CAL POLY UNIVERSITY, SAN LUIS OBISPO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 10.23.06

TO: Dr. Sema Alptekin

FROM: Ruth Brady, David Aine, John Dodds, Stella Tan, Sarah Suksiri

SUBJECT: Proposal to Research Current Health and Environmental Status of the Maasai People in Sub-Saharan Africa

Goal

The goal of this project is to identify and understand critical problems that inhibit a healthy, sustainable community in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the hope is to find creative solutions that the Cal Poly student body can perform to address these issues.

Background

In January 2003, President George W. Bush announced in the State of the Union address a five-year, $15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Implementation of the plan involves "a layered network of central medical centers (CMCs) that support satellite centers and mobile units, with varying levels of medical expertise as treatment moves from urban to rural communities." [1] The concept follows the proven effectiveness of community-based approaches in developing countries, foremost the progress seen in Uganda by the Uganda AIDS Commission. Despite their gains, the commission cites access in rural areas remains insufficient in its National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS Activities (200/1-2005/6). The voiced need for the development of such clinics in Sub-Saharan Africa also comes from organizations including Doctors Without Borders, The Harvard AIDS Institute, UNAIDS, and the World Health Organization.

In response to this need, two senior Architecture students are designing a health clinic to serve the Maasai people in Southern Kenya. Further research must be performed in order for this health clinic to be effective and adaptable to the needs of the community. Understanding the needs of the area goes beyond building a clinic that is well accepted and utilized by the community; the research performed would allow ground for a more holistic approach to the project. By understanding their current water situation, nutrition status, and resources available, the possibilities of solving problems go beyond prescribing medication and treating illness. The potential for this project is vast and needs time to cultivate.

Method

We are performing an in-depth literary review regarding the current health status, water availability, and environmental resources of the Maasai people living in Kenya. Due to the nature of the project we can only perform a review of literature versus first hand research. The information is being gathered using the Cal Poly Library, literature search engines, and information requests to private organizations. The faculty at Cal Poly is and will be a great resource offering insight and direction into the outcome of the project.

Because the stated research coincides with the design of the health clinic, there will be great synergy between the design of the clinic and the findings of the research.

Plan

We plan to meet every other week and update each member on data found. We are also communicating through researchforchange.blogger.com. This allows continual dialog between the members and the progress made.

By the end of the Fall Quarter, 2006, we plan to have an updated Research Proposal for the different areas of need uncovered within the Maasai people. Our goal by the end of the quarter is to understand the needs of the area and start dialoging ways the Cal Poly Honors student body can work together to address issues uncovered.

Team

Because the nature of the project, our team of 5 has been assigned different areas to explore although the specified tasks are not exhaustive. The goal is for each member to all have a general understanding of each area specified. The areas are as follows:

Ruth Brady: Assessing the nutrient status and deficiencies within the region, Co-Directing Research Group

David Aine: Co-designing medical clinic; Co-Directing Research Group

John Dodds: Assessing the current effects of deforestation, soil erosion, desertification and identifying local materials

Stella Tan: Assessing the water status, availability, affects of pesticides, fertilizer, and wastes in the region

Sarah Suksiri: Identifying the major health issues within the region and exploring the Maasai culture

[1] Fact Sheet: The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030129-1.html]