

Kendwa Village Nov 2008

November 17, 2008

We are living in such a historic time – Barack Obama has been elected president of the United States!!!! Many Zanzibaris were skeptical that Americans would actually elect an African American but they are thrilled. I received many congratulatory text messages and kudos as I walked through the streets. I bought a Tanzania for Obama kanga and a Tshirt for prosperity. It feels good to be proud again to be an American. I hope that this will be the dawn of a new era – one of kindness, forgiveness and understanding. I pray that we can begin the healing process with open communication all over the world so that all people can find out that we share a common humanity. The times ahead are going to be difficult but together we will adapt, adjust and prevail. For me, these are the lessons that I am living and learning every day in Zanzibar, this beautiful exotic island off the East Coast of Africa.

I am bubbling over with news and lots of excitement about the work that I'm doing here in Zanzibar. But I am going to focus this email on Kendwa Village – a new project we are hoping to start. Participate Now! is based on four principles:

- **Listen and Learn**
- **Create and Plan**
- **Collaborate**
- **Document and Share Results**

We are currently finishing our entrepreneur project and have begun our agricultural project with 7 farmers in a rural village. Kendwa Village will be a long term project based on learning about this very small village to help them clarify what the most immediate needs are and how to get those needs met. Most of our projects are no more than a total of \$10,000.00 each and we are finding that it can make a huge impact. We have locals who manage the individual projects but I help to “mentor” the managers. My main purpose as director of Participate Now! is to inspire and influence and then step back and observe. But the first step is to listen to the people and that also takes money, paying for time and transport.

This email is about the first principle – we are [listening and learning](#) about Kendwa village, the people and their needs.

Sunset Bungalows



Kendwa is situated in the northwest end of Zanzibar and Sunset Bungalows is my favorite hotel. I have been coming to Sunset for over 3 years and usually spend my birthday here and try to visit at other times if possible. Tourism has become a large part of Zanzibar and much of the coast

has been sold to developers. Many tourists come in on a package tour, stay at one of the resorts and then take a day trip to visit Stonetown or other places. I am very aware that Zanzibar is not the Caribbean – this island is first and foremost a Muslim society made up predominantly of fishermen and farmers. As director of Participate Now! I ask the question “If there were no donors or tourists what would be left in Zanzibar?” The answer is quite a lot but often the tourists only see the poor villages as they drive down the roads to their resort. In Stonetown tourists are sometimes harassed by a barrage of young men wanting to sell things or to be a tour guide. It can be overwhelming for many tourists and give them a very unkind view of what Zanzibar is really like. Many people, ex-pats living here, tourists and students visiting, development people doing projects and locals ask “Is the local population benefiting from tourism?” There are many studies that have been done and a lot of work is continuing through the government, donors and tourist agencies. What I have observed is that a lot of change has happened over the past 4 years that I have lived here – much of it good and much of it not so good. But I just want to tell you about Kendwa Village. The beach on the left is Kendwa beach – it has beautiful white sand and for some reason is like high tide 24 hours a day – I love it! In the center are some of the rooms at Sunset (they also have bungalows on the beach). The sunsets up here are spectacular. But I love Sunset Bungalows because of the atmosphere and the staff. It’s comfortable and relaxing and people remember us from visit to visit. It has a wonderful family atmosphere and I recommend Sunset often to people.

