

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter

Spring Edition XXXII; Zambia, 2021



For Laura. Thank you for your internal and external beauty, your incessant patience, for all your visits to our remote village in Simwatachela, Zambia, for your cheerful and optimistic attitude, for your Loving kindness and sharp intellect in the countless SSAAP projects you have helped with over the years. I will never be able to thank you enough for all you have done for us here. Thank you for being a sister, a friend, and a treasured ally. We Love you all-ways.



Zen asks you to come out of the head and go to the basic source.... It is not that Zen is not aware of the uses of energy in the head, but if all the energy is used in the head, you will never become aware of your eternity.... You will never know as an experience what it is to be one with the whole.



When the energy is just as the center, pulsating, when it is not moving anywhere, neither in the head nor in the heart, but it is at the very source from where the heart takes it, the head takes it, pulsating at the very source.... a tremendous force arises, a transformation of energy into light and love, into greater life, into compassion, into creativity. It can take many forms. But first you have to learn how to be at the source. Then the source will decide where your potential is. You can relax at the source, and it will take you to your very potential.

~ Osho, from Zen Tarot: The Transcendental Game of Zen



The Beauty of the Bush

The African wilderness Africans call 'the bush'. In ciTonga: '*musokwe*': *moo-sew-gwey*.

Gail, SSAAP's Secretary, and I always say that we don't say 'thank you' enough. We don't! I have profound thanks to all of SSAAP's supporters, donors, allies, friends, and those who send us care packages that last us for years over here. I have nothing but undying thanks to you all, and Gail alike. You have given us a home in Africa whereby we sleep with the door unlocked every night. There is nowhere safer on the planet that I could be raising my child than our village, and I thank you with every fiber of my being for this. And for this reason, I work as hard as I can every day of my life on this project. So it is my way of thanking you for all you have done for us and the beloved people of Africa.



Rainy Season: It is the rainy season in Zambia, somehow haunted, and the rains bring out all the things hidden below the surface the rest of the year: a multitude of bugs, mosquitoes, flowers, vegetables, maize (our staple crop here) ~ and so many other Truths. Secrets emerge. Rainy season in Africa is a haunting time. It begs us to reflect upon the deepest things within us. Something about the rain is very raw and strong and has forced me to be the same ~ it has taught me that in order to grow, I need water too, such that my roots don't get parched beneath the soil. Change is always the most difficult gift.

SSAAP-Zambia Microloan Program, 2021

'The Bank of Simwatachela'



One of SSAAP's most beloved donors actualized dream, SSAAP-Zambia's Microloan Program, is also its most popular ~ alongside our water well program. Our donor has constructed, directed, and funded this program since its origin in 2016 and at this time it has grown to gargantuan proportion.

We are serving 173 people with loans in 2021 and the value of the Loan Pool at this time is approximately \$7,400 USD.

The beautiful woman pictured above, Mildren Mweembe, sifts through a pile of 400+ applications looking for hers. Many people try to start loans and they are in extremely high demand as they are interest-free, and the perfect opportunity for people to begin projects of their own on their own.

Known as ‘The Bank of Simwatachela’, this program has people coming from all sides of our expansive chiefdom – far and wide – for loans which begin at 200 Kwacha ~ approximately \$10 USD, to 6,400 Kwacha ~ approximately \$320. In the village, where six freshly-grown organic tomatoes cost K3 ~ 15 cents or a head of cabbage K2 or 10 cents, a loan of \$320 is an incredible amount of money.



SSAAP’s Office is open Tuesday and Thursday every week, from 10:00 to 13:00, and 15:00 to 18:00, with a break from 13:00 to 15:00. The scene (above) is from the morning of Tuesday, February 2, 2021 when I opened the door to my house at 08:30 in the morning to hang some laundry, put our solar lights outside for charging, and to start our fire.





The word 'overwhelmed' is more or less a polite term for the feeling that this brings me at 08:30 in the morning on an Office Hours day. Probably a better word would be 'dumbfounded'; I am utterly shocked, stunned, impressed (!) that the program has this response in the village, no matter how many years it goes on, it never fails to astound me with what a success it has been.



