



Cheetah Development, Inc. Newsletter

Two Tea Trucks

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Greetings to all our friends and supporters!

First off, I hope those of our American friends had a wonderful Thanksgiving. We, at my house, enjoyed a day complete with all the trappings of family, food, and tradition.

Secondly, I wish to express my apologies on an error in last week's newsletter. I errantly used the wrong wording when I stated that Tanzania has no canning facilities. What I should have written and intended to convey was that in Tanzania there are limited facilities for factory canning and I should have continued to state that home and small scale canning is not a concept known or employed by many in country. That was the main point of the letter. That is the area of need that Cheetah wants to address.

-Lonnie-

Two Tea Trucks for the Mkonge Tea Block Association

Last week we talked some about the need for home and personal canning methods to be introduced and taught to our brothers and sisters in Tanzania, and many of the possible results. This newsletter will focus on another of Cheetah's proposed projects, the provision of trucks for the Mkonge Tea Block Association.

Have you ever worked hard on a task or project only to have all your labor be in vain and to see those efforts go to waste? I remember the summer my freezer was accidentally unplugged and I witnessed the summer's harvest, which I labored over, processed, and froze, become a rotting pile of mush. All my effort and work, wasted. I can only imagine the heartbreak of seeing your yearly earnings deteriorating before your eyes and having nothing to do about it but accept it. Let me tell you about the situation in Mkonge.

Think about living on about \$1 a day. \$1 for EVERYTHING! I know I couldn't exist as I know it today. It couldn't be done. Yet that is what the families of the Mkonge Tea Block Association attempt to live on. \$1 per day-among the poorest people on earth. Working long days, harvesting tea leaves, Mkonge Tea Bloc Association of 523 families is just managing to subsist in poverty. A typical family plucks 5 tons of tea leaves a few at a time. But that's only part of the back breaking labor because they have to carry this tea, often several kilometers up mountain slopes and do all the intensive care of the tea plants.

Once harvested, the tea leaves wait for pick up at 28 collection points over a 30 kilometer distance. The tea growers are dependent on the services of contracted trucks from the MTC (Mfindi Tea Company). This is the company that purchases the tea leaves, processes them, and sells to packers, such as Chai Bora, Lipton, Tetley, and Twinings. The drivers of these contracted trucks are guaranteed a fixed price for their service and so no incentive for timely delivery to MTC is in place. In fact, they make as much profit on a 45 minute delivery drive as the farmer does over a year to produce that tea.

Realizing that the fresher the leaves, the better the quality, the higher the purchase price, and the greater the profit for the co-op members, it is easy to understand the necessity of delivering the tea leaves quickly to the processing plant. We estimate that owning their own 2 trucks could quadruple the income of the tea farmers. Right now the bottleneck of trucking is literally choking the necks of families.

This need for trucks is growing. The Mkonge Association has been hard at work since Cheetah's last visit in June of this year. They have expanded their fields, developed their tea nursery, and worked on improving their field techniques all in order to grow even more tea. Meanwhile, due to the great demand on the few collection trucks, the Mkonge Tea Block Association has been limited to only three collection days per week, cutting pick up time to half of what was expected. Even this arrangement is not guaranteed, as often the over scheduled trucks fail to make it to the collection points to pick up the tea, thereby reducing the income of families once more.

Two trucks! Two trucks are what Cheetah wants to help provide. Not giving the trucks away but providing them to be purchased by the co-op, with repayment calculated to take around 24 months. By means of this model, the people will have ownership of these vehicles and learn how to manage their care, maintenance, and eventual replacement. It is a sustainable system.

We estimate that the immediate increase in family income would be more than 50% immediately and growing quickly with time. That increase in family income translates to lower infant mortality, higher education rates, increased family stability, and so much more. The impact that two trucks would bring to these hardworking and industrious people is amazing. To read about this exciting project click [Tea Leaves and Trucks](#). Also you may go to our blog, [Mkonge Tea Photos](#), to see additional pictures. The impact that two trucks would bring to these hardworking and industrious people, is amazing,

As you think about where your charitable contribution might have a powerful impact, consider the diligent workers of the Mkonge Tea Block Association in the highlands of Mfindi. The cost of these two trucks, when divided out by the 523 families of the Mkonge Tea Block Association, comes to about \$200 a family. \$200 to change the life of a family forever.

Investments or tax deductible donations can easily be made online [Donate Now](#). Or you can mail your checks to:

Cheetah Development, Inc.
906 First Street East
Hastings, Minnesota 55033

Thank you for your continued care and support of Cheetah Development's mission and efforts in Tanzania.
Peace to you all,

Lonnie Menard
Executive Administrator
Cheetah Development, Inc.
+1-612-382-3533