

November 29, 2010

To all of you,

This has been a year of learning as always. Participate Now is not a foundation that trains and reaches thousands – we are a very small foundation that makes a large impact in small areas. The reality is that our work takes time and patience and understanding of the culture where we live. For myself, this has been a year of introspection and exploring my motives. I finally applied for disability for my MS from a private insurance policy that I have been paying into for many years – I am fortunate and have been granted the disability. I do have difficulty with fatigue and some other symptoms but that is not enough to stop me from living my life. I am grateful that I don't have to worry about starving and I can focus on what I do best – promoting Zanzibar and the people.

The Participate Now team has also been looking at ourselves. We have been applying for some grants for various projects and have found that most donors will only pay for material inputs not for transport or consulting fees. I work with four wonderful men who have families to support and cannot afford to work as volunteers. I find it interesting that the foreigners working for the donors are paid very well with housing and travel while the locals are expected to work for free. But that is the reality and I have been working on accepting that I will never be able to change international development at the top but I can make a difference within my own little sphere here in Zanzibar.

Let me tell you about some of the projects that I have been involved in this past year:

Digging the bore hole in Kendwa



It has been more than 2 years since we started talking with the Kendwa villagers about their lack of a reliable water supply. The villagers and our NGO members have investigated many different options and finally the villagers raised \$3,000.00 (that we were able to match) towards the digging of a bore hole. Suleiman and the others interviewed three drilling companies and chose Al-Noor Charitable Agency. It is an Islamic organization run by a Zanzibari and they are noted for digging bore holes in difficult terrain such as ours in Kendwa which is almost 100% coral rock. They started digging in October but as usual here in Africa there were problems and delays. They have dug 50 meters but have assessed it and said they have to dig in another spot so we are negotiating that now. I don't understand all of the details but we are still involved and working hard to get this finished. We have sent a proposal to the US Ambassador's Self Help Fund to pay for the piping and taps once the bore hole is dug. We have not heard from them yet but I am praying that we get the grant and can finish this project and get water to the people of Kendwa with a population of more than 1,000.

This project is not just about water – it's about empowerment. The chairman of our small water committee has been talking about land rights – many investors buy land to build hotels and the government can take land at will. The villagers realized that they need to have more control over their own land and even over the individual villagers selling their land to a hotel then moving away and leaving the rest of the village with a hotel and foreigners in their midst. Well, the chairman ran for a political office having to do with land and he won!!!! Now, we were not directly involved with him running but I do know that we have had an impact on the village as the committee has told us on numerous occasions that it has helped them to feel stronger and become more confident because we visit with them often and give them respect and dignity.

Welezo Old Age Home



Welezo Old Age Home is very important to me. It is under the Ministry of Social Welfare and run by three sisters of the Precious Blood. There are approximately 45 men and maybe 50 women who are being taken care of. Ashley Speyer on the left is an amazing young American who has been raising money to build schools in Tanzania. She spent some time traveling around Tanzania and meeting with various NGOs to put together a viable NGO database for donors. I love that I am able to meet such fascinating people who do so much good around the world. I asked Welezo Old Age Home to give me a wish list in case I was able to raise any money for them. Sister said that the priorities are wheelchairs, walkers and medicine. They have had a Danish volunteer helping to get the patients up and walking but it's not an easy task. The Old Age Home is clean and spotless and Sister knows the name of every single patient there. Ali Hussein, is my friend who visits Welezo often with medicine and food that he buys with the small donations he gets from his friends. The patients are always thrilled any time that they have visitors.

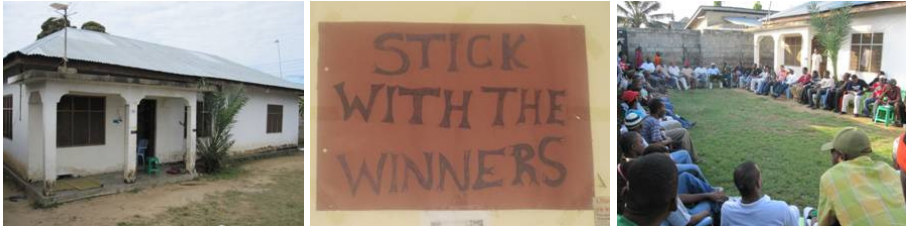
Zanzibar 2010 Elections



We had our election in October and it was incredibly peaceful – very different from 2005. The two left photos are of a rally of the opposition party prior to the elections. There were thousands of people who came to listen and it was so peaceful – the opposition colors are red, white and blue. On the right is the photo after the election – everyone celebrated in the streets for days. The

ruling party colors are yellow and green and you can see that they are mixed with people from the opposition. We now have a coalition government and we all have high hopes for the future. The politics are very complex here as it is in most African countries so I won't go into details but it seems that both parties are doing their best to work together to create a government that will be effective. There is a lot of pressure on the government to overcome corruption and focus on development to better the lives of the locals and I will continue to follow this historic phase of Zanzibar's history.