Kendwa Village and the Well



The road to Kendwa is beyond horrible, comprised of sharp coral rock and a great topic of conversation during the first hour of anyone’s visit. You drive at least 1 kilometre on rocky coral and then go around some turns and the village is on the right. It’s a sad little village and I have always wanted to visit and learn more about it. Now – there are a number of hotels that try to give back to the villages near them but it is difficult because the villagers themselves don’t have a clear idea of what their needs are. It would be great if each village could come up with a “needs proposal” that is available to any donors or government agencies who are interested in helping. Kendwa is one of 3 villages in a shehia (small district area) and has about 440 inhabitants. The villagers are very poor, the soil is very bad and most of them are fishermen. Many are not well educated so they aren’t able to get a well paying job in the hotels. There is a lot to learn of how life used to be for the villagers before the hotels were built and how life is now. I asked if people move into the village from other areas and they said “no” that even if the young men go away to work they most often return with their wife and family and settle in the village when they’re older. Community is so important here and many people “retire” to their home village know matter how important or wealthy they have become. Haji is the hotel manager for Sunset Bungalows and lives in the village – he and I had talked a number of times over the last year or so and he said that water was an issue. I asked him in October when I went up for my birthday if he could please take me to the village to look at the well. The center photo is the well in the middle of the village – you can’t see but there are two pulleys on it and the bucket is let down with a rope – you fill it with water then pull it up. On the right is a photo looking into the well – I’m terrible on distances but it’s far down let me tell you!!!! There is no way that I would want to have to get my water from there –

and I wonder how many containers of water it takes each day for a family of 4. You need it to wash, cook, drink, water what little crops there are and I'm sure other things that I'm not thinking of.

The Quest for Water



This is Haji and his brother at their house. Haji actually has a spigot in his house – I was surprised and asked if he had water. He told me that he was able to put a roof on his house and he harvests rainwater. The problem is that we don't have consistent rain but it's certainly a good idea to learn more about harvesting rainwater. Sunset has their own well which is in a building with a lock on the door. It's off to the left of the center photo – Haji opened the door and connected a hose that he brought outside and told me to wait 5 minutes. Many women, men and children showed up so quickly to gather water. I cannot make judgments because I know only what I experience but I am most interested to learn more as to why there are water pipes (actually hoses) running down the road past the village to the hotels. I am also amazed as to how complacent I can be – I can't imagine what it would be to live without the convenience of running water whenever I wanted it. I asked Haji if they needed another well because I know a good well digger (from the Chejuu project) but he said they wanted an electric pump for the well. A foreigner had visited and said that's what they needed, promised one but never followed through. I told Haji that I would bring Suleiman (my agricultural project manager) and Senga (my driver/translator) to visit the village and get a better sense of what the villagers might need. I'm an mzungu (foreigner) and can't possibly understand all of the issues concerning this village. Yes they do have some electricity but it seemed to me that providing a pump may seem too easy an answer.

Listening Learning and The Map



The photo on the left is Suleiman, Haji, the secretary for the sheha (the mayor) and another elder man (Senga is taking the photo). We talked for more than 2 hours and learned a lot. What excited me the most though was the map. Now as most of you know I graduated from Tufts University in 2004 (as an older student with a degree in Political Science). I visit Tufts when I return to the US and last June I met with Peter Walker the director of the Feinstein International Center <http://fic.tufts.edu>. They do work in conflict zones and focus on including the participants in all aspects of their projects. I'm on the email list and had received the [Participatory Impact Assessment: a Guide for Practitioners](#) two weeks before our visit to Kendwa. I got very excited after reading the report and so I made 5 copies of it and gave it to a few Zanzibaris that I work with. Suleiman also got excited because he believes so strongly that it's important to include the villagers in the very beginning of any project. Kendwa village has many needs but we focused on water. We learned that they already have a water committee and it may be better if they could have their pipes (or hoses) brought in from the new big water tanks that are about 3 kilometres away rather than a new well or an electric pump. They are going to meet with the elders in the larger community to find out if it's okay for them to run the pipes if they can afford to buy them. They said they would then have to decide where in the village the taps would be and that their children would be utterly thrilled if they could actually turn on a tap in the village and have water appear!!! Suleiman told me that the men said that if we could get the water pipe donated they would be happy to volunteer and lay the pipe because they will all benefit by having water.

