



# Heather Johnstone

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Contact details:  
hfjohnstone@gmail.com



**Location:** Tanzania



**What I do:** Helping to empower the most disadvantaged women and children in Mara through the Rehema Project.

Dear friends,

My stories are often accompanied by photographs, but sometimes it's not appropriate to be snapping pics when people are going through a tough time, and I'd like to share two such cases recently when, thanks be to God, we were able to help women in need through our assistance programme.

I recently visited my friend and former neighbour, Anna. We chatted and in passing she told me about a lady, a near neighbour, who she had met recently. Her name is Neema (which means grace). Neema was down and despairing, and Anna asked her what was wrong. Her response was "I'm going to die". She told my friend she has breast cancer and that the doctor had told her she must have urgent surgery to remove the breast otherwise the cancer will spread. She was despairing as she is unable to work, her husband works as a casual labourer when he can find work, and they have two young children. The cost of the surgery was the equivalent of about \$100 and was prohibitively expensive for her. I told my friend we could help her through the Rehema assistance programme.

A couple of days later Anna told me that Neema had had the surgery on the Sunday evening and needed to have several blood transfusions (here, the patient must pay for these AND find his/her own donors!). Her husband found four donors, each willing to donate two pints, but they didn't have the money to pay for the transfusions, or for transport for the donors to get to the hospital, so treatment was delayed. Of course, as soon as I heard I made sure she had the extra money to have the transfusions and undertook to make money available to her for any medication she may need post op.

Rehema assistance also helped a crippled lady to rebuild the roof of her house. Her name is Mama Mkami and I see her from time to time when I'm getting a tuk-tuk into town. She is a paraplegic and drags herself about using her upper body strength. If I happen to be using the same transport, I give her a small contribution to help her buy food etc and she is always so grateful. She has a wheelchair-cum-tricycle which she pedals with her arms, but she can't take it with her when she goes into town on a Friday. (On Friday it is acceptable for people with disabilities to beg in town.) In conversation a few days later she asked if I could help her replace her roof as she lost the sheet metal in a storm. She desperately wanted to replace it before the next rainy season started. Again, our fund came in useful, and Mama Mkami was extremely relieved and grateful.

Praise/prayer point: Praise the Lord that thanks to the generosity of supporters, Neema was able to have the



Some of the Rehema team at Mara Day

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surgery she so desperately needed, and both Neema and Mama Mkami were given hope for the future through the provision of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for God's protection over them and their families.

I might not be able to share photographs of these two lovely ladies, I can however share plenty of photographs from our recent Mara Day celebrations within the Diocese of Mara. All schools, organisations and projects within our diocese had stalls showcasing what they do and celebrating their skills and expertise. All parishes attended too and there were approximately 30 or 40 choirs who performed throughout the day and into the evening. The celebration lasted four days and

culminated in a huge Sunday service at the cathedral. It is a very joyous affair rejoicing over everything Mara, and we were delighted that several of the attendees visited Rehema Café for a refreshing juice or a snack.

Instead of our usual Tuesday afternoon prayer meeting at my house, we recently had a very poignant but joyous get-together at the home of retired Bishop Hilkiyah and Martha Omindo. Most of the Rehema team joined in and a fabulous afternoon of prayer, worship, and celebration took place.

Great news! Thanks to our friends at UK Christian charity Go Make a Difference in Tanzania Rehema products will be available in your neighbourhood this season. They will be selling our fabulous goodies online with Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/GoMADinTanzania>. Please have a look at what is on offer. Who knows, you might find some lovely handmade Christmas gifts at an affordable price. All monies raised go directly to the Rehema Project and support the most marginalised women in the Mara region, so tell your family and friends too.

Praise point: thank God for the many individuals and link churches who support the Rehema Project and the work I do in so many ways.

My contract with CMS has been renegotiated and instead of returning to the UK every three years for six months, it has been confirmed that my new cycle will be two months back in the UK every year. The British summer season is a busy time for Rehema so it is more likely that I will return in winter, which will be a regular shock to the system. The six-month break was really quite disruptive to the continuity of the project, so shorter visits more often will hopefully be more efficient.

A big thank you to my friends and supporters, for your encouragement, financial and prayerful support, and love throughout the year 2023.

I wish you peace, goodwill and happiness at Christmas and always.

Mungu awabariki.



*Photos from top to bottom: Bishop George and his wife with the Nyambeshi choir; the girls from Nyambeshi enjoying a juice at Rehema; celebration with retired bishop, Hilkiyah Omindo and his wife Martha; Heather and the team*



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