

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter

October – December 2014, Edition XII

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This newsletter is dedicated to my parents, in the name of empowering our children to live their highest dreams.



Selena Sibooli (left) with her two oldest daughters, Radiance (center) and Brenda (right) Sinan'gombe. Both Radiance and Brenda are involved in polygamous marriages, and encouraged by both parents to leave their husbands, as the marriages were destroying them as well as their children.

The SSAAP Center: Simwatachela, Zambia:

When my daughter, Radiance, and I returned from Sierra Leone to Zambia on August 7, 2014, we discovered that our house, the SSAAP Center, had collapsed.



From left to right: back view of the house. Note the makeshift tarp toilet that a few of the engineers from the Engineers Without Borders (EWB) team made. The middle photo shows the concave roof, thatched with local wood (right) which is short, weak, and does not have a long lifespan for a home the size of the SSAAP center. The house is a two-roomed home: sitting room and bed room, and two of the main poles in both rooms had already collapsed, causing the roof to cave in further.



I called a meeting with the people of Simwatachela on August 20, 2014, a week after the Engineers Without Borders departed. I invited communities that had benefitted directly from SSAAP, targeting specific communities containing schools that had been sponsored under SSAAP's sponsorship program, schools that had received water filters from SSAAP's water filter distribution program, and most-especially those communities which had previously benefitted from a hand-pump borehole sponsored by SSAAP (Sibooli-B [2012], Sibooli-A [2014], Siamabwe [2014], Simoono [2014] or communities which would benefit in the future drilling season of 2014 and in 2015: Siankope [2014], Siloonda [2014], Kosalala [2014], Siapatunyana [2014], Sileu [2015], Sikalele [2015]. I explained to the contact people for these borehole wells, as well as the headmen from each of these communities, and Chief Simwatachela, that my daughter and I would no longer live in a home that was dangerous, and hazardous to our well-being. I

told them that I would no longer allow volunteers, friends or family from America to come visit or assist with the project if the house was not a safe structure.

I asked the people of Simwatachela how the project would be different if we did not stay with them in the village. We would live in town, I explained, and much of the money for the project would be spent on administrative expenses such as buying a vehicle to visit the village, or on renting a home in town. Our life in Africa would be much more expensive, and valuable money we could be using to serve them would be diverted to the expenses of living in a town versus living in a village. I explained that I would never be able to serve them in the same way if I was not staying with them. I also held the entire meeting in ciTonga [I speak Tonga fluently but have been told I have an extremely thick English accent!] which really drove the point right to the core.

In the village, my daughter Radiance and I live off of \$400-500 every six months. It is hard to beat that, and such a phenomenally low living stipend allows for money to be used more on projects and less on administrative overhead for SSAAP. If we were to shift our house and move into a town, especially in Zambia which is landlocked and thus a very expensive African nation, the cost of living would increase exponentially – which is what I explained to the community. I also brought to their awareness that living in a house with plumbing, living in a town with electricity, and having a more ‘expensive’ life did not appeal to me, that I would rather live in the village and have a grassroot-based project. And that I was here to serve them – but I could not do that without a simple, but safe, home.

I told them that I count my blessings every day to have the best job in the world – between raising my daughter and running SSAAP – and that without them I would never have been so lucky as to land in a village. I told them that so long as they needed my help, and on the condition that they were willing to work as hard as I work on SSAAP, that I would help them for the rest of my life. And I meant it!

And so the people organized themselves and formed a committee, representative of the 9+ communities SSAAP had served with boreholes. There were women and men working alike, and they promised to repair my home in two months. They agreed that any village involved would have to pay 295 Kwacha (approx. \$47 USD), one bucket of *zyopopwe* (maize) and 15 bushels of grass in which to thatch my roof.

Ten years ago, while I was a Peace Corps Volunteer, the Peace Corps made an agreement with the community that they would send them a volunteer if the community would also make a commitment to building that volunteer a house. This was to be the community’s 25% community contribution to the Peace Corps project. Now, ten years later, I asked the same of them – but I asked them to do this in the name of SSAAP. SSAAP paid for six pockets of cement (approx. \$67 USD) to rebuild the house, and the rest of the project would be up to the community.

This project proved to be the most difficult project I have ever undertaken in Zambia. But in the process I learned much more about Tonga culture, the passion I have for the work, and all of the reasons why I love this project so deeply.



First step: setting fire to the yard around the Center. The yard had become overgrown with weeds and grasses, a perfect habitat for a snake or other life-threatening creature.



The women loyally cleaning out the yard during the hot, mid-day August sunshine.