I tend towards self-degradation, as well I am shy: more-or-less an introvert and certainly a loner, thus my immediate reaction to such a scene is: *Can I do this? Do I have enough energy within me to confront this day?*

My eleven-year old daughter, Radiance, always laughs when I come inside the house and say the same to her. *Of course you can do it, Mama-yo (what kids in Sierra Leone call their mothers); you came here to do this. So go out there and do it. Do it big! Get out of the house and go help all those people.* She gives me such courage! I am naturally a very shy person.



The situation, in many ways out-of-control, I decided to control by putting everyone into a long line and giving them a day to come for their loan, and a time slot. Two groups in the morning of ten people each; two groups in the afternoon of ten people each. This equals forty loans per day. Each week has two Office Hours days, so for five Office Hours days I will be giving out loans. The first group on February 2, 2021 was 2-A, the second group: 2-B, the third group: 2-C, the fourth group: 2-D. I did this with every loan day and to organize all of the loan participants took me six hours.



A Committee was given to the project two weeks prior to help organize the SSAAP Microloan Program. I am very, very thankful for them. They helped the loan distribution process immensely.



The Committee, originally gender-balanced, became imbalanced when the women we asked to participate on the Committee stopped attending meetings and showed little-to-no interest in assisting the project, but rather more interested in appearing on a Committee without putting the long hours in that the rest of us had committed to, stating they were too busy, making up lies or excuses as to why they hadn't come to our meetings. Radiance and I were so, so disappointed as we were looking forward to forging intimate bonds with women on the Committee.

Discussing about women in Africa is as multifaceted an issue for debate as talking to someone about whether s/he is a carnivore, omnivore, or herbivore, or shall I say a meat-eater, a vegetarian, or a vegan. There are vastly so many angles and perspectives, hinging upon background, culture, exposure, education, one's personal experience in the matter. I will share here what my daughter, half-Sierra Leonean and half-North American, Radiance said in response to the women's participation in the Committee for the Microloan Program, because she is coming from the perspective of being both an African woman and a Western woman: *Women in Africa are not degraded by the men; they degrade themselves in their choice to be second-class citizens. The men don't do this to them – they do it to themselves through the ritual of tradition. The men wanted them on the Committee. We all wanted them! The women, in response, proved themselves uninterested by not taking it seriously at all. They do this with most-everything. They do what is comfortable to them – the household chores – and don't take the risks they need to grow. Of course there are many angles to this discussion, but the bottom-line is that the Committee must be hard-working and whoever is willing to do the hard work we want on the committee! Gender doesn't matter so much as hard work does, and those who want to participate – let them. I would rather have a Committee, I told them, of one person working hard than of ten people just in this for the title of "Committee member".*

I am a big believer in the *Tao* ~ or the Middle Way. The general philosophy of the *Tao* is the all things should remain in the center space, or in yogic terms: *shakti* (energy) rises through *sushumna* (center of our bodies, i.e. our spinal columns; tube that serves as the body's line of symmetry) as not merely a grounding force, but also a center space to ascend to our Higher selves. The pranic life force energy (*ch'i* or *qi*) flows inside the central canal of the spinal cord, turning parts of us that were off back on – almost like a light switch. In the debate of women and men concerning gender roles, I do believe humanity has arrived in a space where the Union of Equals is at-play. Pre-dated times and the Priestess days before recorded history, the Oracle of Delphi and many of the ancient Egyptian goddesses ruled great lands for some time; subsequently came the Patriarchy Era we are now living in – but that too is coming to a close. Now is the time for balance, for the dawning of the *Union of Equals*, as I call it: men and women living in harmony, not in competition and certainly not in gender wars. These games don't serve any of us. Women have certain dominating leadership qualities and great strengths and men have different dominating leadership qualities and great strengths and it is within their fusion – not their opposition – that true magic, true Divinity, is born.

The philosophy of the *Tao* states that the more out-of-balance something is, the more energy must be exerted to bring it back to its center-space, its harmony, its divinity. Therefore, as I see it, the direction that humanity needs to be headed is to balance the genders by not choosing someone for a leadership position based upon his or her gender, but rather the best person(s) for the job. This is my notion of gender-equality; women and men have different potencies they bring to every situation, and biology as well provides a basic understanding that will confirm this.

