

# Community Contribution Piece for SSAAP

## *How to Build a Zambian Hut (“N’ganda”)*



The houses in the village, unless made specifically with an iron sheet (*malata*) roof, are made entirely of earth; earthen materials include molded bricks, paste between bricks, wooden planks for the roof, roof made of dried grass, door and door frame are as well made of trees.



***Foundation of House:*** This layer is made of a long piece of string (*lozi*), made of tree fibers, wrapped around sticks, stuck in the earth around all four corners of the perimeter of the house. The sticks and *lozi* compose the foundation for the house as its perimeter; the

soil is dug out within that perimeter as the foundation. This job traditionally takes 2-3 men to do, completed in approximately 2-3 hours.

***Structure of House:*** Bricks, or ‘*zitina*’ in *ciTonga*, our local language, are laid around the house’s perimeter. *Zitina* are baked in a local, hand-made ‘brick oven’ used specifically for burning bricks – usually hundreds or thousands at a time.



After the foundation is laid, the sides of the walls are laid with bricks and a mud-water-gravel paste. This ‘paste’ is prone to termite damage, thus for homes that have the means as well as a long-term sustainability mission (such as the SSAAP Headquarters) it is preferable to mix cement with the mud paste – not only for the durability, but also to deter termites from entering. Doorway is built into one area of a wall. This process usually takes 1-2 days, needs 3-5 men to complete.



***Roof of House:*** The roof, or '*ciluli*', is traditionally thatched with local tree poles, which tend to be short and gnarled as in the Southern Province – specifically Simwatachela Chiefdom – we lack tall, sturdy trees due to a deficit of water. Therefore, most local homes use local poles, whereas SSAAP's Headquarters uses Eucalyptus tree poles found in Choma (one town north of our nearest town Kalomo), which, if cared for and maintained properly, last 50-100 years. Most local roofs have a 3-5 year life-span.

The tree poles are built, and nailed into an 'A-frame' shape and as post people lack nails, they are tied together using *lozi* (tree fibers). SSAAP's Headquarters uses nails in its roof, however. The process of building the wooden pole structure for a roof of a local house takes usually about 2 days, and needs 3-5 men to complete.



Most roofs, including SSAAP's, are thatched with dried grasses '*bweezu*' found in the African wilderness, or the 'bush' as we affectionately call it ('*musokwe*' in ciTonga). Grasses

are selected depending upon height and girth; one large bundle costs 3 Kwacha: approximately 20 cents. To thatch most local homes, one must invest in approximately 20-30 bundles of grass. As SSAAP's Headquarters is quite large, and we have a double-grass thatching on our roof (between the layers is a black plastic sheet, to prevent rainwater from entering), a roof for the SSAAP house requires 50 bushels of grass, 80 meters of black plastic, then 50 more bushels of grass = 100 bushels total.



Thatching a typical African-style hut in the village takes 1 ½ days; the SSAAP house will require 4 days.



One uses a makeshift 'ladder' – usually a tree pole with knots around the back for climbing, and climbs up to the A-frame and with the help of 2 other men handing him grasses, he ties large chunks of grass together with *lozi* (tree fibers). Note that this process usually takes 1 ½ days, 4-6 men; women are not part of any of the house-building process save fetching sand for the paste between bricks, water to make the paste with as well to soak the *lozi* to soften it, and for brining dried grasses.

Once the roof is finished, *bweezu* (dried grass) is trimmed with a machete. This takes one hour, approximately.

***Door of House:*** Door is assembled, ‘hinges’ made of local wood as well as the door and door frame are made of local wood. The door takes 1-2 men to assemble; usually the entire process takes 1-2 hours only.

SSAAP’s door and door frame were donated in 2004 when Heather was in the U.S. Peace Corps. The door was donated by the local MP (Member of Parliament), Clive Miyanda, and the door frame – both still standing today! – donated by the nearest Rural Health Centre (RHC): *Simwatachela RHC*.

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SSAAP’s Headquarters, from 2004 – to-date (2019), has cost SSAAP \$115 USD. All of this has been through purchase of either dried grass or cement. All labor, construction and other local materials have been contributed to SSAAP’s Headquarters as the Community’s Contribution to SSAAP.

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Building a house in Zambia is gender-specific, and – excepting bringing local sand, water or grass to the building site – is never, ever a woman’s work. The men do all the hard lifting and building in their culture, as well climbing as thatching a roof requires nimble climbing skills. Women are expected to cook for the men while they are building the house. In the case of SSAAP, when people come to work on the Headquarters, we cook them local food: *n’shima* (local staple food) and *cisyu* (relish that goes alongside n’shima, such as cabbage, beans, tomatoes and onions, soya, eggs, any type of meat) . Radiance cooks the *n’shima* and Heather cooks the *cisyu* ☺

