

HealthEd Connect January 2010



There's an old Zambian proverb that says "Only those under the Mupundu tree hear the fruit fall." Well, we went, we sat, and we heard the fruit fall. And we were impressed! A team composed of Jac and Sherri Kirkpatrick, Cherry Newcom, Michelle Mahlik, and six Graceland Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), Nikky Closson, Laura Ferguson, Taylor Johnson, Danica McLain, Kirk Tabor and Daniel Vogelsang, traveled to Africa in January 2010 to teach and to learn. As usual the learning far outweighed the teaching.

Johannesburg The first stop was Johannesburg, South Africa where we visited the Soweto Museum which poignantly tells the story of Hector Pieteron and the children who died in the protest march that accelerated the abolishment of apartheid. On the lighter side, we visited the Lion Park where we played with lion cubs, fed giraffes, and enjoyed several prides of lions that put on a spectacular show for us.



Livingstone Then on to one of the great wonders of the world – Victoria Falls – where we were treated to thundering waterfalls, clouds of mist, and beautiful rainbows.



Lusaka After the 6 hour bus ride from Victoria Falls we enjoyed a traditional Zambian meal at the home of the Honorable Kabinga Pande, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. His son, also named Kabenga Pande, is a Graceland graduate now living in New York. He arranged to be in Zambia during our trip so that he could extend true Zambian hospitality.

Kasompe - The real adventure occurred when we reached Zambia and began working in the schools. Our goal was to support both the caregivers, most of whom are grandmothers and/or widows, as well as the orphans and vulnerable children enrolled in the

schools. Our first stop was the Kasompe Community School of Peace that is supported by HealthEd Connect. Located in a low to no-income area of Chingola, the needs are great. Over 60 caregivers turned out for classes on financial literacy, paper bead making, and emotional support needs. Overlay the adult classes with the sounds of 100 plus children having English lessons, singing Hokey Pokey, playing soccer and duck-duck-goose, and you have happy pandemonium! In spite of the facility challenges, good things happened!



By the time we left Kasompe, 50 caregivers had volunteered to be trained as community health workers, social workers, or TB counselors while others stepped up to form soccer and Young Peacemaker's Clubs. Everyone indicated they wanted more classes on Income Generating Activities introduced by the Graceland students. At first glance this might appear a bit like a typical involved PTA group anywhere in the world. In actuality, however, their personal stories are quite different from suburbia U.S.A.



AIDS has decimated the family structure leaving over 900,000 orphans scattered throughout Zambia. In many cases elderly grandparents have heroically stepped up and gone to amazing lengths to care for their grandchildren. Unfortunately, some of these children are suffering from deep depression over the loss of their parents and are being marginalized, deprived of school, and forced into the sex trade or otherwise taken advantage of by caregivers.

One of the district nurses told us of a frail and shriveled little old grandmother who came to the clinic with an infant grandchild suckling at her breast. When the nurse asked her if she understood the baby was getting no milk from her she said, "Yes, but I have no food to feed it. What else can I do to comfort it?" Everyone had a story to tell: lack of food, unavailability of transport to the clinic, children being deserted, AIDS stigma, etc.

The Boss - An exciting treat during our stay in Kasompe was an unannounced visit by the CEO, Mirriam, escorted by mother Ethel and good friend Evans. They had traveled by bus by Luanshya to Chingola to survey our team and encourage them in their work. When word spread that the Boss had arrived, our team immediately sprang into action putting our best foot (and camera!) forward. Mirriam, now 3 years



old, generously spread her attention equally by consenting to be held in turn by each eager admirer. Occasionally she even rewarded the group with a quick smile of approval. We found out from Mama Ethel that Mirriam does her best work when she has 2 naps a day and has access to her favorite cuisines of rice and macaroni and cheese. The consensus of our team was that Boss Mirriam looked quite healthy and thriving. Mother Ethel, on the other hand, looked frail and very thin. Both continue to take medicine twice a day for HIV.

