

SOLAR COOKING DEMONSTRATION AT THE MARA IN NAROK; KENYA

The six hour drive to the Mara was quite bumpy especially the last stretch (about 2 hours) as we approached the Game Reserve. There are vast dry lands with zebras, monkeys, gazelles and other wild animals at a distance. We arrived at sunset and were met by Mr. James Lasoloi, the manager for Sekenani Maasai Development Project (SEMADEP) with whom we liaised in organizing this training.

We had a briefing to agree on the agenda for the next day then set off for much needed rest.

We were at the solar cooking site by 8a.m and we set the ingredients and the solar cookits so that the process could begin. This drew a lot of attention but to our surprise the people who came were men. They asked several questions and the solar cooking demonstration began, officially with the men. I was concerned as we had been very specific to James that this demonstration was for the women; of course the men could come but we wanted more women to attend. James was quick to demand that I continue explaining to the men and make sure they understood; so I did.



The men continued to increase in number and they appreciated the concept. After the pots were set, we informed them that the food; depending on what's cooking and the intensity of the sunrays can take 2 hours before it is ready to eat. At this, they start leaving one by one claiming that they would be back to eat.

To our surprise the women started coming to the site, so we got the few remaining men to explain to the women what the session was about and how the solar cookits work.





After the estimated 2 hours within which the food was expected to be ready, there were no men, only women.

Curious, we asked the women where they had been as we had expected them to arrive between 8a.m to 9a.m. They informed us that the husbands had to know what was being taught in order to allow them to attend the solar cooking demonstration.

The clouds had already started gathering and we had to stop the demonstration but we explained in theory how the cookits work and requested them to come back to the site the next day by 8a.m.

Day 2 the women came for the demonstration and they actually got to the site before we did.

They were very active and helped in preparing the ingredients.



They loved the idea and took turns to prepare the ingredients and set the cookits.



They listened keenly and tried the pot temperatures to see if the sun can actually heat a pot. They crowded round the cookits and it took a lot of persuasion to get them to move away. We started teaching them how to recycle polythene bags by weaving baskets from them.



After a little while, the food was ready and they all enjoyed the fruits of their labor.



It was a very successful demonstration. These 22 participants answered all our questions and explain how to make various foods using the cookits. As a reward we gave each a complete set of the solar cookits.





From the generous contribution of the GlobalGiving Family we were able to make a difference to the lives of the women at the Mara. We made friends who now understand that there is an alternative to firewood as cooking fuel. We are all very grateful and the AfriAfya team looks forward to being given another opportunity to improve lives and the environment as well.

