

Report from Dodoma

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This Land is Dry

The certainty of famine is with us in many regions of Tanzania. There have been some recent scattered rains but these have mostly been very heavy with much of the water running off into the dry stream beds. Already in the area in which we are working the young plants are withering. However even if there were good rains over the next week the lateness of the rain combined with the effects of recent dry years will still result in famine conditions. This Dodoma region is one of the most critically effected in Tanzania. Farmers are beginning to search for food for their families. Sadly more will move to the cities searching for food and work but there is very little to be found. There is a realization that the life of the villages needs to be maintained.

In the area where we are working there is water available for some villages from the wells we have drilled. Some other communities are near dry sandy rivers. Although the rivers seem to be without water there is water to be found several feet down in the sandy bed. In a couple of selected areas we intend to encourage the people to dig 'improved' wells in the river beds using the system my oldest sister and family used in Australia in similar circumstances. We feel sure that there is sufficient water there for use with the drip irrigation kits.

In the Makang'wa/Mvumi region we also want to introduce a plan of 'relief work'. There is a very great deal of work to be done on the 250 acres of land at the Makang'wa Center. Certainly much of this is in the future however there is a lot of work involved in clearing land and preparing it for Drip Irrigation from the well. We also need to do a lot in terms of erosion control. The land is mostly quite fertile but tends to be loose soil, prone to erosion once the trees are cleared. We need to build contours and also introduce new planting. The road up to the buildings has to be constructed and a water line 'dug in' for a length of one and a half kilometers. This is all labor intensive work. We could engage machinery and have the work done much more quickly but that would deny many people the opportunity to earn some much needed money. There will also be work in the village itself.

Our plan is to employ local people to do this work. They are very keen and they WANT to work. The local village committee will arrange the workers, spreading the opportunity to earn some money through the village community. We shall be paying 'minimum wage' so that as many people as possible can benefit. We shall also give a midday meal to the workers - a very simple meal but more than many might otherwise have. Our plan is to pay 1,000/- Tz shillings a day plus the food. That is a little under \$1.00US per day. It seems so very little to us but it will make a great difference to the life of the community.

The photographs on the next page illustrate the tragedy in this situation. He animals are really eating nothing! Their mouths seem to be working from habit! The farmer said that 10 cows died last week. He expects to have none in two weeks time. Feed is not available.

As this is a non-profit we need a great company of people who will pledge to provide at least a week's work for a man or woman. This amounts to a basic gift of \$7.00US. That will provide one week's pay, a meal for five days and \$1.00 towards the cost of materials. 'Materials' may be cement, hoes, rakes, shovels, barrows, etc. Can we find the equivalent of 6,000 donors? This will lead to transformation for the community as this time of great necessity will be turned into a time of laying a strong foundation for the future of these people. Long ago someone described this as 'turning stumbling blocks into stepping stones' or, 'a hand up' rather than simply 'a hand-out' although both are needed in this situation.

These photographs were taken within the northern limits of the city of Dodoma.



The green plants you see are inedible. Why do the weeds seem to thrive when true nourishment fails? This parched land is next door to our seventeen acres on the north side of Dodoma. The owner of the cattle is a Muslim gentleman who has become a friend. Because of the conditions and a desire to concentrate our work in the village areas to the south of the city we may probably have to sell our land. The alternative would be to put down a well and introduce drip irrigation on our land and also share the water with neighbors, enabling them to enjoy some degree of sustainability. There is ample underground water in this area - but it would cost \$35,000.00 to drill and equip a well for irrigation. When you stand in the midst of such devastation that seems a small amount! As I returned to the house following this visit my 'mind' was wishing I had not been there and my heart was aching for this farmer and the many, many people suffering in the region.

Donations towards the 'relief work' program may be made through:

Amani for Africa USA Foundation, 4311 Loma Vista, Billings, MT 59106

Or

The Hearts for Africa Trust, 74 Pring St., Hendra, Q, Australia 4010

(The Amani Development Organization (formerly Amani Development Trust Fund), Amani for Africa USA and Hearts for Africa Foundation are all not-profit foundations.)

I have received notice of a generous Birthday Gift given by friends in Montana. I shall dedicate \$3,000.00 of that as the beginning of the 'relief work' program. This is the equivalent of 428 weeks of work plus food and materials! Do you see how readily we can transform life for many people while maintaining their sense of dignity? We shall announce this program at a Church Service at the Maknag'wa village this Sunday. As special guests we shall have the McCann family of Billings, MT.

Pray for guidance as we move ahead with the local people and for a good response to the need.

God bless and keep you.

Fr. John Naumann