

While traveling with the Discovery Tour, hope just rises up. Nurses in training, children with disabilities living in dormitories, 24 young women living at Eripoto (the Maasai word for safe) with their education guaranteed, all thanks to OBA and supporters. Esuvat Lucumay of Eripoto and her team visiting



over 1,000 girls to teach an empowerment program, as well as gathering Maasai communities (especially boys and men) to offer food, clothing, and a different vision for their girls. Finally, of course, 350 young women laughing, learning, and celebrating graduation together - with each graduate knowing her future CAN happen, as graduates (now doctors, lawyers, architects, business owners, teachers...) return for alumni days and graduations.

Running parallel to this hope is an ongoing, profound need. Ilboru needs toothpaste, blankets, and curtains. Students there and at the MaaSAE Girls Lutheran Secondary School (MGLSS) who have no home to go to over holidays are taken in by teachers. Eripoto has 24 young women, but a waiting list of over 150. At MGLSS 32 girls graduated, but 10 did not...many are still denied any power over their circumstances and at times, unable to return to school mid-education.

I think the power and beauty of the projects' successes is in recognition of these parallel threads. It makes the strength, commitment and vision of the founders all the more powerful. It makes the smiles, full tummies, and sense of safety and hopeful futures all the more profound.

I am wearing the beautiful beaded jewelry gifted to me by friends there. I am now sponsoring one of the secondary girls. I hope to fundraise for the needs at Ilboru. But mostly, I am thanking God for OBA. All of the things I believe God would wish us to be in the world are modeled in OBA's work.

May it continue. Those bright smiles we saw every day are lighting paths to a whole new future.

Meet Jeska Zakayo, Our MGLSS Correspondent

Jeska Kay Zakayo is a young Tanzanian woman, a teacher, and an activist towards conservation, and sustainable and responsible tourism in Tanzania. She is also a member of the “WONDERGARDEN” team, whose goal is to bring back all the “heritage foods” into the kitchen by supporting the local small scale farmers into clean farming. Jeska speaks fluent English, Kiswahili and her native tribal tongue. She studied at Tumaini University, Makumira but was raised in Kagera, Tanzania. She now teaches in Monduli at the MaaSAE Girls Lutheran Secondary School (MGLSS) and is a specialist in guest services and hospitality. Jeska loves writing short stories, working on her novel, and story telling.



MGLSS Alumni Gather to Celebrate the First “Career Day”



A heart touching event famously known as “Career Day” at MGLSS began this early April. Fifty three vibrant, confident and happy women stepped on the familiar school grounds that made them reminisce of their golden days as students. For the first time the alumni gathered at Career Day and made it a special day to inspire the young girls at the school towards different career paths.

“We are not here to brag to these young ones about what we have achieved in life or what career path we are partaking in; however, we are here to tell stories. Stories of encouragement that tell somehow, that these girls will have faith more in what they are dreaming of. Our stories are not different from theirs: we all come from the same society, where a girl child is not much privileged. In Maa societies to some extent, the more girls, the more cows a parent will be offered as bride price. Despite all of that, we are here to testify to them that we know it all; but we broke the taboo and it

is possible. MGLSS is a path towards that success they dream of,” spoke one of the alumni who is a now a pediatrician.

“Without this school, I cannot imagine my life today. I sometimes think I am in a never-ending fantasy dream. To think that a Maasai girl who stepped on these grounds in 1995 with only a piece of Maasai shuka wrapped around my body, knowing nothing at all, is now called a CPA. Tell me things are not possible and I will narrate my testimony, this is why I’m here- to inspire these young Maasai girls that it is possible,” said another alum.

Career Day at MGLSS was filled with emotions and happy tears. The now adult Maasai women have pursued the impossible and this wouldn’t have been possible without OBA, and the guardian angels, the



sponsors. Seeing people as people and not objects, gives a chance to someone to understand other peoples challenges, needs, and objectives. That is when we make a world a better place. Since 1995 to date, OBA has done miracles by understanding the challenges, needs and objectives of others. By breaking all barriers OBA, in partnership with donors, has seen people as people and it is because of such a mindset that we can have the once abandoned and less privileged Maasai girls face the world with confidence, pride, and honor.

