



# Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 654, Interview with Jack Lekishon

**Mariann Sullivan:** Welcome to Our Hen House, Jack.

**Jack Lekishon:** Thank you.

**Mariann:** I want to talk about your background and your vegan advocacy and your wildlife advocacy. These are all very exciting topics, but I know there is this very important story going on right now in Tanzania regarding the eviction of the Maasai from their lands and I wanna talk about that as well. But first I thought we would start with a little bit of background.

Can you just tell us a little bit about the Maasai Mara? Where is it and who lives there?

**Jack:** Yes. I'm Jack Lekishon a native Maasai warrior. I am a young man, wildlife conservationist, and environmentalist, and also the community leader from the Maasai Mara, Kenya. Here in the Maasai Mara people rely on the tourism when it comes to economically and also they depend on the livestock keeping that's like cows, sheep and goats, on a very large scale. This is an area which also recorded the highest number of wildlife conservancies whereby the community saves part of their land, part of their land parcel for the sake of the wildlife conservation. Briefly maybe that's what I can say when it comes to the Maasai Mara.

**Mariann:** I know that both the Maasai and many wild animals, the classic African wild animals that we all have heard about all over the world, live in the Maasai Mara. Can you tell us a little bit about the animals who live there and also what it was like growing up there?

**Jack:** The people, just as I've said, they keep livestock on the large scale. And at the same time this is an area which records the wildebeest migrations, especially during this time that's happening right now, between June and November, we are having thousands of wildebeest coming into Kenya and they go back to Tanzania.

On the same note, the Maasai people, they do not do a lot of farming simply because of the climate change. And the Maasai Mara is also a well known area in East Africa, or also in Africa at large, where we can find the big five animals. Which are very famous in this place. Which we have the elephants, we have the lions, we have the cheetahs and we have the rhinos. Those are some of the big five that we have.

You can also observe, or we can, you can also witness the shy five, the small five, the impossible five, which are very rare to see in the Maasai Mara. Of course, some can be seen during the night, during the night safaris, some can be seen during the day or while doing a walking safari. That is what makes this place globally known in the world and at the same time, it is well known when it comes to the beautiful of the landscape. When it comes to the vegetation, the sunset and the sunrise. So basically that's what I can say on the same.

**Mariann:** It sounds like a very, just an amazing place. But as you've mentioned, your people, the Maasai are very dependent on animals as a food source. And can you explain the traditional diet of the Maasai?

**Jack:** Yes. The Maasai are indigenous people. They believe to survive on animal's products like the milk from the cows. We also have meat and then we also have eggs from the hens, from the chickens. And also, we also, they also depend on taking blood, cow blood, sheep blood, and also even the goat blood. So that is the main source of food.

**Mariann:** How did it happen that you made this big change in the way that you eat? And you shifted to, I believe you're a vegan, you follow a vegan diet, is that true? And how did that happen?

**Jack:** Of course, yes. I am a vegan and I'm three years vegan. I started this initiative immediately when the COVID 19 hit the world globally.

When the people suffering, people are living with a lot of starvation, malnutrition, hunger crisis. So I started fundraising funds to ensure that the humble backgrounds, the poor families, poor children. Even in the schools, I started the feeding program whereby The Million Dollar Vegan came in to support this program, right from the community to where we are right now, by converting students in school into veganism.

And I will realize that we have to go vegan in order to fight for the future pandemics. We know very well that the source of the COVID19 is the animal's products, or it has come from the animal product that has been used that has

spread the disease. So I decided to go vegan simply to be kind to the planet, to the animals and for the sake of our health.

**Mariann:** So you mentioned during the pandemic, you were involved with a vegan food relief program. Can you tell us a little bit about that and how it was received? Were people excited about it?

**Jack:** Yes. When the pandemic started of course when people are very hungry people turn to look an alternative for survival and the way that they have shifted to a new feeding program is people started hunting animals for food. Of course the local markets were closed, no shops that are open and the same time the food prices went high, of course, because of the COVID pandemic.