Here in our rural African context, little girls are not raised to believe they will ever amount to anything. They are raised to bear children when they are 15 and to be a man's wife ~ which in the remote villages of Africa is sometimes the equivalent to his slave. It is something that the children grow up believing, breathed into them not only by the culture and the society but also, many times, by their *mothers*. My stance on this is: adult education for women. Please read the 'Adult Education for Women' section of this newsletter (pages 51-57); SSAAP has freshly-begun this project. The philosophy: invite all the women back to school after age 35, when they are now grandmothers, and teach them to read and write and empower them through reminding them of their inherent strength and power and goodness and they will be changed forever ~ and will raise different daughters who are no longer afraid of the power their contribution will make to the society. In other words, their Light will guide them – rather than intimidate them.

This is the road forward for Africa, in my humble opinion: it is the union of our genders that will bring us together, specifically in non-romantic contexts, rather than a constant tension between them ultimately bringing us all farther and farther apart.





Committee members come in the sun or in the pouring rain, as pictured above. Above left: Committee Chairman Pumulo Mwiiya (standing) and Committee Member Mike Mupalanga (black shirt); above right: Committee Vice-Chairman Nelson Kanyembe (in striped shirt), and in the back Committee Members Edson Sinan'gombe and Raphael Sibooli.



Here we are, huddled beneath the shade of one of the guest houses on the compound and out of the rain. The Committee wants to build a shelter on the compound where people waiting in line for hours can cook and make themselves at home. A fine idea, and I applauded them on it.



Through our Committee meetings, we organized everything for the Loan Program to begin and for me to start handing out all 173 loans!



Giving out a loan is a lengthy process because I require a paperwork trail. Each participant must fill out an initial application for her/his first loan (K 200) and write a report for each subsequent loan explaining what s/he did with the loan. When coming to collect the loan, I explain as well write the conditions of the loan (its due date) on their application and have them read before signing. For those who cannot read and write, I read aloud to them and then they stamp the form with their finger.



As per the previous discussion, many of the people in the village who cannot sign their names are the women, as when they were of school age, rather than being sent to school they were forced to stay at home to perform household duties such as fetching water, washing the family’s clothing, cooking, sweeping the yard. As a result, as mothers and grandmothers, many of the women in Simwatachela cannot read or write. SSAAP also hands them applications for our Adult Education Program, which will commence after schools reopen post-COVID, which pay for each woman to attend a year of school through paying their school fees, as well providing a *chitenge* (African fabric) uniform for each woman. It does not equalize the injustices inherent in the society over the last few centuries, but it is a start in the right direction, SSAAP believes.

1st January, 2020

Ms Heza C.,
SSAAP.

Adapa kulumba autoomue
a bakaintu bangi a mkwasji
oonse kw SSAAP kwigwasya ndu-
twalana. Kwzwa mw K3,200,00
twakonzya kwigwasya mbwi-
mkwasji oonse. Sana bacikoto
bakonzya kwuya cakuti umui
wasika mw grade 12.

Alimui twakonzya kulipinda
ula akulana mpindu. Bobutu oonse
oobu twabubona nkaambo ka-
SSAAP, talo tagwasya bantu bambi
mwosko eeci. Tuhisi kukomana
nkaambo twakonzya kwita ang'ombe
kwzwa mkabunga aaka.

Kulombozya nkwekuti SSAAP
izumanane kugwasya.

Ndime,
Mate and Betty,

0970247711

Example of a loan report. Most people write their loan reports in ciTonga; however, there is always the exception in English.

10/09/20

Dear Sir/Madam

I am here by giving a report on how I used the K400=00 given by your organisation, I and my family managed to purchase a Vifa sala light for CU which will enable my children to study on their school academic

lastly but not the least would like to thank your project for the recognition

we therefore ask SSAAP and it Partners to continue helping

US

Yours Faithfully
Siakambola Emmanuel

TO SSAAP, My main purpose of writing this note is just to let you know that I am so thankful for the help in form of money you have given me. It is not that easy to give money to someone and that person returns the same money without putting any interest on top.

I am hereby encouraging you to continue helping the people in need like me. I do not have any reservation to say it's a very good idea and I promise not to disappoint you in anyway.