“From forced marriage to early pregnancy, I had lost all hope. Just imagine a young girl with an infant. What was I to do? (Tears lingered in her eyes as she stammered.) I was rescued to a safe house and OBA once again never abandoned me. I got a second chance to proceed with my education fully sponsored and here I am. I broke all boundaries, refused to be married to the man of THEIR choice. That infant I had in my teen days? She is pursuing her Bachelor’s Degree, and I have a husband of my choice and we are happily married. What would have happened without MGLSS? Without OBA and the sponsors who never abandoned me? With education you can go against all odds, it is not easy but it is not impossible. I am a Maasai woman and I am very proud. No one is ashamed of me anymore in my family. You can be anything you put your mind to.” -Alumni Testimony

“I’m proud to tell you that the school you are in today, not only does it prepare teachers, doctors, accountants and architects to mention a few, but also they prepare leaders. I’m among those leaders. I’m the District Commissioner of Nzega district and I’m still charging towards higher government posts in the future as a politician. You won’t imagine the impact I have on the society as a woman and it is all because of this school, as without it I wouldn’t be who I am. The president knows my name as one of the leaders. May God keep blessing the sponsors and OBA. When I think about my life without MGLSS I get emotional. So girls, you can be more than you are imagining. This school is a blessing to us, especially as Maasai girls and women. Use this haven of safety to dream as you have full support from OBA, make them proud as we are doing.” -Alumni Testimony

The graduates of MGLSS have stories to tell. Their lives are no longer the same since stepping on the school grounds. Therefore, Career Day with the MGLSS alumni is a story telling event full of inspiration to the young girls at school. Stories of gratefulness and gratitude to the sponsors and OBA for spearheading the impossible. Seeing them you can tell, they are changing their societies and their families will never be the same again. Heartfelt thanks to OBA in partnership with our guardian angels, the sponsors. May your commitment towards this job keep making history in the hearts of people for generations.

There are still 34 Form 1 students who need sponsors at MGLSS. You can walk with them as they become the future of Tanzania. Become a sponsor today! - Written by Jeska Zakayo



Have you considered volunteering as a teacher at MGLSS? Perhaps a Nursing Professor at the ALMC School of Nursing? Volunteering is an amazing way to share the unique skills and knowledge you have acquired! Short term volunteering (2-3 weeks) and longer terms (a few months or a year) have incredible impact. Volunteering can change your life and the lives of others. Contact OBA today if you are interested traveling across the world and making a difference!

What does a million

Eating lunch seems like a trivial thing for many children in the United States. Usually, they have two hot lunch options at school, both of which are supposed to have balanced nutrition to ensure they grow strong. I remember complaining about the options and wanting to use my pocket money to buy sweets in the a la carte line instead of eating the regular menu items.

On my first visit to rural Tanzania I witnessed several children begging for food on the side of the beaten dirt roads. The swell of their bellies was not from fill, but rather the absence of protein and nutrition in their diets. As we ventured through the terrain, it was desolate. Dusty winds blew through the thorny whistling acacia trees. There was not a sign of vegetation for miles. In the backseat of the safari vehicle I gazed at my boxed lunch in my lap. I realized that lunch truly is a privilege.

Olchoki Primary School had been outfitted with a brand new kitchen in 2016. When the Executive Director visited in 2018 he was surprised to see that the kitchen was still shining and new. The storage room across from the kitchen was also



barren. The headmistress explained that the school could not afford to purchase groceries for their students, and that it was challenging for the parents to come up with money for their children's lunch.

Jason came back to the US and spoke to the Board of Directors about the hardships at Olchoki. By January of 2019, the Olchoki Lunch Program had begun.

Shortly thereafter, OBA was alerted by a project partner in Southern Madagascar that 9 children had died of starvation due to a horrific draught called a "kere." The people in the villages had resorted to eating cacti and clay to get nutrients into their bodies. After hearing these horror stories, Jason went to the Board once again to try and find a solution. The Madagascar Lunch Program started three and a half weeks after his return.

The Madagascar Lunch Program started out serving one thousand children in five different schools. Today, that number has DOUBLED. Over 2,000 children eat lunch at school

meals a year look like?

through the OBA lunch program. Your support is doubling the school population in five villages in Southern Madagascar.

Over 1,000,000 meals are now served each year in Tanzania and Madagascar through OBA support. This is a feat that would not be possible without your kindness and devotion. We are so grateful that you have made this happen...but we are confident we can do more.

The Tanzanian government has mandated that all schools serve lunch in their schools, but they have not provided funding to support that mandate. This leaves the schools in a deficit that they did not plan for, and many are having to cut funding from their programs and facilities in an attempt to provide lunch to their students.

OBA has received an abundance of requests from schools who are suffering to meet the government standard. The parents are giving what they can to help cover the costs, but it takes away from their family income.



Your dedication and caring has given these children the ability to grow. The nourishment of their bodies should not be a privilege. It is a right that you have made possible. We firmly believe that together we can double our impact this coming year to serve twice as many meals in twice as many schools.