And because of this...this is a well renowned place whereby there is a lot of Conservancies. We have the Maasai Mara National Reserve. Animals are crossing the community land from the Maasai Mara National Reserve to the wildlife conservancies or to the community land. So people turn, that since no one can afford food from the shop, since all markets are closed to access vegetables, now people are shifted to wildlife hunting. Especially like tortoise, like zebras, like gazelles, like giraffes. This was very risky, or this was a very bad way of survival.

And others, they turn into the ecosystem by destroying, by cutting down of trees, burning charcoal and sell charcoal as a source of funds. Of course the Maasai Mara is well known, depending on the tourism and because of this the young people from the Maasai land, they're the one who are the guardians, who are the tour guides of all the tourists who are coming into the country.

And because all camps are closed and all staff has been sent back home during the pandemic...Everyone depending on the tourism industry they have lost jobs and therefore everybody went back home. People also shifted to sand harvesting whereby you can find a high population in the rivers, in the streams fading sands and selling to the big lorries that are traveling, even to Nairobi and other parts of the country. The degradation of the natural resources was automatically being done and this made me to raise an awareness or to raise a calling the world globally to come on board to ensure that we're ensuring this community accessing food, especially the vegan foods. To ensure that they're not hunting animals anymore, they're not cutting trees anymore, they're not destroying rivers and streams by fading the sands. Of course, we know that water is also home for some other animals who cannot survive on the land.

Basically we used the social media to call for this action with especially the GoFundMe fundraisers, some other platforms. And we accessed foods from the big towns in the country like Narok Town in Nairobi. We distributed to families while they are staying safe at home. And we are ensuring we have a team from every village, especially the village elders were ensuring that there is fairly distribution of food and also we consider the most needy that needs our quick response for food relief. We visited village to village distributing food very equally and very responsibly.

And also we had a team of youths whom we are still working right now. Because to ensure that we are helping our community we have about 50 youths and another 50 youths. So we have a group of two which makes a total of a hundred youths who are helping in distribution of this food.

**Mariann:** That's an amazing story. And it's not just the pandemic either. I know that you believe it's very important for people to shift their diets in that area, particularly away from raising cattle. And one of the reasons is climate change and drought is that right?

**Jack:** Yes, of course. It is not only because of the pandemic, but we are looking into the future for the sake of the future generations and generations to come.

Because when you try to see, this is the most land that's hosting a variety of wildlife. The community is converting their big lands or their parcel of lands into conservation for the sake of the vegetation conservation for the sake of wildlife.

Of course, just as I have said, the Maasai keep herds of animals and this also is causing a lot of challenge when it comes to the conservation. Because if you can find a family with approximately 1000 cows or 700 cows, of course even grazing becomes a problem. And also we have a lot of drought. So you can find during that drought season this community facing a lot of great loss because right from the 700 cows in a family, they can die, up to 400 cows, during the drought season.

So for the sake of this we are turning on this to ensure that it'll reach a point whereby we will encourage our people to do farming, to grow vegetables on their homes to ensure that they have plenty of food for the sake of the future.

**Mariann:** Do you anticipate the Maasai staying on the land and food being brought in from other areas? Or do you think that people can grow food and do more cultivation of food, which has not been a Maasai tradition, has it?

**Jack:** Yes, of course, that is very true. When you try to see, because of these people, this community, keeps a lot of animals normally when they access, when they access vegetables...like for us who are vegans and also of course in the Maasai Mara local centers we have other communities that are shifting in, coming to work from other parts of the country who are not livestock keepers. Of course this also makes these local markets to grow. Of course, in this local markets, there is vegan foods that are being sold, like vegetables, all kinds of vegetables.

**Mariann:** But even in Maasai tradition, I understand, and correct me if I'm wrong, but there's even a feeling that it's wrong to dig into the land. That that is not the traditional way of life, do people resist farming?

**Jack:** From the statistics, or from the study that I've took so far, it's kind of just a mentality that needs to be removed in a very smart way through the conservation or through the educational forum.