Leonard (Treasurer of the SSAAP-Center Committee), left, and Tom (Chairman of the SSAAP-Center Committee) put makeshift poles in place to keep the roof erect long enough to not fall down on Radiance and I while the community was still organizing itself before the actual reconstruction of the Center took place.



The people came in numbers to first take apart the damaged roof, then to tear down the brick structure. What was left was the cement floor, and five lines of bricks – as well the door and door frame. Much of the house had suffered water damage through the bricks, and considering the age of the house (ten years old) as well the materials used to make it (mud and clay) it had had a lifespan to be proud of!



And then we rebuilt the house with cement, which would trap any water which might try to come inside during the rainy season.



Building the A-frame: This was the most difficult undertaking of the entire project as the poles were quite expensive, and the money the Committee raised was not sufficient. They decided to buy industrial poles from town, then have them delivered to the village (more than a four hour drive from town), yielding a roof that will last thirty to fifty years. Chief Simwatachela ended up donating many of the poles in support of the project, which he is very proud to have in his chieftom.



Leonard (left), Treasurer of the Committee, and Tom (right), our Chairman. Both men loyally came to work on the house, and without them it never would have finished.



The roof was thatched just before the first rains fell at the beginning of October. The roof will be strong, and a layer of plastic tarp was placed at the very top of the roof to ensure that the house would remain dry inside even during the heart of the rainy season.



The finished house, with the [small] crew of loyal community members who saw it through to the bitter end. The house was finished just days before Radiance and I boarded the airplane to travel back to America.

Water Wells in Simwatachela, Zambia:

Working with Engineers Without Borders, Mississippi State University:



The EWB-MSU Team working with SSAAP in 2014. Left: The Team standing around the completed borehole in Siamabwe Village, Simwatachela Chiefdom, Southern Province, Zambia. Leonard, in yellow and blue stripes, was the contact person for this borehole. Right: More activity surrounded the SSAAP Center in a few short weeks than it will see for years!

A group of six students from the engineering college at Mississippi State University came to Simwatachela in August 2014; they arrived a few days before I left Sierra Leone, and because my daughter and I evacuated Sierra Leone earlier than we had expected to, I had the gift of meeting with the EWB Team in town and then traveling up to the village with them – an unanticipated surprise. The Team consisted of six engineering students, their professor, a professional engineer, and two ladies from the media team for Mississippi State University who had come to photograph and take video footage of the project on behalf of the EWB project in Simwatachela with SSAAP.

During their visit, the engineers had anticipated that they would witness the four boreholes drilled that they were sponsoring in 2014; four to five more boreholes are planned for 2015. The drilling order was as follows: Siamabwe Village [contact person Leonard], Simoono Village [contact person Jackson], Siloonda Village [contact person Victor, who has now passed away], Siankope Village [contact person Bright]. The plan was to conduct site visits simultaneously with half the Team for the 2015 borehole sites while the other half of the Team witnessed the four boreholes being drilled for 2014.



Site visit at Sileu Village to assess whether the site could produce water via borehole well in 2015.

Unfortunately, the drilling company that the Engineers Without Borders hired, called Overland Mission and based in New York, U.S.A. had a problem with their drilling rig and therefore the EWB Team was only able to witness the drilling of one borehole, in Siamabwe with Leonard, in the 10 days they visited Simwatachela.



The Engineers Without Borders Team from Mississippi State University. Five student engineers are in the back row, and their professor is featured on the far right of the front row. Front and center is Chief Simwatachela, a modern chief and the youngest chief Simwatachela has ever had. To the left and right of Chief Simwatachela are Gibson Sinan'gombe and Heather, the two SSAAP representatives for the well-drilling mission with EWB.

After the Engineers departed on August 13, 2014, my daughter Radiance and I met with the Overland Mission Team on the side of the road and traveled with them to Simoono Village to drill a well with Jackson, SSAAP's contact person for that particular borehole well.



Radiance patiently waits by the side of the road for the Overland Mission Drilling Team to pick us up to drill the SSAAP/EWB-Mississippi State University borehole in Simoono, Simwatachela.



Overland Mission’s borehole crew consisted of Joe, born in New York (pictured left, dousing the land to find water, with Jackson in Simoono Village) and his wife Lily (pictured right, having her hair styled by Radiance), from the UK, and Nick (pictured below), also from New York.



Joe and Lily were responsible for the drilling of new borehole wells (see drilling rig, above, center), whereby Nick was responsible for fixing ineffective and insufficiently-producing boreholes already in existence. Above, center, Nick works with his crew to fix one of our boreholes in Sibooli-A Village. This particular borehole was barely working, and outsourcing approximately twenty liters of water every day – not enough water to serve the village of 560+ people. After Overland Mission fixed the borehole, the community of Sibooli-A reported to me that the borehole was producing much more water. However, the original drillers in 1992 did not drill the borehole deep enough (approx. 30-40 meters whereby most boreholes in the area are drilled at least 60 meters) and the pipe installed was too short to extract a large volume of water.

