

Press Release

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Rotary Clubs of Cork give Project Rombo the Green Light Maasai Tribe of Kenya to benefit from Cork Rotary Fundraising Drive

Cork, 4 April 2008: The four Rotary Clubs of Cork launched today their fundraising drive in aid of Project Rombo, an innovative programme aimed at supporting the Maasai Tribe in Kenya. A gathering of Cork Rotarians, District Governor Ray Cosgrave, business people and Elaine Bannon, coordinator of the Rombo project in Kenya, met in Jury's Hotel to learn more about the plight of the Maasai Tribe and how the people of Cork can support this worthy cause.

Rombo is a village in the southern part of Kenya, at the foot of Kilimanjaro, on the Kenyan side of the Tanzanian border. This area is home to approximately 10,000 Maasai families. Rombo village, with a population of approximately 1,000 people, is a village of red dusty roads, timber shacks for shops and very poor people. The Maasai are one of the few remaining tribes in Africa who continue to live by their culture and tradition. They continue to dress in their traditional clothes and live in the traditional mud and cow dung Manyatta. They are a proud and peaceful tribe who think only of their animals and who try to be happy no matter what difficulties they face.

Rombo is a long term project to build strong, secure communities for the people living in the village. The aim is to ease the hardship they face due to drought, the killer disease AIDS which is spreading rapidly amongst them, lack of basic education, lack of clean water and the lack of a basic healthcare system. There are three projects that require urgent funding. The first project Education is aimed at fitting out schools in the Rombo area - €20,000. The second project is to provide clean drinking water by bringing water from the spring at Munura to Rombo town area, at an estimated cost of €25,000 and the third project is to fit out the Rombo Health Centre and the Maili Tatu Health Centre with medical, costing approximately €35,000.

Speaking at the fundraising programme launch Elaine Bannon, coordinator of the Rombo project, highlighted the challenges the Maasai people are facing day by day and made an appeal to the Cork Rotary clubs for present and future support. *"Rombo is facing a number of challenges and we are appealing to Cork Rotary Club members to help raise emergency funding. Our greatest wish is to see a day when no woman will have to walk 20 or 30 km for water every day, where girls can start school at the age of 4 or 5 years happy, in the knowledge that they will not be removed from school at the age of 13 or 14 years to be circumcised and married. It is our dream to have clinics spread throughout the district. At present we have a health care centre at Rombo Catholic Mission which employs only nurses at present (we are waiting a clinical officer posted by the Department of health). As many people have to travel up to 70-80 km to reach the centre smaller clinics in the interior are badly needed. With a small amount of money we can make a big difference"*.

Cork Rotarians and guests were very impressed and touched by Elaine Bannon's presentation with many questions about the project following. Importantly to note, all money donated as a result of fundraising goes direct to the people without any administration or other costs. Congratulating Elaine on this initiative George Roche, Cork Bishopstown Rotary President observed *"It is a great advantage having direct control on the ground, direct approach is the key. Having Elaine in Rombo, overseeing the administration of the monies raised, builds a lot of confidence in this worthy project. A lot of people in Cork, in fact in Ireland, take for granted that most people in Africa face a huge challenge on daily basis. However, we may do very little to help. Project Rombo is a great opportunity for us to show our support for the Maasai Tribe, without trying to change their way of life, just make it easier"*.

District Governor Ray Cosgrave called on all fellow Rotarians and colleagues to support this project and highlighted how important it is to make a contribution to the fantastic work of Elaine Bannon. To make a donation please visit <http://www.lightofmaasai.com/donations.htm> or contact one of the Cork Rotary Clubs – Glanmire, Cork Bishopstown, Douglas and Cork.

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Notes to Editors

Photographs

Photographs distributed to news editors, business editors, photo editors and journalists by COMMUNICATE

About Rotary International

Rotary is a worldwide organisation of more than 1.2 million business, professional, and community leaders. Members of Rotary clubs, known as Rotarians, provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. There are over 32,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Clubs are nonpolitical, nonreligious, and open to all cultures, races, and creeds. As signified by the motto Service Above Self, Rotary's main objective is service — in the community, in the workplace, and throughout the world. To find out more visit www.rotary.org

About Elaine Bannon

Elaine Bannon is originally from Dublin, Ireland. She left her job and comfortable lifestyle to live and work in Rombo, Kenya as an unpaid NGO worker (non governmental organisation) in 2002. Elaine was already very aware of the plight of the African people but only when she first visited Kenya and witnessed the extreme poverty for herself did she decide to try and help by living amongst the Maasai community. Five years later by working with the local Maasai men and women, Elaine has adapted to her role as teacher, project manager, builder and doctor. Elaine has been heavily involved in fundraising and subsequently building small schools, a medical clinic and water wells. To find out more visit www.lightofmaasai.com