Of course we have the Western education, which has now changed a lot of young people, even some of the people that have learned it. We also have Christianity that has changed the way of the Maasai life. So of course through this awareness because we are now shifting into farming awareness, or the importance of farming, or the importance of growing food. This is very important because it is an alternative way of survival even during the drought season. And also even during the outbreak of the pandemics in the future,

**Mariann:** Aside from the pandemic, I know that you believe it is very important for people to shift their diets away from this reliance on cattle, because it's not sustainable for a number of reasons.

And one of those reasons is drought, which is increasing because of climate change, am I right about that?

**Jack:** Ok, thank you, as I said yesterday, that it is very important for the people to shift their diet away from the depending on the animal's products and of course keeping the herds of animals.

Just as you have said, there is a drought, which is which is the main issue here which leads to the great loss of animals. And at the same time keeping these herds of animals on this land where we have a lot of conservation going on, both in the Maasai Mara conservancies and also in the Maasai Mara National Reserve, it is leading to the degradation of the natural resources since these animals are destroying the natural forest. They're making a lot of pathways in

the parks in the forest and also destroying all the vegetation because of the big numbers. As I said yesterday people are keeping very big number of animals and of course this is leading to the destruction of the valuable resources.

And this is exactly why this is very important for people to shift on and go to the plant-based lifestyle whereby people can grow vegetables, can grow other plant foods, which is more sustainable because of these reasons.

**Mariann:** Yes, I certainly can see why keeping large numbers of cattle can be destructive to the environment, but where will people get food?

Will people be able, especially in a drought damaged land, will people be able to grow food or do you expect to be able to import food? I'm just wondering how do you answer that question of, "Well, what will we eat?"

**Jack:** Uh, Mariann, this is a very good question and I'm encouraging our community, and we are here to inspire them to shift from livestock to plant-based lifestyle. And source of food will be mainly from the from farming because in the Maasai Mara, even though there is some months which have a lot of drought, but in between I'm very sure they will be able to grow plenty of food and store in preparations ahead of the dry months where we experience a lot of drought. The same time, the community can also access these plant based meals or foods in the local markets because of course we have so many local markets in The Mara. This will be an access to these people.

Remember that in The Maasai Mara people depend on the hundred percent rate on keeping the animals and also in the tourism industry, which is also their main source of financial status in the community. Because we have many camps the young people here, they are local tour guides and as long as the people have funds, the source of funds, as long as the industry is keeping on shining, the source of funds will not be cut off. And therefore these people can access food from the local markets. To be self sustainable and to be self independent on the production of food, people should shift, they should grow food at their homes. They should grow vegetables. And any other thing like cooking oil starts, all those can be accessed in the local shops. And I did a statistic and I am very sure this is successful.

But it's only that this isn't tradition for the Maasai, which is their best lifestyle. And and because of the pandemic and because of the climate change that is coming right away, or that is already we are facing on, it is very possible for us to change.



Remember right now, people should change their mindset. People should change their way of lifestyle, as long as there is a global change when it comes to the climate change. And of course people do not experience a lot of drought, let us say, 25 years ago, 50 years ago, hundred years ago.

Of course, as time goes there is a lot of climate change and there are some months which we never experience rainfall in these areas where this indigenous community are living. And because of the same, this will make the shift to be very possible for the benefit of a sustainable lifestyle.

**Mariann:** Your last answer leads us completely to the other area I was wanting to talk about, because we don't want, just wanna talk to you about veganism and diet, but about wild animals, because this seems to be really your passion. Most of your background has to do with working with the wild animals and which is totally normal considering where you live.

And in fact, where you live is one of the most precious places on earth. It's something that everybody, almost everybody in the world knows about. And of course, ecotourism is already important there. And you see that, I think, as really the savior of your people that they should be more involved in and get more of the benefit from the ecotourism in the area.