Overland Mission returned to Simwatachela on October 15, 2014 to drill the last two boreholes for EWB/SSAAP in 2014: one in Siloonda Village and the other in Siankope Village. Unfortunately, during this time I was working with another contractor, SRR Waterwell Drilling & Exploration, Zambia Ltd., to drill two more boreholes sponsored by SSAAP, donated by Denver Rotary Club [World Service Committee] and by Stanley British Primary School. Therefore, I was unable to drill the boreholes with Overland Mission at Siloonda and Siankope Villages and instead sent my counterpart, Gibson

Sinan'gombe, with one of SSAAP's cameras, a few batteries and his memory card to get footage of those two drilling sites. I hope to have photos from either Gibson or Lily in the next Quarterly Newsletter for SSAAP.

Working with Denver Rotary World Service Club and Stanley British Primary School:



The first signs of water. Drilling in Kosalala Village, after approximately thirty meters deep drilling into the ground, the first signs of water are found in the soil as the texture changes and the color darkens. SSAAP's contact person in Kosalala, Shedreck Kantambo, pictured left, gleefully outstretches his hand to show signs of water in the soil. A few minutes later, the water shot out of the ground and sprayed everything around it, pictured right, while the people of Kosalala rejoiced, a few of them even cried with joy.

In 2013, the Denver Rotary Club, specifically the World Service Committee, donated half of a borehole to SSAAP via direct grant. The other half of this borehole was donated by Stanley British Primary School, as well as for a second borehole funded entirely by Stanley British Primary School. Both organizations (Denver WSC and Stanley BPS) gave full authority to SSAAP to decide where both borehole wells would be drilled.

Filtering through the [very large] stack of applicants for borehole wells is not an easy task, especially because most people/villages need help with water and the sad truth is that SSAAP cannot help *everyone*; SSAAP literally has hundreds of applicants. Thus, I painstakingly went through all the applications and decided upon two.

Kosalala was chosen due to a miscommunication between the Engineers Without Borders (EWB) and SSAAP, as SSAAP was not present during the site assessment with EWB in 2013 for the wells to be drilled in 2014. Two different gentlemen had applied to SSAAP for a borehole and SSAAP sent the EWB team to assess both sites, not realizing that the sites were more than 8 kilometers apart from one another. The

EWB Team assessed the closer of the two sites, Siloonda, and signed a contract with Victor to drill a borehole in Siloonda Village, not realizing that Kosalala was also supposed to be visited. Then, Victor died in late 2013 and much confusion erupted as to the location of the borehole. When people appeared in number at my doorstep, both from Siloonda and Kosalala Villages, I realized I could not turn either community away. I gave Shedreck from Kosalala my word that SSAAP would drill a borehole funded by Denver WSC and Stanley BPS in 2014, and Siloonda's borehole would be drilled by Overland Mission, funded by EWB in 2014 as planned.



The finished borehole well in Kosalala Village, October 14, 2014 (left), pictured with the SSAAP-Zambia Team: Gibson and Heather. Right, the drilling rig for the Indian-owned company responsible for drilling both of SSAAP's wells in 2014: SRR Waterwell Drilling & Exploration, Zambia, Ltd.

The second borehole is in another chiefdom of Zambia, not in Simwatachela but rather in its neighboring Siapatunyana Chiefdom. This area, barren with water (see photos below) has no borehole for at least twenty kilometers away, fetches filthy river water over twenty kilometers away, and is scarcely developed and shockingly underdeveloped, especially in contrast to Simwatachela Chiefdom! The village area SSAAP drilled its second borehole is called Simapuka Village, and SSAAP's contact person for this borehole is a schoolteacher, Morris, and friend of Heather's since 2008.



SRR Waterwell Drilling & Exploration Company's drill rig (left); notice the dryness in the land around the Simapuka site. Center: gradations of soil as it changes from sand to clay, then finally to mud – and darkens as it does so. Right: Mr. M. S. Reddy, Managing Director of SRR Waterwell Drilling & Exploration Co. at the Simapuka site on October 15, 2014.

School Sponsorship Program:



The SSAAP Sponsorship program for the school year January 2014-December 2014 (Terms I, II, and III in Zambia) was executed in early February 2014 upon Heather's arrival to Zambia. The following schools were supported: Sibooli Community School, Siankope Community School, Mafuta Basic School, Mulamfu Basic School, and Siloonda Community School. Sixty sponsorships were given to students [both genders] grades 1-7 depending upon need: orphans, vulnerable children, and children of polygamist or alcoholic fathers were given priority. Half of the sponsorships will be for the 2014 school year, and the other half for the 2015 school year.

