

Newsletter



SEPTEMBER, 2011

MARQUIS PROJECT

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Josh Sebastian to speak at Chilli Chutney Dinner

The return of Marquis Project members from visits with our overseas partner is always an exciting time for us, as we get news of our friends and colleagues in Tanzania and get updates on not only our projects, but other TSAEE activities. That time is here again! It is particularly exciting to welcome a member who has spent considerable time working on projects with TSAEE. For the past year, former Marquis Project E.D. Josh Sebastian has been in Tanzania, coordinating the end of project report of a five year twinning project between the Tanzania Society of Agricultural Education and Extension (TSAEE) and the Canadian Agricultural and Rural Extension Society (CARES). [This project between TSAEE and CARES was funded

by the Agricultural Institute of Canada with the financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).] Like many projects involving TSAEE, This project focused particularly on working with **women's and youth groups** to increase income, enhance food security, develop micro-



Josh with Women's group

enterprises and build organizational capacity. In his presenta-

tion, Josh will explain how the **members of Tanzanian women's** and youth groups in the Lake Zone participating in Canadian supported projects, including those by The Marquis Project, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, CARES and People to People, have achieved tangible goals related to housing, education and agriculture.

CARES has generously offered us an opportunity to not only meet and learn from Josh, but to share in a fund-raising opportunity, as **we indulge in one of Marquis'** favourite activities—dining at the Chilli Chutney!

Dinner is at 5:30 on September 18th. Tickets are \$35.00, and are available from the Wordly Goods Shop—727-5675.

Marquis introduces new Program Coordinator

We are pleased to introduce our new Program Coordinator, Marquita Stewart, who assumed this position in mid-August.

Marquita is a recent "immigrant" to the Westman region, having moved to Shilo to join her husband less than a year ago after completing an Education Degree at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. Marquita has extensive

experience in working with children, and spent last semester as a substitute teacher in the Brandon School Division. We are delighted to welcome her to our team.

For the last two weeks, Marquita has been hard at work learning about Marquis and becoming familiar with curriculum and resources.

Some of you may have noticed the new position title. The Board has made some staffing changes this year, taking a more active role in the administration of the Marquis Project so that our staff person can focus on building a strong and dynamic education program, enhancing the excellent work done over the last few years by Josh, Karli, Samantha, and Robyn.

In the Red: the winding path of cattle from farm to fork



20 million cattle make red meat a major industry—that actually benefits few.

Former Marquis Project Executive Director Josh Sebastian is in Brandon this month, taking a short break from his current project, working with TSAEE and the Dutch NGO SMV to map the “Red Meat Value Chain” for the Mwanza region.

Tanzania possesses the 3rd largest cattle herd in Africa - last estimated to number +20 million. Why, then,

are so many in the livestock sector realizing little or no benefit? Why does an industry that employs thousands, benefit so few? Those are some of the questions SMV is hoping to help TSAEE to answer.

To learn more—and to share your perspectives, you are invited to a presentation hosted by the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University at 3 pm

on September 15th in the Riel Room. “In the Red” will take us to cattle markets, butcheries, and abattoirs, documenting the winding path of cattle from farm to fork in a unique model for value chain mapping that takes into account both economics and stakeholder relationships

“To catch the reader’s attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”

Caption describing picture or graphic.

International project update

While February is the shortest month, for some in Tanzania it holds the longest days. In a normal year, the second month of the New Year signals the end of what many here refer to as the “hungry months”. This period, encompassing November to February, marks the time when food supplies are their lowest after the long dry season from June to November. Relief at the end of this time rarely arrives until the harvests from the short rains of Vuli in December and January begin to arrive from the field in February.

At the present time, it is safe to say that Vuli never made an appearance this year. The results are a wide swath of people describing meagre harvests or complete crop failure. In the short term, this will translate into an obvious decline of local household food availability as annual stores of staple crops such as rice and maize are stretched to last several months beyond their intended date of use. In the local market, prices will begin to rise in a gradual ripple as growing demand will outstrip available supplies. Typically, the hungry months can see market prices for staple crops rise by as much as 20%. This year it will be of little surprise if food prices climb even higher with increases of 30% until the harvests of June and July arrive from the long rainy season in Masika.

The more subtle extents of food insecurity make their reach to unexpected corners with quiet and steady influence upon the lives of rural agricultural homes in Tanzania. Consider also that January, in the heart of hungriest months of the year, is also the start of the school year – with the requirement for families to make the annual school fee payments. In a year of poor harvest, it’s not only food that’s off the table, but income generated from the sale of crops for cash flow. A decision that may seem unfathomable to many a Mzungu, whether to feed the mind or the body of a child, is an occurrence that I wish were much more rare than it actually is in Tanzania.

Under the best of circumstances, conditions in rural households allow little margin for error in the events of the year. Failures in harvests, diminished food storage supplies and inaccessible market prices are factors the stretch the capacities of even the most well equipped families – far less those living on less than \$1 a day.