One million meals a year is wonderful, but there are billions of children who are still going without. These children are leaving


school to find access to food and water.

You can be the difference between going without and a full belly. Giving \$100 to the OBA Lunch Program would feed 500 children. To feed a school like Olchoki Primary for a day is \$280. You could even feed an entire school for a month with a gift of \$5,600.

Even a single dollar can buy five meals in East Africa. Please consider making a contribution to the OBA Lunch Program today.



Scan this QR Code to see your impact in action.

-Bri Engh 

Bridging the 10 Month Gap: Pre-Form 5 Program Begins at MGLSS

Completing your Ordinary Level studies and going home for 10 months to wait for the National Examination results is a nightmare every student faces in Tanzania. Truth be told, every parent becomes anxious too, not knowing what the future holds for their kids.

As days went by at MGLSS in 2023, you could sense uncertainty among the girls (graduates) even before sitting for their national examinations. The feeling was not caused by examination stress but rather, “What happens next?” What will happen to them for the ten months they are absent from MGLSS? What if they are forced to get pregnant or become victims of forced marriage because there would be no chance for further education? These girls’ mind-set has changed within their four years at school. Their wishes are to proceed to higher learning institutions and become better people for the sake of their loved ones. None of them wished to sit idly at home gambling on the national exam results to define their next move.



Passing the national examination in Tanzania determines your educational future, which means failing the exams ends your continuation to the next level. Many candidates end up depressed, disappointed, and discouraged towards their future- believing they wasted four years for nothing.

As they say, good things take time. Finally, after 29 years since the school started in 1995, a miracle

happened. OBA once again together with our guardian angels, the sponsors, did it again. A vocational program was born at MGLSS with four courses: Animal Husbandry, Computer Science, Food Processing & Tailoring.



Vocational Training is something common in Tanzania, but not in schools. OBA’s impact to our community is impressive, but no one ever thought a day would come when another mesmerizing program would operate at MGLSS. After their exams, the head of the school announced that a new program would commence in January of 2024. Noises of elation were heard from the girls, screaming out of joy and singing Maasai hymns praising God. Some thought the noise was due to completion of the exams and the joy to go back home, but the opposite was true. It felt good to be able to stay “home” at MGLSS.

“When the headmistress announced about the program, I thought it was not something serious. I somehow couldn’t believe it. When I completed my exams, I already had plans. I hail from a single mother family and all I thought of was to find some work as a house maid so that I could earn money to help my mother. I wished to apply my knowledge of food and nutrition I learned in the past four years but I had zero capital to start a small entrepreneurship of selling maandazi (buns) while waiting for the results. When I

confirmed my doubts, that indeed the program was starting, I sighed not only out of relief, but also out of happiness. This program has rescued me once again from falling into temptations out there while I waited anxiously for the results. May God bless OBA. I am at a loss of words to my sponsor and I cannot put it correctly in words but thank you, my sponsor. I am forever grateful and thank you for keeping your unwavering support of me” -Nanyoi Saitoti, a student from Losirwa.

The Maasai communities are slowly evolving from nomadic pastoralism to mixed farming because of climatic changes and they no longer rely on livestock alone for survival. Animal Husbandry course is one of the most loved course by the girls.

“I can now vaccinate livestock without fear and doubt as I have been trained very well. Struggling to pay for a vet in our communities becomes a headache. I feel so great that I can be of help in our society as a girl child” -Rabia Edson

This new program is another rescue mission for the girls as a part of continuing to secure the Maasai girl child’s future. Despite the positive changes going on in their communities by acknowledging a girl child and her rights, there is still a mystery in their safety. Some of the cultural stereotypes towards a girl child secretly haunts them. The new program with short courses ensures their safety and development. We are forever grateful to the guardian angels, the sponsors, and OBA.



Written by Jeska Zakayo

Madagascar Musings—Your Support is Becoming Impact

Thanks to our donors, OBA completed its 5th school construction project in the Deep South of Madagascar this February! Here are some before and after photos showing the drastic differences in the educational environment for the 2,000+ students attending those five schools!



Students walked each day to study and learn in cramped classrooms. They diligently sat on dirt floors or benches made of round logs.



School life is so different now. Students sit at desks and have a full view of the new chalkboard. Their school buildings are sturdy, protecting them from the harsh elements.



OBA Donors have been providing teacher salaries and school supplies to communities in the Deep South Androy Region for over 40 years. Schools were made out of mud, sticks, grass, and tin. Cyclones and dust storms were constantly tearing roofs away or knocking over the schools completely, causing many lost days of learning.



