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To: suehome Mckenzie
Subject: Visiting Two

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This morning I visited the family of a 16-year-old Maasai girl, Brenda, whose father had approached me to find a sponsor for his daughter's education. For a girl to have reached the age of 16 and still be unmarried is somewhat remarkable in the traditional Maasai culture.

Brenda proudly showed me around her home which was made of mud and sticks. We walked out into the bush to view her family's cows, sheep and goats which were being tended by her 72-year-old grandmother. There was no sense on her part about how her home might appear to me, an outsider. This was a real learning for me about how different perceptions can be. In actual fact, I felt honoured and accepted by this simple gesture of trust.

We had chai with her family and took pictures of everyone (decked out in jewellery for the picture!). I had a chance to ask her father, through her, some questions about how he came to be so forward-thinking as to want education for his daughter. Brenda is now in Form 4 (grade 12) and wants to go to University to be either a doctor or teacher.

The father's response, considering he is a traditional Maasai man probably in his late 40's, was moving. He said he believes that all children, boys and girls, have rights and that one of those rights is education. He wanted all his children to achieve a better life than he and his wife have. It is hard for me to imagine that the \$248 needed for a year of education (including board) could seem almost unattainable to this family. Children must leave their community to board at school since there is no high school in this area.

During the visit with Brenda's family, a neighbour, Regina (mother of the groom at the wedding we attended), who had also asked me to 'stop by', arrived to walk me to her house. She stayed during my entire visit with Brenda, then she and Brenda walked me to her house for chai (2 km) visiting other friends along the way. After chai, they walked me another km, to Nicholas and Mama Chris' house where I met up with the rest of our group to have lunch. Both Regina and Brenda stayed to help Mama Chris prepare lunch, then joined in on the eating. David and Amos also arrived so we were a very large group – 15 in all.

After our huge lunch, Mckenzie and Judith set up an interview with Nicholas and his wife, Mama Chris (Margaret). Our whole crew was sent away so as to be out of hearing of the very sensitive microphone. Regina took us to her shamba which was more like a farm with tomatoes, green beans, cabbage, spinach, and maize - all sown and tended by hand. When we returned to the house about an hour and a half later, we headed for town. It was getting late and we had 5 km to go to reach the Mission house.

One must be home by dark as that is when the elephants move about. They had been near Nicholas' shamba the previous night. We are all so aware that elephants on the prowl is not a romantic idea. A man was gored to death last week near here, leaving behind two wives and 15 children. This family will be another candidate for the widow's project that David and Merry are trying to get going.

So the entire group, except Brenda who had a long walk of her own, walked us to town. Regina was still among that group when we reached town at 6 pm!!! The group that walked us back into town was at least 14 people. I told them nobody in Canada would even consider walking guests 3 or 4 km back to their homes – never mind having the return trip of 3 to 4 km to their own homes.

No one needed food after our huge feast and everyone retired for the night pretty exhausted after all the walking - at least 12 km for the day for me.