I don't know whether I'm putting words in your mouth, so tell me. But you already mentioned some of the animals that live in the area and that the wildebeest migration goes through this area. So it is an amazing place. So how do you see the Maasai's involvement in ecotourism to increase that are of benefit for them so they don't have to rely so much on cattle production?

**Jack:** Basically what I can say that the Maasai really realize the importance of eco tourism because of the tourism industry. Of course some of these lodges and some of these camps are living on the community land. Incorporating this business through community support, through community participation. Because of this they're really supporting eco tourism when it comes to the tree planting, to fighting the climate change.

Of course, people have now that idea and that is exactly what we are doing even in the grassroots of reaching the schools spreading the conservation education, the importance of trees, the importance of wildlife conservation as well. And of course spreading on how people should interact with the animals without human wildlife conflict, because this is an area whereby animals and people have freedom in movement.

Animals are moving from one conservancy from the national reserve to other areas in the community land. Right now, what actually can show that these communities are really cooperating, especially when it's, when it comes to the eco tourism, is that people now are leasing the part of their lands, including where they're living, to some of their camps and lodges who can support the environmental conservation.

They are leasing and get let us say monthly payments or in a yearly payment so that these people can do a tree planting in part of their homes, in part of their land. Apart from the lands that are being used for as a conservancy, now back at home where people are living, they're now giving out this land to allow eco tourism organization, the eco tourism comes to lease and pay.

Additionally people now are really admiring on the importance of the using solar system at homes and also at the local centers. And also when it comes to the water pumping of course there are some eco-camps or ecologists that are supporting the community through water projects. Of course this goes to the fight of the climate change, where people sometimes face water scarcity and also animals lack water because of the drought.

And of course this is now one of the systems that are, that is being used-solar system to pump water. People now are using the same at homes for kids to study while during the holidays and also this is one of the ways people are now using their solar system lighting at home, to make them comfortable and to make life better.

So I can actually say, through this again, through what else can show that eco tourism is more important and the community are motivated to participate in it, even including in the local churches people are planting a lot of trees, in schools people are planting a lot of trees and even at homes people are having... these eco-camps are having these tree projects and people can go and borrow trees.

Some even like us, who do a lot of volunteer work in the community, we can go and ask permission to plant trees inside local churches and also encourage people to plant trees at their homes. And we keep a monitor on whether these people are taking care of these trees or not. Such that in a certain period, these people can be encouraged, to be given a reward, especially the solar lighting for kids to study at home, because of taking care of these trees.

So what can actually show us on the importance of eco tourism and how this community is picking up on the same.



**Mariann:** Yeah, it sounds like there's so much going on there that's very exciting and very looking towards the future. And, I really wanna get into what's going on in Tanzania because it seems like they're looking more to the past than the future.

And before we do, I think there's a kind of obvious question in that area as to why do you see ecotourism as more beneficial to the local economy than bringing in trophy hunting?

**Jack:** The eco tourism is really giving on the modernized ways of people's survival because of course taking care of the environment will also be friendly to everyone, including the animals, including the people because if eco tourism is much rooted in the community.

Of course, remember that there, there will also be improvement of the soil. When there is also a lot of tree planting, of course, we believe that when we plant a lot of trees, of course it attracts a lot of rain. And because of this, when a lot of trees is planted as well I believe that this is also leads to the conservation of soil, and that's, what I can basically identify on that.

**Mariann:** But speaking of trophy hunting, that is a lot to do with what's going on in Tanzania. And I know Tanzania is a completely separate country, but for the Maasai, really there are Maasai people on both sides of the border if I understand correctly.

So in some ways it's a different country, but it's the same people. You know, I don't have an in depth knowledge, so just give us an idea of what is happening there and the conflict going on between the government and the Maasai people in that area of Tanzania.

**Jack:** There is a little difference between the Maasai on this border and also from those who are in Tanzania. Because in Kenya trophy hunting is very illegal and the people on this side, in the Maasai Mara, and also of course in Kenya in general, have realized the importance of wildlife conservation.