The sponsorship program in Zambia is needed as much as it is in Sierra Leone; however, in Zambia it has been very, very difficult for SSAAP to secure essential, basic documents for the sponsorship program: receipts for school fees, receipts for uniforms and school shoes, attendance records and report cards, even photos of the sponsored children in their uniforms. In Sierra Leone, SSAAP requested such documents [from the four schools it worked with in Moyamba, Njagbahun, Kentimawa and Manjendu] and received the requested documents a week later. In Zambia, SSAAP distributed the funds for the sponsorships and requested the specified documents in February 2014; we did not receive any documents from the five schools SSAAP worked with even up until September 2014! SSAAP wrote letters to teachers, begging for receipts, or opportunities to photograph the sponsored students.

This is *not* the way a project should be run, and is a waste of resources if the beneficiaries (the school teachers and schools of sponsored pupils) are unable to produce simple receipts or proof that the money was utilized for what it was intended. For this reason, I have told the people of Simwatachela that SSAAP will only be sponsoring students to school in Sierra Leone in the future. I cannot quite understand the problem in Simwatachela with sponsoring students to school, but only that I cannot attest that the money handed to the teachers of five various schools was indeed used to sponsor the students for a year of school. And because I cannot attest to this, I would feel more comfortable using funds donated to SSAAP on projects that are transparent in nature, yielding tangible results. Or a simple receipt, at the very least!

SSAAP was able to secure receipts from three of the five schools by October 2014, but after much hassling and pleading with the school teachers. It should not be this difficult, I told them, and for this reason the

school sponsorship program in Zambia is suspended until something shifts and the schools/teachers of Simwatachela learn the importance of documentation to the West, as well as proof of how funding is used.



Two of the sponsored students by SSAAP at Mafuta Basic School. The children surely need the sponsorships, as well as education, but without receipts, documentation, and co-operation with the schools and teachers involved, SSAAP does not know how to continue this program successfully and has thus temporarily suspended it.

Loan Program:

Fourteen loans were given in 2012 from SSAAP in Simwatachela for different intervals of time: some for six months, some for one year, all with 0% interest rate, in the amount of 100 Kwacha [approximately \$15.88] or one goat. Out of fourteen loans granted, two groups provided the necessary reports and feedback as to how the loan money was used and therefore will be granted another loan in the future. The second 'round' for the loan program is an exponential increase of 200 Kwacha or two goats; the third 'round' would be 400 kwacha or four goats and so forth.

The two groups who received the second 'round' for the loan program are women's clubs: one from Sibooli-B Village (Kandunya Women's Club) and the second from Siloonda Village (Siloonda Women's Club). Two groups failed to find the money to pay the loan back in its entirety, one club flat-out stole the loan and the head of the club ran away, one club returned a sick, dying goat to SSAAP and the other eight clubs or individuals who benefited from the SSAAP loan either failed to produce a report or even an oral explanation of how the loan benefitted their club, business, community or family. For this reason, SSAAP is considering revising its loan program to in-kind animal projects, specifically chicken-rearing, goat-rearing or pig-rearing projects.



A few women involved in Siloonda Women's Club. They are very active and enthused about SSAAP's loan program.

One women's group, Cinkoyo Women's Club, never received its loan from SSAAP because another women's club in the village stole the money intended for the Cinkoyo Club. SSAAP decided to try an alternative idea which had been stewing in Heather's head for awhile now: providing the group with two hens, one rooster, and some vitamins and antibiotics. The club is then responsible for building a chicken home and for taking care of the chickens.

The cost for such a project is less than eighteen dollars. Thus, the cost is quite manageable and is still approximately the same amount of money as the loan would be (100 Kwacha). The following Women's Clubs/Associations will be working with a chicken project: Siloonda Women's Club, Kandunya Women's Club, Cinkoyo Women's Club, Syoonze Women's Club, Sikalele Women's Association (consists of five separate clubs within the Sikalele Village area).



Two black hens went to Cinkoyo Women's Club on September 22, 2014, along with twenty-one eggs. Peggy, Chairwoman of Cinkoyo Women's Club proudly takes the chicken in its home, with its twenty-one eggs, on behalf of the Club.

Animal-rearing projects are among the best ways of working with/helping people in rural Africa. So long as antibiotics and vitamins for the animals are budgeted into the project, the animal projects start from something small and grow very large. Rearing chickens, goats, sheep, pigs, even cattle provide food, milk, labor on their fields, and even an income source for people/clubs/groups selling these animals.

