

May 17, 2009

I must say that my life is never boring here in Zanzibar. Many things in my house have broken in the last month, wireless routers, printer, TVs, shower head, coffee pot, and the monitor of my laptop. I have replaced or fixed most things and I'm using my old laptop. I'm finally at a point where I can laugh a bit – I'm shuttling between two computers – one with an external monitor set to VGA, the other a very old, slow laptop that doesn't have many of the programs or abilities of the other. So – I am backing up, restoring, cleaning etc and I can't wait until I can wake up one morning and just go to work rather than starting to do something and finding out oops! – I don't have that file or program or whatever. I am looking at the positive – so many people have come to my rescue – either lending me things or giving me a very good price on new ones. I am overwhelmed by the patience and generosity of Zanzibaris. The other positive is that I had to merge my old and updated Outlook contacts and spent days cleaning all the duplicates, old ones etc. I found a few people that I thought I had lost details for – so I am looking forward to sending this email out to many people.

I have tons to tell you but I'm going to try to just give quick summaries and then I'll write more later for each area. Most important – my last email was concerning the Kendwa Water Project. The total budget is \$6,800.00 and we have raised \$2,000.00 as of today. I am grateful for your donations and working hard every day trying to come up with other solutions. I will be meeting with some local businessmen to present the proposal and budget to them in the next week or so. Suleiman and I are going to Kendwa next week to meet with the villagers and give them an update. We believe that it's important to let them know exactly what we are doing. I had my Kendwa email translated into Swahili and we will take it with us when we go – the villagers need to know exactly what it is I am writing about them. If you would like to learn more about this endeavor please visit our [projects page](#) on our website [Participate Now!](#).

Koani Farming Project



We went to Koani yesterday and presented tools and seeds to our 7 farmers. Suleiman visited each of them last week and took photos of their plots. He is thrilled with the progress they are making. They are working hard and you can see how strong and healthy Mwajuma's banana plants are!!!! There are 4 women and 3 men involved – one of the women is pregnant but she keeps on digging new holes and adding more plantings!!! Ali Jafar is in the center opening a can of seeds with a panga. He has been very ill for the past few months and not able to participate at all. It was heartwarming to see him yesterday – he is gaining his strength and excited to be back to work. You can read more about the Koani Farming project at our [projects page](#) on our website [Participate Now!](#).

Irrigation and SACCOS



I am learning new things every day. Kadir is in the red and white striped shirt on the right – he is a friend of Suleiman's from the Ministry of Agriculture and has been working with us on a number of projects. He is in Nairobi studying for his Masters and will be finished in August. He took me to visit a rice irrigation project and the SACCOS that he is involved with. I apologize because I don't have lots of information just now – like exactly which village the irrigation project is in or exactly what SACCOS stands for. I am always looking at what the existing situations are rather than trying to re-invent the wheel. Micro loans have been something I've been interested in for years – Kiva is a fabulous organization and I have researched Grameen Bank and their small loans. I learned so much about loans when working on our entrepreneur project with the women from ZAPHA+ - mainly that it's extremely difficult to manage the repayment of loans. I visited this SACCOS which is a savings and credit organization – there are quite a few of them in the different villages. I'm not going to go into all the details right now – but it was started by the villagers themselves in 2004 and is maintained by them. All of this has been done without donor funding and our group photo is in front of their office that they are building themselves!!! The members donated money and they also donated their labor. Here we are in one of the rooms – it's going to be a wonderful community office. I will be visiting them more often and learning more. This follows [Our Method](#) that we utilize in [Participate Now](#).

Stonetown and Friends



Suleiman brought his three daughters up to my flat for a visit – aren't they just beautiful? Sada is the youngest and she is quite a chatterbox!!! In the center is the view of Stonetown from the ferry – I went to Dar es Salaam a few weeks ago to visit friends. You can't see it well but on the left is a building that fell down. That happens a few times a year here because the buildings are made out of coral rock. On the right is Pravin the sandalmaker – he has a shop on one of the main tourist streets. I always stop and visit with him and his family when I go by.

Maulidi ya Homu



And of course there is Maulidi ya Homu. I will be sending out an email specifically about this performance – it was magical!!!! Maulidi ya Homu is a group of Muslim men who sing praises to the Prophet Mohammed. Their devotion and love is awe inspiring. I do believe that I am the most fortunate woman in the world because I am able to live here in Zanzibar and learn about Islam and the culture. I am a foreigner living in a foreign land but I have become a part of the community in ways that are appropriate for me. I am grateful to be living here.

There are many changes in the air. We are in the process of registering ourselves as a local NGO – we will be able to do much more that way. We are exploring entrepreneurial options rather than just donor options. It is wonderful that donors care and want to help but there are often many restrictions that go along with the donor money. We at Participate Now! are trying to understand how we can stay true to our original purpose and vision. I feel passionately that my work here is all about honesty and integrity and I do not want to stray from that path. I want to stay open to all of the new lessons that I will be learning. If you are interested in learning more about me and my life here in Zanzibar please visit my website, [Kathryn Sutton](#).

On a personal note, my youngest son JD has come up for air!!! He's a diver working off the coast of Angola for an oil company. He is doing saturation diving and was living underwater for over 30 days!!!! He was able to write notes and the office would scan and email them to me - I have saved every one of them. My eldest son, Keith is a psychologist in San Francisco. He is doing fabulous with his practice and has been elected president of the SF psychologists society. I am certainly a proud mother!!!

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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Kathryn