And everybody's participating in this to ensure that animals are being taken care of. No hunting, no wild meat and also no cutting down of trees when it comes to the charcoal burning businesses. Because of course, this leads to the destruction of the wildlife habitats. What is happening is that through the community cooperation, when it comes to the conservation, this is what's encouraging the community to give part of their land to be made conservancies for the sake of wildlife conservation and for the sake of the native conservation.

And when it comes to these wildlife conservancies which is, of course, the community based land. The people who are working as rangers, who are working as wildlife watchdogs is from the community. This is also working as a source of employment, as a source of jobs, for the local people.

And also in the Maasai Mara National Reserve it is the same people from the local community who are being employed to patrol day and night to ensure that animals are safe day and night, for the sake of ensuring that there is no hunting that is going on both in the community land and also in the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

When it comes to the trophy hunting of course it is very illegal and that's why in the conservancies there is always the entry and exit points. And also in the Maasai Mara National Reserve, there is always the exit and entry points and of course people are patrolling day and night. And when you try to see in deep details, for example, if a cheetah is identified to have given birth to a certain number of kids always that animals have to be monitored day and night by the rangers, monitoring when the kids are growing until they become adults.

This is to ensure that there is not an animal that is being taken away out of the conservancies, out of the community land, or out of the national reserve for the sake of these kind of businesses where people are depending on the wild animals for survival, when it comes to the illegal markets of the wild animals.

In Kenya this is actually very condemned and it's not allowed-totally. And the county government is also coming on board to ensure that people, the community, are living with animals in harmony. And that's why the animals from the national reserve can move to the conservancies. To and from, there is freedom of movement for these animals. And that's why for those community, or the local people, who have, who did live fences in their parcel of land are being now encouraged to remove it. Whereby the conservancies are supporting them to ensure that they're responsible for what they have spent to put on the live fences within the wildlife corridors.

This is to open up the land to make freedom for the animals to move freely and also from one place to another. As you can see that everybody's who is on board to ensure that animals are living in harmony. And at the same time the county government, also the local leaders and also the conservancies boards are making a lot of boreholes that animals, the animals and the domestic animals are sharing to access water.

This is because sometimes, when there is a lot of drought, animals and also the domestic and the wild animals, everyone suffers when it comes to the drought. So to ensure that the animals, the wild animals and the domestic animals access safe water during the dry season, now in every conservancy they are making a lot of boreholes and both animals, the wild and the domestic, they can access freely without actually the human wildlife conflict.

And it's also happening that these conservancies and also the county government when the lions kill the animals- the cows, the sheep and goats-the Maasai no longer can fix it by killing the lion. These people are shifting in, are taking the records, taking the witnesses that this has happened-the number of cows, the number of sheep that has been killed by a lion- and then the owner has to be compensated when they're especially losing the financial support. So this is to bring people together that you should not kill a lion because he has the ability to kill a cow. So, there is a board, or there is organization that can set great laws for the local people. And this is bringing a lot of positive impacts and people are no longer directly fighting with animals for survival on the same planet.

**Mariann:** Yeah, no, it sounds like what you're doing is incredibly progressive. And just to go back to the Tanzania question it does sound like, at least possible from what I've heard, that the approach being taken in Tanzania is more looking backwards and possibly like supporting trophy hunting. And not looking as much to the future as it is in your area where ecotourism, and as you pointed out and I know is an incredibly important thing for you, the planting of trees to improve the land and to help fight the drought.

All of these things are very progressive in looking to the future that we have to live in. And I know that you do a lot of wildlife conservation work with children, which is so important if we're going to be looking to the future. Do the children you work with understand what an extraordinary place they live in and what extraordinary animals inhabit the area where they live? Do they know it's amazing there? Or do they... \*laughs\*...is it just like another day?

**Jack:** My passions rely basically on the conservation, both for the wildlife and also on the environmental conservation.

And this is what I studied in the college. And because of this, I do a lot of conservation when it comes to the kids, because I realize that it is very easy to change the mindset of a young person compared to our grandfathers and our grandmothers. Of course it is past the age whereby they can easily understand on exactly what is happening.

