

Though it is the rainy season, the rain is very sparse, and both the people and the animals are extremely malnourished, with little hope for the months ahead. Usually the food grown at this time of year keeps them going for the next four months, but now, due to global warming, the crops are dying in the fields, except where there is irrigation. Where Elaine has been able to pipe water there is good growth, because the ground is fertile.



*Sr. Kathleen with the family who had lost their only son*

The most difficult part of living and working in a place like Rombo is seeing little babies dying, because their mothers have no milk, due to hunger. On the other hand, I met women who were full of courage and determination to provide for their families, and Elaine has arranged loans for them so that they can make some money from growing tomatoes, and sunflowers (for the oil), making beaded jewellery or keeping hens and goats. The scene in the local town square in the early morning is reminiscent of Ireland in famine times. The people gather in the hope of getting a day's work in return for food. One would wonder how hungry people can work, but

lorry that was transporting stolen goods, and when the police caught up with him they shot him dead. She had a nine year old daughter who was very bright, but was suffering from a serious heart condition. On the same day a woman who had AIDS died in the Health Centre, and the body would not be released until the fees of the clinic were paid, and the cost of the ambulance journey home paid also. I could go on, but the struggle to survive is very obvious.



*Elaine Bannon with a newly born Masai girl*

On the other side the people have great faith. The little churches are full on Sundays and the singing and dancing (at the Offertory) is wonderful. At the Mass I attended on the Sunday there was a meeting after the Mass to arrange who would donate a goat or a lamb for the Christmas dinner. The cooking will take place outside the church while the Mass is going on, and everyone will eat together. This is probably how it was in the early church!

I saw the schools, water pumps, and pipelines that Elaine has been responsible for providing, and I met the women's groups who have got new heart from her presence and intervention on their behalf. I have listened to her hopes and dreams for those who come to her house on a daily basis seeking help of all kinds, especially for their children's education. Most people I know, including myself, would be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of suffering, but this woman who was a child when Beaumont Parish was set up thirty years ago manages to continue to work unceasingly, with courage and good humour. We can be justly proud that from our midst a woman of generosity and love has gone out to a very needy people and is working lovingly with them.

We are all aware of the present crisis in Kenya and by staying with the Masai people Elaine has shown immense courage. The road ahead is difficult and uncertain, and she needs our prayers and support.

At present she is mounting a food program and if you feel you would like to send her financial help, the bank that deals with her account (and transfer the money to Kenya) is the **Bank of Ireland in Walkinstown (Account name: Joseph House of Hope. Account number: 88233182. Branch code: 900287)**. If you wanted to send it to this branch you could put it into the emergency lodgement at Beaumont Hospital. If you need any further information I will be delighted to help (01 8377023).