The Boss's home support system is fragile to say the least. We had originally understood Mirriam's father had died but it turns out he is alive but unable to provide for the family. That makes Mirriam the "Vulnerable" part of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC's) at this point. She's not an orphan yet. But in addition to herself, both Mom and Dad and a 4-year-old sibling are HIV positive. Her father once had a good job working in the copper mines. After the mines closed, he learned to repair cell phones and televisions. As the economy took a down turn in Zambia the repair business followed suit. About the same time he was disabled in a vehicle accident and faced major new medical challenges along with his previous diagnosis of AIDS. The family is surviving from the maize, groundnuts, cabbage and tomato shamba that Mom Ethel grows.

As long as Mirriam has food and uninterrupted ART treatment for HIV, she should do well. If Mom Ethel's health deteriorates, however, the well-being of Mirriam and her 5 siblings will be further compromised. Based on the enthusiastic reception of the team, it is obvious Boss Mirriam has the full support of her workers who will do everything possible to make sure she has a long and healthy tenure as Boss.



Chipulukusu - We reluctantly said good-bye to our new friends in Kasompe and headed for the Chipulukusu Young Peacemakers School two hours down the road in Ndola. We were again warmly received by over 50 caregivers and 150+ children. Unlike Kasompe, there are no individual classrooms in the Chipulukusu church.

Everything occurs in the one room church. The chatter of 100 children in two simultaneous classes along with an enthusiastic caregiver's class and a lively soccer game being played just outside made for lively acoustics. The church benches are much too high for the little ones feet to reach the floor. In addition there are no desks to work on so students frequently sit on mats on the floor and write in their exercise



books on the floor in front of them. The school has only one textbook for each class (K-3rd) so the teachers laboriously write lessons on the chalk boards for students to copy. This is not only time consuming, it also greatly limits the amount of content that can be covered. The goal is to add a grade each year until the oldest students reach grade 7. At that point the students are eligible to sit for the government standardized exams and, if successful, proceed to grade 8 in the government schools. Children currently enrolled in the K-3rd grade classes range in age from 5 to 17. This is the first opportunity many of the older children have had to learn to read and write.

The caregiver discussions, outdoor games with



the children, glitter “germs” health lessons, art and drawing, income generating and financial literary classes were all



enthusiastically embraced. The children loved the soccer balls donated by Uniroyal. Their usual balls are formed from rags or old plastic bags wound together to form a ball. They lost no time in initiating the new treasures. The women also embraced new opportunities. The week after we left 15 women had already formed a joint venture to hone their paper bead-making skills (“we have to learn how to make really good ones”) and to form a *katemba* or small business to benefit the school. They loved learning about the wonders of calculators!

Kafwa - The *Kafwa* community health workers Sherri trained 17 years ago are still faithfully serving as volunteers. On Mondays and Fridays they visit home-bound clients and on Friday’s they hold a baby-weighing clinic for children under 5. Our visits with the District Ministry of Health (DMOH) officers verified that these services are indispensable to augment the insufficient services provided by the government. We are now in discussions with the DMOH to arrange for training of additional community volunteers in the near future.

The *Kafwa* meet life at its most desperate level. They invited members of our team to accompany them on home visits to 4 of their clients. We had just started walking through the village toward our first home visit when we came across a woman writhing and moaning in the open doorway to her little mud-brick home. The *Kafwa* immediately sprang into action, diagnosed the problem as a probable miscarriage and began arranging for a wheelbarrow to push her to the nearest clinic. Fortunately since we were in the area with a car, it was called into service to transport her to the clinic and later on to the hospital. Last we heard she was recovering well. For many other women, however, transportation and facilities are not available and the story has a very different ending. According to UNICEF’s 2009 *State of the Worlds Children*, 1500 women die every day while giving birth. That’s a staggering half a million women per year.



We ducked under clothes hanging on a front porch clothesline to arrive at our first scheduled home visit. We were welcomed into a small dimly lit room to meet Felix, a young man in his 20's who is suffering from the late stages of AIDS, including TB. Felix has already lost one child to AIDS, has another child,

Esther, who is HIV positive, and has a wife with AIDS who is currently hospitalized. Felix and his family are totally dependent on his gentle mannered parents who have a total of 10 people depending on them. In the U.S. having someone in the hospital might temporarily lessen the demands on the caregiver. Not so in Zambia. The only food patients receive in the hospital is that prepared and brought by the family. Felix's parents now have the added burden of finding money for transportation and food to take to the daughter-in-law.



