

July 26, 2009

I want to first tell you that I am a very strong woman – I am creative, innovative and take chances even when I'm afraid. A few months ago I considered giving up – maybe getting a “real” job (as many suggested) or even possibly returning to the US. I spent time with our farmers in Koani and our villagers in Kendwa and realized that we share many of the same dilemmas. How do we learn what our skills are and then utilize them to make enough money to feed ourselves? My strengths are my organizational and management skills. For 30 years in Connecticut I worked with small business owners, teaching them to read their financial statements and understand the money flow so that they could make good business decisions. I do well asking questions that others may not think of. I have an enthusiasm and positive outlook that is infectious. I'm a good communicator (although I often talk too much and too fast). These are the skills that I bring to my work in Zanzibar and which I will continue to build upon rather than running away and starting over somewhere else.

Local Technical Advisors and Consultants in Kendwa



I'm not going to write a whole lot about our Kendwa water project today. Much of the success of this project has been the relationships that are being formed between people. We had another meeting last week and have decided to dig a new bore hole that will be on land that is owned by Kendwa village. My assignment is to update the proposal, the budget and raise the money. We are estimating that it will take a total of \$10,000.00 to finish this project. If you have questions, would like to donate or wish to know more please visit our website [Participate Now!](#)

Participate Now Zanzibar is a good working team. Right now there are four men, myself and many advisors who help us along the way. We put a lot of time and energy into our projects. In Kendwa, we had thought we could hook in to the main water pipe but learned there isn't enough water. There is a bore hole that a hotel owner dug but we have found out that it's on land owned by another village. They are willing to allow Kendwa to use the bore hole but they will retain ownership. This could create tension in the future if water becomes even scarcer than it is now. So we are planning on digging a new bore hole that will be on land in Kendwa village.

Ali Hussein is in the center – he is a plumber/electrician and has been incredibly generous by sharing his time and expertise with us. The villagers are grateful to have local men who can help advise them.. The man sitting next to Ali Hussein thanked Allah as he remembered the first day that we met so many months ago. He remarked that we are increasing our group and that others have joined to help to find a solution. One of the men said that when something we want is very good there can be many obstacles to be overcome to achieve it. They appreciate that we have been patient and flexible and keep coming to visit them to learn how to move forward.

Koani Study Tour

We are continuing our work with the Koani farmers. Suleiman has learned that the follow up visits are very important – one of the farmers had planted some vegetables but had done it incorrectly. He just needed some advice to make the change so that he can be successful. We had some extra money (due to currency exchange rates) and Suleiman asked if we could do a “study tour” and visit some farmers who are utilizing the lessons that we learned in our trainings. It was a great day and I had a wonderful time – this is the best part of my work here!!!!

Study Tour Breakfast



We met up at the sheha's (like a mayor) house in Koani and had breakfast. This is a typical breakfast for local people – chapati (a flat bread) and a piece of mashed potato with dough (sorry I don't exactly what to call it). And then tea with powdered milk and lots and lots of sugar.

Farm visits



We visited three farmers in different areas of Zanzibar. The first, Bwana Aboud Ibrahim, told us how he had started growing tomatoes but they died due to lack of water. Then he tried growing rice but the harvest wasn't very good as he didn't have good seeds. He has learned a lot over the past 5 years and is quite successful now – he grows rice and then clears the area and grows vegetables so that he's always got something to harvest. The second was Bwana Alhaj Abdul - he was selling vegetables and fruit to a few hotels but they often have high expectations and are not understanding that there is an off season. He is now growing vegetables and bananas and selling them at auction at the large local market every morning. His house is on the right in the middle of his banana plot. He used coconut and banana leaves as ground cover to take care of the weeds – everyone really liked that idea.

Bananas, Vegetables and Lots of Information



We went up north and met some women who are growing bananas and Bwana Othman Abdalla who has a banana plantation. We brought a zawadi (gift) for each of our farmers in appreciation for the time they took out of their day to meet with us. In the center Kaesser is presenting one of the gifts to the women farmers. This was a great day because we were able to visit other farmers who are successfully using techniques that can work in Koani. The main topics that we shared with each other were lessons learned about seeds, fertilizer, irrigation, marketing and selling the products. I'm hoping to be able to bring these farmers to Koani for a visit in the near future. I am adamant in my belief that it's best to utilize local resources and people – I don't think that the answer is always to bring in foreigners to train people using new systems.

A Picnic Lunch and A Walk on the Beach



Suleiman also works in tourism (we are all octopi) and suggested that we have a picnic lunch at Mangapwani where there is a natural cave that tourists visit. Suleiman's sister had cooked pilau (spiced rice) with chicken for lunch and we sat around talking about what we had learned from the morning visits. In the middle is our official group shot at lunch – we traveled in Kaesser's school bus which was lots of fun. We walked down to the beach after lunch – Fatuma and Mtalii enjoyed the ocean. There were some tourists on the beach and Fatuma went up to a young woman who was sunning in her bikini and asked "Do you need a husband?". This was her first time seeing a tourist in a bikini and she was surprised as it's very different from what's accepted in this culture. The conversation in the bus after that was quite ribald, loud and lively.

Best of All - Making New Friends



Shaali is here with his “assistant” – there were children everywhere that we went. I love the women – they are so beautiful and so generous and kind to me. On the right are two women from the last village and they invited me back to visit. I am still so very frustrated that I can’t understand Swahili and that limits much of my interaction. But I’m not going to give up trying – slowly, slowly I will get better.

This project could be considered finished and we could start a new one or “scale up” but we’ve decided that we’re going to do a cooking project with the same farmers. They are growing better food – next we’ll look at how they can cook more nutritious meals that the children will like.

We, at Participate Now, are a small group who care deeply for Zanzibar and the people. There are many people and organizations who are doing great work and helping many of the inhabitants. Participate Now Zanzibar is focusing on small scale projects to learn what the existing situations are and how to build on the strengths of the people. There are many resources available, most of all the resilience of the people who work so hard day after day. It’s important to build on these existing structures rather than trying to create new ones. It’s also very important to include the people themselves as participants in the decision making process. They know what they have and they know what they want. They need validation that they are doing good work – they need advice and guidance as to how to build upon what they have. Help us to continue this learning process and strengthen the network of local resources.

Visit our website [Participate Now!](#) to learn more about our foundation. Our main objective is to do small-scale projects with lasting impact. We are grateful for any support at all that you can give us. Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Participate Now!
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