Each new school is outfitted with a tin roof, gutters, and water catchments. These improvements will be crucial in negating thirst and dehydration during the droughts. They will be able to start plant nurseries and feed their livestock as well.

-Written by Aaron Bartholomew

Madagascar Trivia:

What is the capital city of Madagascar?

Answers on back page.

Let Saving the Lives of Girls in Africa be Your Legacy

Ways to Give:

- Give Directly from Your IRA—If you are 70^{1/2} or older your contribution will count towards your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) and will not be included in your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). You may contribute up to \$100,000 annually from your IRA. In some situations lowering your AGI may be more beneficial than itemizing charitable deductions.
- Make a Stock Contribution—Gifts of stock are generally tax deductible at the full fair-market value and exempt from long-term capital gains tax.
- Create a Donor Advised Fund—A donor-advised fund allows your assets including cash, appreciated stock, mutual funds, real estate, and more to be invested and grown tax-free. Contributions to your fund are tax deductible in the year that they are made, but may be granted to eligible charitable organizations over a period of multiple years. Donor-advised funds are a useful tool for donors who are affected by the new, higher standard deduction threshold and wish to combine multiple years worth of giving into one year in order to itemize.
- Legacy Gifts—Include a gift to OBA in your will or trust, designate OBA as a beneficiary of your IRA or life insurance policy, or give to the OBA Endowment Fund. InFaith Foundation.

Thank you for remembering us in your estate planning. Leaving a legacy speaks volumes about your values and creates impact long into the future.

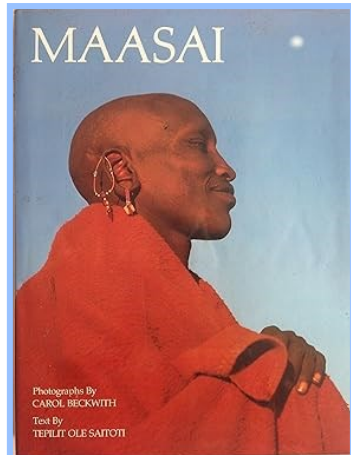


OBA is proud to have been recognized as a 4-star organization by Charity Navigator for 10 consecutive years, to achieve this honor one must meet the highest standards of financial health, transparency, and accountability. This puts us in the top 10% of all nonprofit organizations in the United States. We are a mission-driven organization, committed to ensuring your support goes where it is most needed!

For more information, please contact the OBA office at 612-871-4980. 🌐

Operation Bootstrap Africa and its affiliates are not financial advisors and cannot provide tax, legal, or accounting advice. Please consult your financial planner to learn how gifts to OBA may benefit your unique tax or financial situation.





***Maasai*—Text by Tepilit Ole Saitoti**

This authentic commentary and its brilliant photographs portray the traditional lifestyles, economic activities, customs, ceremonies and religion, social structure, and natural environment of the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania. It's contents are not an outsider's perspective on a vibrant and new culture, but rather a honest telling by a Maasai tribesman. Author Tepilit Ole Saitoti was born in Maasailand in Tanzania in 1949. His father had 36 children, and of those, Tepilit Ole Saitoti was the one who was chosen to go to school. After graduating he returned home and became a warrior.



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Dignity is a publication for friends of Operation Bootstrap Africa, a Minnesota-based non-profit dedicated to helping people help themselves through a variety of educational programs in Africa.

In partnership with African communities and organizations, OBA provides support and assistance to projects and programs based on locally-established priorities.

Gifts to OBA are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. OBA reserves the right to utilize up to 10% of revenue to fund undesignated opportunities.

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Trivia Answer: Antananarivo
or "Tana"



Join Us On A Discovery Tour In Tanzania!

Visit OBA projects including schools and clinics, embark on safari to view some of the world's most abundant and beautiful wildlife, and engage in cultural activities. Tours vary in cost: approximately \$3,000-\$5,000 per person, meals, lodging, tips, and all land travel costs included. Airfare not included, as it is subject to change.

October Trips: Focused around OBA missions, Form 4 MGLSS graduation, and safaris.
February Trips: More elaborate, focusing on OBA missions, cultural experiences, and bespoke safaris.

April Trips: More cost inclusive, focused on Form 6 graduation, and service projects.
July Trips: Focused on OBA medical missions, Nursing School Graduation, and safaris.

Costs not covered include: beverages, immunizations, anti-malarial medication, a Tanzanian tour visa, and travel insurance. A Zanzibar extension and other excursions may be arranged at additional cost. Contact OBA to secure your spot!

Anticipated
Tours

October 2024
February 2025
April 2025
July 2025