Our next visit to a middle-aged woman's home was equally sad. Catherine, an AIDS widow, and her daughter live alone in a little two-room mud-brick house. Both mother and daughter have AIDS. Catherine is now quite ill and her feet and legs are swollen making it difficult for her to get around and



impossible for her to pursue any income generating activities. The most pressing issue the day we visited was lack of food. The daughter was out in the neighborhood looking for food while the mother was home awaiting the results. It was obvious from the kitchen shelves neatly lined with newspapers and the attractively arranged meager possessions in the house that Catherine had once taken pride in her surroundings. Now her total existence revolved around finding food for the next meal. There was literally no food in the house – not even a

few dried beans or handful of cornmeal. At the end of our visit we had prayer with Catherine and took our leave.

Totally sobered by the impact of our visit and knowing there were many more just like Catherine in the neighborhood, a little emergency fund of \$400 was set up with donations made by our team for the *Kafwa* to use. They immediately set up a bank account, developed an accounting system, and spent 68,000 Kwacha (approximately \$15 U.S) to purchase enough food to last Catherine and her daughter for

two weeks. When the food was delivered, Catherine said with tears in her eyes, “God is so good to me!” The *Kafwa* estimate that the \$400 will last about 6 months if they use it only for the most pressing emergencies.

Supportive Organizations - Fortunately, there are many people working diligently to address the huge issues facing Zambia and many other areas in the world. The pastor and co-founder of the Chipulukusu school introduced us to the immediate past president of the Ndola Rotary Club. We were subsequently invited to attend a Rotary luncheon and share some of the needs of the Chipulukusu school such as water, benches and desks, and textbooks. Having just completed several other service projects for children in the Ndola area, they were eager to find new ways to serve. Before we left the luncheon they said “we’re onboard!” Rotary has a fantastic 3 way matching program with local clubs providing a token financial donation and providing the major oversight of projects with U.S. Clubs providing a matching grant which is again matched by Rotary International. Now we need to find the U.S. Rotary Club partners. If you have any leads please let us know!!



One of our primary goals for the trip was to investigate training courses for new community health workers. After several visits to various Ministry of Health offices, we met the dynamic and friendly District Community Partnership Coordinator, Lynette Mambo. The Zambian Ministry of Health freely admits it cannot meet the health needs of its citizens alone and actively seeks partnerships with NGO's.



Lynette was excited to learn of our interest in training health workers. She herself conducts the training and will personalize a curriculum to meet our needs if we provide for the training costs. We're now looking toward June as a possible training date. We had over 100 people volunteer to be trained at the two sites. Knowing that number will dwindle over time, we estimate we will probably end up with 25 or 30 serious candidates – certainly enough to make a

huge impact on communities with little or no health care.

We again visited Church Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ) where Dr. Dhally Menda made a very informative two-hour presentation to the SIFE students. CHAZ is actively involved in small income generating activities and had very helpful handouts. A couple of days before leaving Zambia, Dr. Menda and his wife invited Jac and Sherri to their home for dinner. In addition to Dr. Menda's role with CHAZ, he and his wife have sponsored a school in the Eastern Province for over 12 years. They were able to

share some of the lessons they had learned that will be helpful to us. We're looking forward to an ongoing working and personal relationship with the Menda's.



Summary – We experienced a whole gamut of emotions on the trip from exhilaration, excitement, hope, and joy to sadness, and compassion that boggled our sense of reality. And talk about optimism! Members of the community surrounding the Chipulukusu School have already dug a foundation for classrooms even though there are currently zero funds designated for the expansion. There are so many good people in the world reaching out to others. No matter how little some people have in life, they seem to find ways to make life a bit easier for those with even less.

It was definitely a growth experience for all of us that sat under the Mupundu tree -- we certainly saw good fruit fall and even more ripening for the future.

For more information and pictures, check out our website <http://healthedconnect.org> (click on "Media" at the top of the home page to see more photos) and our blog <http://healthedconnect.blogspot.com>. If you'd like to join Mirriam's work group, send your tax deductible contributions to:

HealthEd Connect
%Sherri Kirkpatrick
1401 West Truman Road
Independence, MO 64050