

Joint Handbook

*of the Orphan Ministry at the LBS Mwika (HUYAMWI)
and the Orphan and AIDS- program of the ELCT ND (OAPND)*

Paper 20: Expansion of orphan services in Masai area

Released 30.11.07 – Author: Rev. Dr. Martin Burkhardt - Coauthor Rev. Stefan Scheuerl.

I. Introduction

The following notes were taken during my visit to KIA parish. Before my visit the congregation passed the following data to the office of OAPND:

- Number of children: 2288 (this includes also non-Lutheran and non-Christian children)¹
- Number of orphans.: 390
- Percentage of orphans: 17%

With this data the parish of KIA is within the congregations having the highest number of orphans.²

II. The Problem of Polygamy

The polygamy practiced amongst the Masai tribe is causing a high number of orphans and widows.

For example: One father of the visited families left four wives with a total number of 23 children. In another case one father left three wives with 9 children of this man and another 5 children conceived from other men after the death of their first husband.

The death causes reported were not indicating AIDS as a primary cause, instead accidents or sudden infections were reported.

III. Problems seen

1. The widows were left with only one to two cows per nucleus family. The other cattle were obviously taken by the relatives of their passed away husband.
2. Most of the children did not attend school, especially girls, who were often married early to older husbands.³ However in KIA -area schools are almost nearby, so the widows reported, that financial needs are the main reason for this problem. Many of the children were not able to speak Suaheli.
3. In this area a traditional house needs to be rebuilt after ten years. However, the widows needs between 100.000 -150.000 Tsh to reconstruct a house, as not all the materials are available in the nearby living environment (especially timber and poles). Also the widows need help to construct the roofs.
4. Some of the widows were having no land to cultivate as they were only hosted by the relatives or the land was planned for the expansion of Kilimanjaro International Airport.
5. The widows can hardly afford to visit a hospital (for example Machame hospital) because there is no cash to pay the bus fare or the medical treatment.
6. The reason for children born after the death of the husband is not clear: are the widows inherited by the relatives of their husbands? Are they forced to prostitute themselves to receive help?

IV. Prioritizing of the problems

Some widows gave the following priority list:

¹ As the Lutheran adults were counted only, the percentage of 79% children is to high.

² Actually only Moshi mjini is having more: 395 orphans counted.

³ For reason the parish of KIA has started a service to these girls to bring them back to school.

1. Opportunity to their children to visit school
2. Repairing and reconstruction of houses
3. Nutrition

This may lead to the assumption, that basic nutrition support is provided by the clan, however any further expenses, like school expenses or building expenses are not included in the mutual help.

V. Understanding the Masai society

Any kind of social intervention must consider the special Masai society with its different customs and concepts in order to not destroy the existing mutual help, but to strengthen the ability of this society to deal with their own problems.

Therefore we need the help of experts to evaluate and adjust the standard HuYaMwi/OAPND methods.

I consulted a former Masai- missionary **Rev. Scheuerl**:

Due to the nomadic life-style children are more important to survive. In the past children were even stolen from other tribes to enlarge the number of the family. These children were not kept as slaves, but were adopted fully. The actual fatherhood of children is less important than in farming societies as there is no heritage of land.

The real problems are widows and their semi-orphans. The widow is allowed to stay in the boma of her passed away husband. His cattle goes to his children. The widow can be married by the older brother of her husband, but in Christian times this becomes more difficult. The brother is also responsible to care for the widow, but his own family may be closer to him. Food may not be the problem, but cash money for medical treatment and education.

Rev. Scheuerl advises us to make further studies before becoming financial engaged. A researcher should live some time close to the Masai to check out the social relationships.

VI. Evaluation of HuYaMwi/OAPND methods

1. **Small income generating projects (SIP)** could be effective as a cattle market is found at the junction of the KIA-road to the main road. The price for one goat is between 30.000 to 60.000 Tsh. Problem could be the missing resources like water oder leaves in the arid area. Extension of goat keeping must be considered carefully in order to not destroy the remaining poor natural resources. Other options are to enable widows to find an income at Kilimanjaro International Airport or at the nearby settlements of miners from Mererani.
2. The **building fund** could bring a quick relief, as the building costs are low for traditional houses.
3. **Small material help** can ensure school attendance. But as money may be not the only problem for drop outs, there must be other measures to monitor school attendance. Another problems are the older children who already missed school.
4. A **medical fund** can help the widows to attend medical services providing bus fare and payments to the dispensaries and hospitals.