Josh Sebastian from his February “Mzungu Monthly”

Continued on page 3

International Project Update: *continued*

It appears that drought and inconsistent seasonal rainfall patterns will have to be accepted as a reality of life in Tanzania, as in much of Africa, in the coming years. But does it mean that farmers will be totally at the mercy of capricious weather? Josh points out that, while the department of Agriculture warned of the drought *after* it happened—the forecast information was available well *beforehand*. Those that were aware adjusted crop types and planting schedules. Those that were not ended up planting crops 3 to 4 times at the first hint of rain, only to watch the planting fail. A lot of suffering, he says, could have been avoided this year had there been better availability of meteorological/information to extension staff.

This is exactly where this year's Theme Grant Project fits in. An \$11,000 grant procured by the Marquis Project on behalf of TSAEE from MCIC has two thrusts:

- 1) Providing Information Communication Technology skills to extension staff, so that they can use computer equipment and applications effectively, and teaching them how and where to access critical information.

2. Using both research information and current local experience to develop new climate calendars.

In a recent e-mail, Josh described how these goals are combined in a workshop with extension workers. In this workshop, extension workers from the six districts identified the weather patterns they have observed themselves. They then compared this to the research information provided in a tool Josh developed.

He says, “We were surprised to see how much the weather in one district varied from what was communicated in climate reports (long term weather) as well as to clearly see how the occurrence of rainfall is much different than our own beliefs. What we were able to do in a very short period of time was to identify that in the last 5 years there are 2 months when it always rains without fail (December and March). Any months before or after were 50/50 at best.”

“More interesting”, he says, “is that we only used one district as the sample for information - but the others each had highly variable answers. I think this will bode very well to making a local weather forecast available to rural

groups. We were also able to see how effective the planting dates were and what would require shifting. It was very interesting to learn that crop calendars were available to some extension staff, but they are based **solely on the life cycle of the plant (germination = x number of days, etc).”**

“We then used this as an opportunity to learn how to transfer the information from the working session to the field data form --> from the data form into word --> from word into email attachment. We also covered how to use online translators to copy instructions and reports from Swahili to English, and did a longer review of climate change impacts as particularly related to Tanzania, and beneficial management practices for water conservation. The focus was to promote “win-win” (accomplishes both adaptation and mitigation) and “no regrets” (good to do regardless if the full impact materializes) strategies for assisting rural communities”.

President's Message

Hello everyone and I hope you all have had a great summer!

The school year is upon us and Marquis is ramping up our educational programming. Last year we engaged more than 3000 people with our programs and hope to continue to grow that number this year. There are many international issues facing the world today, the famine in Somalia is a particularly important one, and understanding international development issues is more important than ever. I encourage you to donate to help those in desperate need in Somalia. We at the Marquis Project have been encouraging people to see our friends and partners at the Canadian Red Cross or the Mennonite Central Committee about donation opportunities that will make a difference in the horn of Africa.

Coming up this fall is our fundraiser with our former executive director, Josh Sebastian, who will be discussing his work with our

friends in Tanzania. Josh has been a remarkable supporter of Marquis and his work overseas is sure to be fascinating.

Also Marquis is happy to announce our second consecutive year of partnering with Brandon University Students Union and their Rock the Block event. Marquis volunteers are going to be on hand to help out at the show and to also collect donations for Marquis programming and projects.

Finally I would like to extend a personal thank you to our volunteers, staff, and board who have been working very hard to pursue the mission of Marquis. Their work is very important in this dynamic and globalized world and I am proud to be working with such a strong and devoted team.

Cheers,
Sean Irwin



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**“Connecting Manitobans with the
Developing World”.**

Marquis Project Mission & Purpose

The Marquis Project is a community-centered, non-profit organization committed to the strengthening of international development. It has a two-fold purpose:

1. To involve adults, children and youth in Manitoba in dialogue and experiences that increase our understanding of international development and economic, political, social and environmental issues that are of local and global importance.
2. To create linkages with overseas communities and local, like-minded organizations that further our understanding of issues of global importance while promoting sustainable development in communities.

If you would like a presentation for your class or group, or would like to partner with us on an event or activity, please contact:

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Marquis needs you!

The valuable work of the Marquis Project can only continue with the help of volunteers who plan programs and events, assist in fund-raising activities, staff information displays and off-site sales, and help in the store.

But the benefits of working with Marquis really go to the volunteer. This is an opportunity to meet other like-minded individuals who have a deep interest in both international development and youth education. For the **experienced, it's an opportunity to share your learning and skills with others, and to watch young people gain in awareness and understanding.** For **young people, it's an opportunity to learn about international development and to gain experience in working with boards and committees, facilitating presentations, and working in a retail environment.**

Opportunities currently exist in the following areas:

Marquis Board and Committee members: . Anyone committed to the Marquis mandate and mission is welcome, but we particularly invite *youth members, educators, and people with fund-raising expertise* to consider this opportunity. Do you have a particular interest in learning about in-



Help us sell Fair Trade and Ecologically friendly toys and prod-

ternational development activities? Consider participating in the *programming committee*.

Store volunteers: To maximize the capacity of the Worldly Goods Shop to pay its way and contribute to Marquis programming, we need to expand our hours. Volunteers able to commit to regular hours or days would help us to meet this goal.

Facilitators: Our expanding education program needs volunteers to facilitate education on a variety of topics from fair trade to environmental issues to human rights. Honorary may be available.

Proposal Writing: We need people to seek out grants and develop proposals for funding both local and international activities.