And I also believe that when I change the mind of a young kid... For example, if I reach a number of 800 students in a school teaching them and educating them on the importance of wildlife, on the importance of the environment, on the importance of fighting the climate change, on the importance of changing their diet from animal products to the plant-based lifestyle. Of course, I believe that when these kids, or when these children, change their minds it helps me to spread the message to reach 800 families of which I could not achieve, to gather all of them together in one place and be able to address them, and I've seen this working very well. These students are spreading this word when they go back home.

And that's why we do, I do teach them on the importance of tree-planting, the importance of wildlife, on how they can appreciate nature itself, how they can realize the importance of nature. And after that sometimes I organize, I have clubs in schools- wildlife clubs and environmental clubs, so that sometimes through some financial support, when we raise a lot of funds, we can use some extra to take these kids outside to the national reserve, to the conservancies, for them to be able to appreciate the nature, to appreciate how animals are living freely.

And this is actually touches the heart, that's why once in a year I do organize a cleanup in the Maasai Mara National Reserve. Especially in the month of April, or in the month of March, whereby we organize to collect all the rubbish in the park. This is one of the things that these kids learn on why should we take care of the environment. You can realize over the past years during the game drive you can find holding the plastics, which is very shameful to see an animal holding rubbish or holding the plastic bottles in their mouth. So because of this, this is actually the reason why we are doing this.

And it is the young people who are doing this. It is not our mothers. It's not our fathers, it's not our grandmothers. It is them who come out in large numbers and do a cleanup. When these kids go back home, they know that there is a need to clean their home compound. At the same time, we do a cleanup in the local centers. We organize that this month we go to a certain local center and do a cleanup and be able to separate the bottles and what should be burned and what should be... what is reusable. Basically there is a very positive impact when it comes to the, getting the young people.

**Mariann:** Just can I ask you too? I think you mentioned also that you, at least during the pandemic, you had a vegan school lunch program in the schools as well.

So you're not just teaching the children, you're helping to feed them as well. Is that right?

**Jack:** Yes. Right now I have three schools, which we are helping through The Million Dollar Vegan organization based in the US. And this is an organization that is spreading a veganism lifestyle. And right now we have three schools in The Mara. We started last year whereby we have 3 schools which we are supporting directly through the Million Dollar Vegan organization based in the US.

And we do vegan meal delivery on monthly basis. So every month we deliver food, vegan meals, which we approximate that it'll be enough for these kids to feed on until the next month. So every first date of each month, we have to deliver these meals. And now we have three schools. We have Mara Valley Vegan School, Talek Vision Vegan School and we have Talek Boarding School. These three schools have a total of 3,500 kids, which are now converted into vegans, into veganism, one hundred percent rate. And through this program, we have realized that after converting these 3,500 kids, when they go back home during the holidays, they're also bringing the same impact to their families.

Now it is so surprising for their parents to realize that my child is no longer eating meat. My child is no longer eating animal's products. They go specifically for the vegan meals, even back at home. And some have even already influenced their parents to go vegan as well.

So that's why I was focusing and I have been focusing that when we change the young people, we directly or indirectly can change their background or their families that they come from. And when we change this number of kids and this number of families, of course, in one way or the other, we are reaching the whole society.

So that's why we have focused on, and we started with the three schools and maybe as time goes, as much as we continue receiving a lot of support, we'll be able to reach other schools in the neighborhood to ensure that we are teaching them on the veganism lifestyle.

**Mariann:** Everything you do seems to focus really on helping your people adapt to what are really very dramatic changes going on in the whole world, in positive ways rather than in negative ways.

And I'm just wondering as a closing question, do you believe that the Maasai, and perhaps just Africa at large and Africans, have the potential to lead in the

future, in learning how to adapt to what's really going to be a new world because of climate change and pandemics...and they're affecting the whole world.

Do you see Africa, and the Maasai in particular, as being leaders in this? Because it sounds like what you're doing is very progressive.