Zanzibar Sober Houses



I have also become involved with the drug recovery community in Zanzibar which many of you know is very dear to my heart. Heroin and marijuana are rampant on this small island. The government and the police are not in a position, I suppose, to do much about it and the problem is increasing every day. But there is now a solution for drug addicts who would like to stop using and learn how to live a new way of life.

In the past drug addicts would go to rehab (English only) in Mombasa, Kenya and come back and usually relapse as there was no support system here. One man, Suleiman, started Narcotics Anonymous meetings with another recovering addict in January 2009 and the first sober house opened up that March. There are now three houses in Unguja (the island where I live) and one house in Pemba, our sister island. The recovering addicts manage the houses themselves and there have been a lot of challenges but they are grateful to be clean and sober and know that they can only keep their recovery if they give it away and help others. Now, not everyone is actually staying clean and sober but there is a solution in Zanzibar where there had never been one before. We have NA and AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings every week and I also help to run sessions in the houses. We even had our very first non-official NA/AA convention – there were 10 guys from Dar es Salaam who came over for a weekend. On the right is the Saturday afternoon meeting from that weekend with more than 65 recovering drug addicts attending. The love and generosity within the community is astounding. Zanzibar is a very small island and so everyone knows each other. There are waiting lists for the sober houses and they are becoming known as the “Swahili rehabs” in East Africa. This is wonderful as many of the clients only speak Swahili.

Pemba Drug Recovery Community



Last weekend some of us traveled to Pemba to visit the sober house there. They have about 14 guys and there are others who live outside but attend the meetings and sessions. I am in awe as to how quickly the program has taken off. The guys are hungry to learn all that they can about alcoholism/addiction and the 12 step recovery program. They truly want to live a better life and become productive and happy citizens of society. Besides Suleiman, the longest clean time is 1 year, 11 months and it has been fascinating to see how the guys are healing the wounds with their families. They are taking their rightful place within their families and their society. I am eternally grateful to be a part of this – I am often reminded that this must have been what it was like when Alcoholics Anonymous began with two men over 75 years ago.

Women – yes there are women alcoholics and addicts and it is a great challenge to all of us as to how to help them. We are hoping to open a sober house for women but we need approximately \$8,000.00 for rent and furnishings to start the house. Each client pays a monthly fee so once the house is up and running it will be self supporting. But I am hoping to raise the initial investment so that we can start a house as soon as possible. There are a number of women who are seeking help and it would be wonderful to have a place for them.

Maulidi ya Homu in Pemba



And of course there is Maulidi ya Homu. Haji Barua is the teacher for the Maulidi groups in Unguja and Pemba and he traveled to Pemba with us and invited me to a practice of the group there. We sat outside in an open area of a small village and the boys performed outside the madrassa (Koranic school). I sat with the wife and daughter of the leader and behind us were the young girls who were singing and swaying along with the boys. This is very different from our Maulidi here and it was a special treat for me to attend this performance. I am always infused with a strong spirit of spirituality every time I see them perform. They are singing praises to the Prophet Mohammed and it is very obvious how much they love their religion.

I am one of the most fortunate women in the world that I am able to lead an incredibly fascinating life. I love Zanzibar and I love the communities that I am involved with. I learn something new every single day about myself and about the world around me. I know that times are even more difficult this year in America economically. Yet if you are able, we would appreciate any donations that would go towards getting water for Kendwa village, wheelchairs or walkers for Welezo Old Age Home and helping women who wish to recover from drug addiction. Thank you for reading this and for all of your help.

Participate Now is dedicated to continue working for the welfare of the people of Zanzibar. We strive to make the biggest impact possible with very little resources. We do have a wealth of love and caring to share with others who are interested in raising the quality of their lives.

“Being rich is having enough to share with others”

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Kathryn

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