SSAAP's Success Story:

SSAAP's loan program caters to individuals, groups, clubs or associations struggling with financial hardship, feeding their children, or have initiative to begin an income-generation activity (IGA). Unfortunately, usually it is the women in African society that suffer from the hardships of the family, although the SSAAP loans are not limited to women. Men can also apply for the program.



Radiance Cumming, Heather's daughter (left), and Radiance Sinan'gombe (right), for whom she is named.

In 2012, SSAAP gave a loan of 100 Kwacha (approx. \$15.87) to Radiance Sinan'gombe. At that time, Radiance was considering leaving her husband Eugene, who had two girlfriends in Kalomo town and a second wife in the village. These various other women were distracting Eugene from fulfilling his paternal obligations to his six children, and as a result his nine year-old son Capabo Milonga had never been to school, nor had his seven year-old, Ian Milonga. As well, one of the girlfriends in town was on ARV drugs (Antiretroviral drugs, used to treat infections by retroviruses, primarily HIV), thus it was considered that she was HIV-positive. So Radiance's marriage to Eugene was also posing a threat to her life.

Radiance is the mother to six children, and decided to leave her husband in 2014. Radiance's husband Eugene was sent to jail for stealing and selling a cow, then for performing witchcraft against Radiance. As earlier stated, her husband is a polygamist, with at least two wives and multiple girlfriends.

In 2012, Radiance came to SSAAP and applied for a loan. The loan was for 100 Kwacha, due in one year to be paid back with 0% interest.

Radiance used the 100 Kwacha loaned to her by SSAAP to buy *chitenge* cloth fabrics. With these cloths, she hand-sewed African-style clothing for various people in the village: children's clothing, women's suits, men's shirts. She sold this clothing and with the profits she bought flour, yeast, sugar, and cooking oil.



With these ingredients, Radiance Sinan'gombe began a bun business, selling one bun for 50 Ngwee (approximately eight cents) and because there is no one else in her village, Sibooli-B village, who is making and selling buns, people in the village came flocking. Traditionally, Radiance would bake the buns in the evening; by the following morning, most of the buns had been sold. She baked 80-160 buns at one time.

From the profits that the buns generated, she was able to pay the school fees for both of her sons to attend school. Radiance hopes next year to be able to send one of her daughters, as well, when her daughter is old enough to attend class one.



Ian Milonga (left) and Capabo Milonga (pictured right, behind) are now able to attend grades one and two because their mother started her own business, selling buns, and can now afford to send them to school.

An added success to this story is that Radiance has involved her older sister, Brenda Sinan'gombe, in her booming bun business. Brenda, also suffering from a polygamist marriage, left her husband, Cipego, in late August 2014 and helps deliver Radiance's buns to homes around the villages. For this service, Brenda is paid by Radiance, and Brenda hopes to use these profits to send four of her six children to school, as

Cipego has decided only to provide for the children he has produced with his second wife. Cipego married his late brother's wife and refused to support any of the children he produced with Brenda. As well, Cipego beat Brenda to the point she landed in the nearest rural health center (RHC).

SSAAP's Future Programs in Simwatachela, Zambia:



SSAAP has been fortunate to receive a high volume of in-kind loans from various sources, most- especially the Mississippi State University engineers involved in the EWB program. Every time they visit Zambia, they bring a plethora of in-kind donations: crayons, soap, toothpaste, and various other things that could easily lend themselves to a project-context.

SSAAP is fundamentally an education-based project, and therefore any distribution of in-kind materials will also involve a training/teaching/educational workshop.

New Projects include:

- Sanitation and Hygiene Workshops (Zambia): building hand-washing 'tippy-tap' stations
- Youth Sports (courtesy of EWB-Mississippi State University Team): organizing children and teens into sports groups and distribution of soccer balls
- Solar light project (courtesy of Nokero): distribution of solar lights to schools so that during the rainy season, which typically incurs dark days, the students will have light
- Water filter project (courtesy of Stanley British Primary School): distribution of water filters to schools without any water source. Filters clean 99.9% of parasites and other bacteria contaminating the water
- Hygiene: tooth (courtesy of individual donors as well as EWB-Mississippi State University Team donating toothpaste and toothbrushes): one- or two-day workshops where lunch and tea breaks

are served, educating health workers as well as individuals in the community to the importance of oral hygiene

- Hygiene: hands (courtesy of individual donors as well as EWB-Mississippi State University Team donating toothpaste and toothbrushes): one- or two-day workshops where lunch and tea breaks are served, educating health workers as well as individuals in the community to the importance of hand-washing to combat disease
- Penpals: Zambian students linked with various schools/students/universities in the U.S.A. and in Sierra Leone and in the effort of writing letters will in-turn learn much about the culture from which his/her penpal is living
- Kid Camp (courtesy of individual donors as well as EWB-Mississippi State University Team donating jump ropes, markers, colored pencils, coloring books, pencils, pens, crayons, and activity books): will be held at the SSAAP Center for one week during every school holiday break, providing lunch and drinks. Open to twenty children per session, on application-basis. The program promotes working with children through art, and using art as a tool in which to grow a child's confidence and expend his/her creativity muscle.