**Jack:** This is very right. And I have a lot of hope and I have a lot of faith and always I believe that through a global solidarity, as a global family...because remember that it is I and you who will bring a change.

Of course we have to start small and move bigger. And I believe that because of this climate change and because what the world is currently facing and where we are heading on as a global. Of course, I believe that the Africa at large and the Maasai as well, and also the Kenya people are ready to go where the world is moving.

And that's why...I didn't mention about of course, can be related to what you have just asked, about the global marches for the endangered species in the Maasai Mara. Of course we organized these global marches once in a year, but over the pandemic's time we lost a lot of financial support and this has collapsed and we hope that it'll go back to normal again.

So we normally do a lot of global marches whereby we do once in a year in Maasai Mara. And also once in a year in Nairobi, Kenya. This is basically to target on the importance of the wildlife conservation. We speak against trophy hunting, we speak against depending on the wild animals for survival of course, through selling, through trophy hunting, and even through killing and eating their products directly like meat.

That is exactly what we are taking...we are taking on to ensure that everybody gets this message. There is also an organization which is called NARD which will normally do the Animal Rights Day once in a year. And I lead the same in the Maasai Mara through NARD's support, based in the US, that on every month of June on 5th we commemorate the loss, the great loss of the animals that have already...that have been already killed. So that we mourn, we commemorate, we come together and also spread the same word.

I believe that there is a change, Africa is ready to change because through the voice of the young people, I believe that. Because I've already worked with the young people so much, I believe that we can make a change. And it is us. We are not here to wait someone else to be able to make a change. It is our time and

we have to stand and we have to speak and we have to come out in large numbers and say this is right.

I didn't also mention about some other programs, but maybe you can ask later whether I have anything else to say and I will be able to mention...

**Mariann:** No, \*laughing\* I was just going to ask you if you had anything else to say, so please!

Yeah. Tell it, yes. Tell me everything that I should have asked you, but I didn't.

**Jack:** Yes. What you have not just mentioned is that I have about two programs I have Maasai girls employment program, education employment program, whereby I do sanitary towels drive.

Of course the Maasai do not recognize women is most important people in the society. They always believe that men have a voice and men have right to education and men have right to, to, to their human rights. And I'm also fighting for these girls' rights. And I'm fighting against the FGM, which is circumcision for girls, which is very illegal. This is actually going very down because I have seek a lot of permission from the government, seek a lot of support, to ensure that always when I make a voice, I will not be able to get an attack directly from the community.

So I do, monthly sanitary towel drive. Of course all our projects, GoFundMe projects. We raise funds through GoFundMe for all this. So I do delivery for monthly sanitary towels for girls. It is so bad that you can find that these monthly thing for our girls can also prevent them from going to school because they do not access to such important supplies. You can find during the end of the month, for those girls who have already reached to such a period, you can find a whole class, all students, have missed to attend the school because of the same. They do not have sanitary towels, some even use pieces of clothing, some even use pieces of mattresses as a sanitary towels.

So I saw that there's a need for us to address this. And I always struggle and spend so much to ensure that these kids or these girls are accessing the same. Additionally, apart from fighting the FGM, which of course I can share with you with a lot of writing about why I'm against this.

And of course, I know that you already understand that FGM is not right for the... to be done. I also ensure that I support girls that are being married in a very early age. And right now I am the main point where girls are running away



to. When a girl is being given for early marriage, maybe to a really old man, they run where I am for support, for protection, for the right for their education.

And as we speak right now, I have 52 girls which are already under my support, through different people who are giving financial support for their tuition fee payments. So right now I have 52 girls, and around 16 girls out of 52 are rescued from early marriage and they're under my care and always ensuring that they have their basic needs.

I'm ensuring that during holidays they have a place to stay until the rest of the kids go back to school. So that is some of the other projects that I'm doing and right now because students have come home two days ago just for 10 days holiday and then they go for a new term. Right now, in my records, I have six girls already, which I'm also seeking a lot of support to ensure that as school opens they're going back to access education. Because some...three of them are orphans and three of them are being given to an early marriage.