I have to stress that I am not professionally trained and that I know that this sort of assessment for projects is going on everywhere in the world. I cannot say that Kendwa Village has never had anyone try to help them – I know that the hotel owners have discussed doing projects with the village. But this is the process that I go through to learn the truth about how complex “development” or metamorphosis as I would like to call it is. I cannot come into a foreign country or a new village or town and look around noting all of the problems and the “lack of” and think that I can come up with one easy solution. I cannot look at people who are thirsty, hungry and poor and find one system that will cure all of their ills. There is no “magic bullet” to alleviate world poverty or to bring global justice to the world. There are many people who care very much and want to help people who have less than themselves. I am trying to make a difference in Zanzibar – to listen and learn what the needs of some of the people are. And not just the villagers – this work is also to help the donors and others who want to give and to help to find ways that are more effective and make a difference in the quality of lives of the people they work with.

Marine Corps Ball and Diplomats in Dar es Salaam



And now – for the flip side of my life – I do have the most fabulous life let me tell you. I went to Dar es Salaam to visit with my friends Grant and Karin Gleisner (who are at the table with me on the right). Karin works with the DOD (Dept of Defense) at the US Embassy. I've lived in Zanzibar for 4 years and have been to the Embassy twice – once to get a tax booklet and once to add pages to my passport. There are so many different communities all over the world. Diplomats and ex-pats who work in development are fascinating people – they choose to live in a foreign country and work with people from a different culture. Yet they work in Embassies and offices that are much like the ones in the West – our world is so very interesting. Well – I stayed for 3 nights at Grant and Karin's beautiful home and we had lots of fun – Thursday night we went to a party at the Marine House on the Embassy grounds, Friday they had a Halloween party at their house and Saturday we went to the Marine Corps Ball (November is the birthday month for the Marines) which is held every year at every US Embassy around the world. I was married to a Marine who served in Recon in Vietnam and my son was in the Marines from 2000 to 2004 so I was honored to be able to spend time with the wonderful soldiers.

I went to the Embassy on Friday morning with Karin and had breakfast in the cafeteria – I have to tell you – this was October 31 (before the election) and Fox News was on the TV. I am really interested to know if Fox will still be the “official” US media TV channel after January. I'll check back to find out. I met with Karl Fickenscher who is the director of the Millenium Challenge Corp TZ (you can google it) which is funded by the American people. In Tanzania the MCC will improve infrastructure – they're going to build roads and other things but most importantly for me – they are going to replace the underwater electric cable to Zanzibar!!! Hooray – remember the horrible blackout that lasted more than 30 days? Well – the Americans are taking on the project and I asked Karl how soon the work would start (I am me after all and want to get things done quickly). Of course there is a lot of work to do and it will take a number of years (no more than 5). For me I appreciated that Karl agreed to sit and talk with me and tell me the truth of what is going on. There are always so many rumors as to who's doing what and when - this way I can give correct information to people when they ask. The next night I saw Karl and his wife at the Marine Corps Ball and asked him if there is a contingency plan in place in case the cable breaks again before it's replaced. Do we go back to the Norwegians who originally installed it or do we go to the Americans who are going to replace it? He said that was a very good question and I hope that he and others are coming up with a plan. The best part is that I have his phone number and email so if the cable does break again maybe I can get correct information. I was in the US during the Zanzibar blackout in June and even though I was on the phone with friends here in Zanzibar almost no one was sure of the information that they were getting which made it very difficult for people to plan ahead for even a few days or a week.

My life is wonderful and I am blessed to be living here in Zanzibar and working with all of the fine people that I do. Our agricultural project is progressing better than I could have ever dreamed but I will write about that in a few weeks. In between my projects I have many guests coming to visit and as always I am happy to show them Zanzibar through my eyes. I made the right decision last year to start my own foundation – it's not easy and I'm not a great fund raiser but I am making a difference and I am learning more than I ever imagined. I hope that you will continue to support myself and others in the work that we are doing every day here in Zanzibar.

Please visit our website <http://www.participatenowfoundation.org/> to learn more about Participate Now! 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.

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