Art:



(Left) Paintings created by Med Krack, Kosi, and Med Rac in Freetown, Sierra Leone. (Right) Also in Freetown, Ras Jalloh has his own street side business knitting bags, hats, and making various beaded jewelry.

SSAAP has a variety of art for sale this year. The list of goods include:

- Bamboo cups (Sierra Leone)
- Soapstone elephant figurines (Zambia)
 - Malachite bracelets (Zambia)
 - Wooden animals (Zambia)
 - Masks (Zambia)
- Sandals (Sierra Leone/Guinea. Fula cobbler is from Guinea, makes the sandals there, then sells them in Freetown, Sierra Leone)
 - Small paintings, sold on wood frame (Sierra Leone)

- Large paintings, sold either in glass frames or as fabrics (Sierra Leone)
 - Knit purses, hats (Sierra Leone)
 - Beaded jewelry (Sierra Leone)
 - Baby clothing (Sierra Leone)
- Traditional clothing (Sierra Leone)
 - Drum (Zambia)
 - Clay pots (Zambia)
 - Throw rugs (Zambia)
 - Peanut butter (Zambia)
 - Beans (Zambia)
 - Ground nuts (Zambia)
 - Coffee (Zambia)
- Baskets (Sierra Leone and Zambia)

Please note that the proceeds from art sales go back to SSAAP, so selling the art is a way of 'recycling' money for the nonprofit. SSAAP buys art in Africa to support artisans in Zambia and Sierra Leone, then through selling the art in America the nonprofit has funding to buy more art in the future.

Upcoming Event with SSAAP: World Gift Market, Nov. 22-23, 2014:



Traditionally, SSAAP sells art at the World Gift Market, located at the First Plymouth Church in Englewood, Colorado. The gift market is hosted by First Plymouth Church and supports nonprofits working around the world (Asia, Africa, South America, Eastern Europe) and a plethora of worthy causes. SSAAP is proud to be among the nonprofits selling art at the gift market and welcomes its supporters to attend as well.

The gift market is open on Saturday, November 22nd from 9 am to 4 pm, then again on Sunday, November 23rd from 9 am to 2 pm. Details for First Plymouth Church:

First Plymouth Church: 3501 South Colorado Boulevard
Englewood, Colorado 80113
Phone: 303-762-0616
info@firstplymouthchurch.org

Please come and explore the many gift-giving ideas which offer more than just a material object to a loved one for the holidays, but rather bestow an opportunity to someone less-fortunate in the world.

Expansion of SSAAP: Ethiopia:



Through the years, as SSAAP has traveled between Zambia and Sierra Leone, SSAAP has passed through Ethiopia a number of times and had the opportunity to spend a few nights in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city. SSAAP has a few contacts in Ethiopia, and some ideas for projects, which include clean drinking water in rural areas as well as working with health-related projects, potentially in a more urban area. The idea is in its infant stages, but SSAAP checked with Ethiopian Airlines and discovered that it is possible to have a layover up to one year's time in Ethiopia and not be charged extra for the flight or the layover. In other words, SSAAP could work in Ethiopia without paying any additional money for airfare, between traveling from Sierra Leone to Zambia and vice-versa. So, from the standpoint of airfare, working in Ethiopia would be free for SSAAP!

The idea is still in the works, and there is a lot of research/planning that would need to be done beforehand, but SSAAP-Ethiopia is definitely on the horizon. Especially at this time that Sierra Leone might not be safe for travel for a few years, or until an Ebola-vaccine is manufactured, and that Zambia is already being aided by so many churches, NGO's and small charities or projects like SSAAP, the need for expansion – or for a change – exists.

A beautiful culture rich in ancient history, Ethiopia suffers mostly from a lack of rainfall, thus no systems in place for rainwater harvesting.

The Rural Poverty Portal remarks the following in regards to Ethiopian poverty:

Since 2007, Ethiopia has achieved strong economic growth, making it one of the highest performing economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet it remains one of the world's poorest countries. About 29 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line. Ethiopia ranks 174th out of 187 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's human development index, and average per capita incomes are less than half the current sub-Saharan average.