Of course it's not right. So that's something else extra that I'm doing.

**Mariann:** I love that work. I think that all of your work is very progressive. And in my mind, the road to progress lies through empowering women. I love that that's part of your mission and I'm very excited to hear about everything that you're doing.

I'm very excited to hear about how connected you are to the animals of the area and how it's such, that's such an important part of the work you do and I'm so glad you were able to join us today on Our Hen House, thank you so much, Jack.

**Jack:** Maybe additionally...I'm also coming up with a tree planting project whereby we need to have a tree nursery and have around, a target of 10,000 tree seedlings.

So that as we move one...to one school to another spreading the importance of conservation, we always have to plant trees during the sessions. We also will be able to have trees to plant even in the conservancies, even in the Maasai Mara National Reserve. When we find a place in the park which is very dry, what I did when I was in college in Nairobi whereby I organized tree plantings in the Nairobi National Park because of course it is not every place that there is a lot of trees in the park.

There are some places we would like to do reforestation in the Maasai Mara National Reserve where these animals are. Of course it's a park but we need to do a reforestation because in the past and even sometimes there is outbreak of fires, a lot of plants are being destroyed.

Coming up with the same project, even though the main problem here is source of water for the animals, for the people and also for the same projects. But hopefully as we come up with such projects, hopefully in the coming years or in the coming future, we'll be able to get very willing people who can even support us to do drilling water from underground to, to supply for the community and to start to supply to all these projects.

And an opportunity that it's giving me to make a very positive impact in our community. And also it is giving an attention for people to listen to me is because of what I'm doing to them. My dedication, for the kids, for the feeding programs. And also throughout the pandemic, I have been feeding thousands of families, reaching them to ensure that that we are fighting against hunger. We are fighting against malnutrition. We are against the staffing crisis. When you are helping a lot, always people are ready to follow you, always people are ready to listen what you are saying, and that this is making all this to be very successful.

**Mariann:** Yeah, absolutely. That is the fundamental part of leadership is to help people. And then of course they will listen more to what you're saying. Very, very powerful. And I actually should ask you one more question. How can people who are listening learn more about and support your work?

**Jack:** Yes. I think this is very simple, but this is the most challenging part. All my projects, or all these projects are GoFundMe projects, which of course we raise a lot of funds or we raise whichever amount of funds that we receive through the social media and this is mainly through my Facebook page. I seek support from new friends, of course GoFundMe you cannot set up when you're in Kenya. So someone else from another country has to set up for you and then I have to do a lot of marketing. I have to talk to make a lot of voice on Facebook to attract people, to make people understand.

And it is the most difficult part of it because over the past times... For example, if I can talk about the tree planting project. For the last almost six months, I've been raising funds for the tree planting project. Of course there is not enough, there is not any donation. So if someone, or if I'm not, if I'm not careful enough, if I'm someone who can give up, I can easily leave the project simply because seems like people assume... sometimes you feel like people are thinking this project is not important, it's not the first priority. But of course I will keep on

and I will keep on pressing. And when it comes to the food relief program for the community, I've used the GoFundMe projects, making a lot of posts, ensuring that I use the language that everyone understand, ensure that I reach those people who already understand what I'm doing. To share the post to friends and also globally.

The main part of it is the GoFundMe of which all this on my Facebook, on my Facebook page. That is the only platform that we are using currently. Like the Million Dollar Vegan, who already we have worked now for three years and we have built a lot of trust. That is the only organization right now that can send funds directly to my aunt through bank account.

And this is for the three schools because we see every month we receive USD 7,000 every month to deliver this food for these three schools every month. So unless a lot of trust is built, that is the only way people can do directly to you, but also adapted to use GoFundMe so that those people who have not already received the better understanding of it can always donate as little as they can.

So specifically that is what I can say.

**Mariann:** That's very helpful, thank you. And thanks for joining us today. It's really been very exciting to find out about the work you're doing.