

# Prayer Letter

October 2007

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Important Info...  
 All packages that are mailed to the P.O. Box must be 8 1/2 x 11 or smaller. Letters are very much appreciated as I can read them over and over again. If you send large packages to the Kenya or New York address, remember that I must pay to get them out of customs.

## Karubuni

Well, I've been here for two months now (10 weeks and 2 days...but who's counting?) ☺ I've been mentioning language learning and asking for prayer in this endeavor, and as this will continue to be my major focus the first year here I wanted to share why language learning is my ministry for now.

Our team's administration (Zaramo TIMO Team Manual, Ver 11.06, pp27-28) aptly states that, "Besides facilitating communication and understanding, learning a person's language (mother tongue) is a powerful evangelistic tool for a number of reasons:

1. RESPECT – it's difficult to accept the words of someone who doesn't respect you."

I recently read a short article by Mark Willis (EMQ Oct '96 "Learning to Speak All Over Again") in which he states, "I am convinced that a persistent, faithful effort in learning the language of another communicates the essentials of servant hood found in Phil 2:3-7. In doing so, we seize the opportunity to 'consider others better than ourselves.'" A little over a century ago the Zaramo were feared and respected among local tribes now, however, their name is mentioned with contempt. They have been labeled simple-minded, "country folk." Our team leaders, in fact, were told they would never be able to live among the Zaramo as they would beg or steal everything off of them. Even the Zaramo who live away from Zaramo villages are slow to acknowledge their tribal associa-

tion or use their mother language because of how they're perceived. They believe knowing and using Swahili to be a "step up" and shows they're capable of learning. So, they're rather awestruck we insist on learning Kizaramo instead.

2. "CULTURE – Most cultural uniqueness is transmitted thru the nuances of language, so learning the language of the people you are living among will unlock for you the mysteries of their culture. The more that we know about a culture, the more we are able to articulate the gospel in a relevant way."
3. "RELATIONSHIPS – The gospel is usually communicated most powerfully through loving friendships, and these friendships are aided immeasurably by the people being able to effectively communicate with each other."

While the Zaramo do speak Swahili when necessary all their long held traditions, ceremonies, and even front yard chat is done in Kizaramo. And for us to know and speak Kizaramo with them communicates two things: First, "... interest in them as people" (M. Willis, EMQ article) – to acknowledge publicly and in our hearts that they were made in God's image (Gen 1:26) and have inherent worth. Second, "my need to learn from them." To show them we are equals in God's eyes and have just as much to gain from them as they do us.

## The people...

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It is interesting to note that the prior mission engagements amongst the Zaramo were done in the Swahili tongue. And, today there is little evidence to suggest that the work was effective. In fact, over the last 120 years the Church has worked amongst the Zaramo with large effort from Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans ("The Zaramo of Tanzania", An Ethnographic Study, L.W. Swantz, p 75). Unfortunately, history has recorded little fruit for a number of other reasons –

1) With the lack of available malaria prophylaxis in the late 1800s mission personnel frequently left due to illness or died. 2) Large scale community development strategies often ended up focusing on ex-slaves or other needy non-Zaramo. 3) At two critical periods when fruit was about to be visualized with the German missionaries the world wars occurred and the missionaries were interred in camps. 4) Personnel and



leadership changed hands too frequently disrupting continuity of work and strategy. 5) The few young and educated new believers left their tribal homes and moved into the city for work leaving a "continual drain" on leadership and education capabilities. This is not to show that the Zaramo are hard hearted and have refused the gospel. On the contrary, it shows how hard Satan has been at work to keep them in the dark! It also stands to remind us of our need to pray for them diligently and to stand firm despite Satan's attack that will most assuredly come.

While the Zaramo call themselves Moslems they are at heart animists. They (in general) adopted Islam in the early 1900s as they noticed German and British colonial powers giving jobs and leadership positions in large to Moslems. The Zaramo also found that they were not forced to give up their animistic beliefs and practices, and conversely, were introduced to Islamic beliefs and rituals akin to their own (ritual magic). Paulina and I recently learned that when our team leaders

lived in our home they dug up a *zindika* (zeendeekuh) (see **photos**) – or magic charm – that our landlord Ditirro paid a medicine man to bury. Ditirro was outraged to learn it had been dug up and had his son rebury it at night. He paid about 100,000 Tanzania shilling (about 3 months good pay) to have this *zindika* prepared and buried, and has various other ones on our homestead as well.

*Please continue to be in prayer for our team, the Zaramo, and God's work here.*

## ***Praises***

- There have been no major illnesses.
- The children are really adjusting well now.
- Dulla wants to study the Bible!
- Our Christian house worker Salome is a great encouragement.
- With our limited Kizaramo we've been able to verbally share a life-style witness.



## ***Prayer Requests***

- Miriam – a close neighbor in a long standing feud with Ditiirro. She will not step onto his property for fear of a curse that might kill her. Pray that she would feel safe in our home and free of fear.
- Dulla – a good friend to Tim (team leader). Tim has been talking to Dulla and sharing the gospel for over a year with him. After a significant dream and consistent Christian witness Dulla has asked to be taught God's work.
- Team unity – as we're getting to know each other better now and individual quirks that can be irritating, pray that we might not entertain gossip or slander against one another.
- As you feel led regarding the Zaramo's fear of and attempt to manipulate spirits.
- Team wellness – the African sun is HOT! And I am predisposed to abnormal mole growth. And, my gut is have a really tough time adjusting to the food here. The team as a whole has been suffering from recurrent diarrhea.
- A continued and deeper ability for me to trust and submit to our team leaders.

*Pray for language learning.  
In Him,  
Monica*

**Monica Miller in  
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Me at Mt Meru game reserve where we had a nice team lunch



Baboons at Mt Meru



Other kinds of monkeys at Mt Meru (Caden & Justin Kerr)



Team pic at Mt Meru (back row: Dan Andrade, Duane Couch, Me -- middle row: Jeremy Hill, Paulina Johnson, Tanya Couch, Tammy Kerr, Keith Kerr -- front row: Jacob Couch, Emily Tanner with Caleb, Tim Tanner, Justin Kerr, Caden Kerr, Caleb Couch)



Tired monkeys at Mt Meru