Ethiopia has enormous potential for agricultural development. At present only about 25 per cent of its arable land is cultivated, and agriculture is dominated by subsistence rainfed farming, using few inputs and characterized by low productivity. The vast majority of farmers are smallholders. About 12.7 million smallholders produce 95 per cent of agricultural GDP. These farmers are extremely vulnerable to external shocks such as volatile global markets and drought and other natural disasters.

Smallholder farmers form the largest group of poor people in Ethiopia...The persistent lack of rainfall is a major factor in rural poverty. Drought has become more frequent and severe throughout the country over the past decade, and the trend shows signs of worsening. The impact of drought is most severe for vulnerable households living in the pastoral areas of lowlands and the high-density parts of highlands.



Schedule for SSAAP in U.S.A./Africa:

- October 17, 2014-July 2015: U.S.A.
- July 2015-December 2015: Zambia (well-drilling season August-late October)
 - December 2015-February 2016: Ethiopia
- January 2016-July 2016: Sierra Leone (well-digging season January-early April)
 - July 2016-September 2016: Ethiopia
- September 2016-December 2016: Zambia (well-drilling season August-late October)
 - December 2016-February 2017: Ethiopia
- February 2017-July 2017: Sierra Leone (well-digging season January-early April)

Please note plans are subject to change due to creation of the Ebola vaccine (in 2016?), as well as funding permitted to begin/grow the program to Ethiopia. Funds allowing, SSAAP hopes to continue providing water wells to both Zambia and Sierra Leone.

A Personal Note from Heather, SSAAP's Founder:



It is my desire to use this opportunity to address the Ebola plague that started in West Africa (began in Guinea, spread to Sierra Leone, then to Liberia), spread over the course of six months to Nigeria, Senegal, the D.R.C. (Zaire, formerly known), the Gambia, and continues to spread over the beloved Motherland, cases of it sprouting up in South Africa, Kenya, Mali, and, rumor has it, even in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. The border of Zambia and its northwest neighbor, Angola, is now closed, as supposedly there are some Ebola cases in Angola. I was told that a few cases of Ebola came to Zambia through the D.R.C., via truck drivers importing and exporting goods there. The truck drivers went to UTH, the largest government hospital in Zambia, and were diagnosed with Ebola. I can't find any reliable source that confirms this, however. Living in Africa during a time that there was a disease outbreak has forced me to live with a few grains of salt, knowing I don't know the whole truth – about anything – on either side of the globe.

There is a lot of confusion, panic and fear surrounding Ebola; no one seems to have the facts. And, as Christian Bovee, the early American author, wrote: *We fear things in proportion to our ignorance of them.* No one knows where Ebola started, and no one seems to understand much about it – including our much-trusted World Health Organization (WHO) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. There is the theory that Ebola came from the river which links Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia: the Mano River, which originates in the Guinea Highlands and forms part of the Liberia/Sierra Leonean border. The disease was supposedly started by something in the river that made contact with humans. There is another theory that the disease was started by a bat, a mango, and a child in Guinea. A mango fell to the ground, a bat ate the mango, and as bats carry a plethora of diseases, a child was severely infected and died when he ate the same mango that the bat had chewed on.

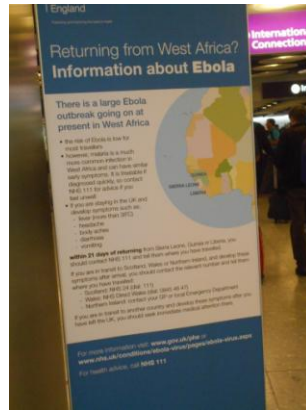
Living in Sierra Leone during much of the Ebola plague, I heard many things. I had a school teacher in late May in Njagbahun ask me if I 'believed in Ebola', the way one might ask if someone believed in Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. On our compound in Moyamba, early June, one of the mothers who sent her children to the same school my daughter attended told me not to send Radiance to school because the following day they were vaccinating all the children at school with an Ebola vaccine. When I told the woman that there is no vaccine for Ebola, she told me that what they were injecting them with would actually give the children Ebola. I had heard something along the same lines, but on a larger scale: in Kailahun District where Ebola began in Sierra Leone, a laboratory had been funded by the Gates Foundation to research Ebola, and in fact in the laboratory they were injecting Ebola-free patients with a shot that would give them Ebola. Many of the Sierra Leoneans had told me this. Again, these are undocumented sources that, having no proof or their reliability, causes us to question if we ought to believe or disbelieve, causing our fearfulness.

Ebola is actually the name of a river, the Ebola River, which is a tributary of the Congo River, flowing through the northern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C., or Congo, former Zaire). The virus has taken this name because the first outbreak of Ebola occurred simultaneously in the Congo around this region in 1976, simultaneously with an outbreak in the Sudan.

My daughter and I were planning to come back to America in December 2015; late July 2014 we got word that some of the major airlines were going to cease operations into and out of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia: Emirates, Brussels Air, British Airways, to name a few. The reason that these large-scale commercial airlines canceled their flights was because they realized (a) Ebola was spreading due, largely, to people traveling, and (b) Ebola had already reached Nigeria. Apparently a man fell to his death from Ebola as he was walking out of the aircraft after his flight landed in Nigeria. Thus, the small Nigerian airline we had our tickets booked with canceled our flight out of Sierra Leone, and by then most of the airlines had already boycotted operations out of Freetown, Monrovia and Conakry. It was almost impossible to find a flight out of Freetown, and luck must have been in our favor to find a travel agent who took pity on me, pulled a few strings and got us out on a Gambian airline. Needless to say, this was a terrifying experience that will go to the grave with me. Therefore, we did not want to experience the same scare trying to leave Zambia, and so we decided to leave before any of the chaos hit Zambia – or Africa at-large. As of September 13, 2014, there were so many infected people and Ebola-related deaths in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, that no more beds were left in the hospitals and so the sick were told to go home and die in their own beds.



On a personal note, my daughter and I came home before 2015 from Africa for two reasons: my mother and my father. Whether Ebola is a threat to my life or my daughter's life is, at this point, irrelevant. What stands as a beacon of truth, rather is the suffering my parents have experienced, worried that Ebola will wipe out Africa and carry my child and I along with it. It didn't seem fair to them to stay any longer; as well, SSAAP had accomplished so much in 2014 in both nations that it seemed like a good time to come home and relieve my parents of their fears – knowing that I and my parents didn't truly have all the facts on the virus, and most likely never would.



I understand that there is no cure, at present, for Ebola. I also know that my loved ones in Sierra Leone are calling this their second war; the first war, being, of course, the Diamond War/Civil War/Tribal War/Rebel War of 1990-2001. This war on Ebola, they say, is bacteriological warfare. And given the exceedingly low level of medical services, competent medical personnel, sanitation and hygiene awareness, and medical equipment available internally in Sierra Leone, I believe the situation will hit an abysmally low point (similar to the civil war's low point in 2000, just before the war ended in 2001) before the country can begin to repair and heal itself.

As a culture, we are very focused on the power of computers; it is said that the strength and abilities of computers is increasing exponentially every eighteen months. The rate is almost incomprehensible. But I wish to focus now on a power which far exceeds the power of any man-made machine, any technology we have created. And this is the potent force of love, which exudes in strength and magnitude unrecognizable to any scientific or technological scale of measurement.

Love is an actual energy force; within it is the power to heal. It is only natural to feel utterly helpless during a time such as this whereby an epidemic disease with no cure is spreading exponentially and killing those whom it touches. However, we are not powerless; the most potent source of healing, of energy, of wisdom and progress rests within our hands: the ability to love. This gift rests within us!



In the center of Freetown is the historical cotton tree. Around the tree are images of the Sierra Leonean President, Ernest Bai Koroma, and images of the Sierra Leonean flag as well as the American flag. Sierra Leone is a nation that deems itself very close to America. The U.S.A. took many of its refugees or asylum citizens during the war, and most Sierra Leoneans have a direct link to the U.S.A.: a family member who is here, children or grandchildren who were born here, education that was acquired at a university here. Sierra Leone needs our support, our love and our good wishes now more than ever. They are at a point of crisis in their history, and the goodwill of others is instrumental during this time for them.

So...light a candle, repeat a mantra, whisper a prayer, close your eyes and embrace one moment of silence before falling asleep at night for the people touched by Ebola, specifically those who are facing a disease that has no known cure, or those who have already lost tremendously due to this epidemic. When in the silence of your own heart, please think of these people and the power of your thoughts in the name of healing, and surely in the name of love.

Thank you for your time, effort, energy, support, concern, interest and love – it matters!

Heather and Radiance



Leaving Lusaka on October 16, 2014. We decided not to invest too much in plans – even in our own, and to be happy wherever we go.





Africa is hard to pass up...



...as one wise African man pointed out to me, yes, it is true that Africa is plagued with disease. Here, he said, we have malaria; we have HIV and yellow fever and now, behold, we have this Ebola epidemic. But you never hear of earthquakes in Africa, or tornadoes, or floods. Or hurricanes. So, Mother Nature distributes herself in good ways and bad all around the world, and the equilibrium of her balance is what keeps us in motion.