I do not have more words to say, thanks go ahead with the sincere help.

Yours,
SIKAMBOLA EMMANUEL
~~SIKAMBOLA~~

Cell no 0976280025



All the loans were due on 5 January 2021. SSAAP redistributed the loans once more, starting on 2 February 2021. Of all the loans due on 5 January 2021, **100% of the loans were returned**. SSAAP lost \$0 from people returning the loans, and the loan pool at that time was approximately \$3,400 USD. I believe this is saying so much about the quality of our loan participants. Pictured above, a set of triplets signing their loan agreement form.

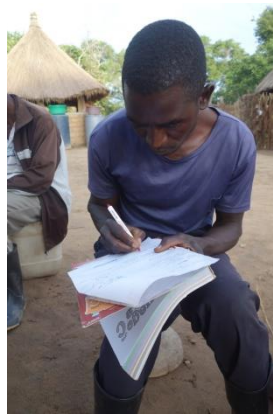
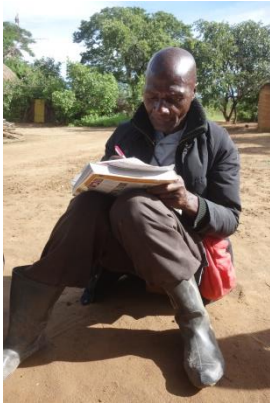
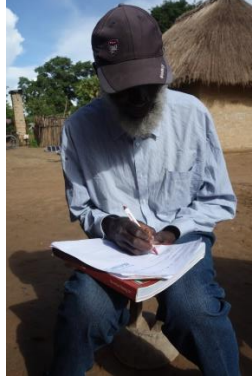


Sometimes the state of the Office is so chaotic that we are all laughing! In the end, I think we all have fun. I know I do.

It dawned on me during one of these Office Hours days, handing out the loans, that perhaps this is the only opportunity that some of these people have. I see the way that the people come to the office: no shoes, shoes ripped; toes coming out of their shoes. Old raggedy clothes, or in some cases: their Sunday best. Hungry, tired, eyes red-rimmed from the fatigue that hunger brings. It dawned on me like lightning striking through my spinal column: *Maybe SSAAP is the only opportunity many, many of these people have.* It is seldom that most of the NGO's (Non-Government Organizations) would ever

reach these hard-to-reach pockets of Zambia, and therefore I am grateful to SSAAP for allowing me to do so. But these are the areas of the world which need our attention and assistance and our Love the most, so that is why SSAAP is called to these areas. While they are typically the most difficult, I do feel they are also the most rewarding. I am up for any challenge that is flung my way, will rise to its occasion. It is just so utterly worth it to me.









Our wonderful record-keeping Committee makes an inventory of each person receiving a loan and the amount of each loan, as a back-up copy for SSAAP's record-keeping database.





People crowd, waiting for their turn in line. Social distancing doesn't appear to be a concern for them, despite my repeated attempts to ask them to keep distance from one another. Such things in Africa – keeping space from one another – seems a taboo to the local people; they are not a science- or a medical-based culture, and because we don't seem to have any reported COVID cases in our remote area, they have no proof that it exists and therefore think of it, more or less, as a falsity.





I am so touched by this beautiful woman, Eunice Mangwanda. She is blind in one eye (her left eye) and has come to the Office for the last two weeks to try to secure a Cycle #1 Microloan (K 200). On Thursday, 11 February, she finally received her loan! In the rain, but sure enough – she received it!



Another smashing success story for the Microloan Program is Betty and Mate. Betty, pictured above, received the highest loan SSAAP has ever given out: K 640, or approximately \$320 USD. Betty and Mate have used their loans to begin a fishing business at the Zambezi River, and with the proceeds from their business have bought cattle. They are a shining success story for our project.



One of our many obstacles to flight through Microloan distribution in January/February 2021 was the rainy season. As we all essentially live outdoors, when the rains came we ran to the sides of the houses to take shelter during the storm and to wait for its passing.



The people, strong and mighty, wait out the rain beneath the sides of the roofs of the little structures all around my compound. Sometimes, hundreds of people would visit the Office Hours and we found ourselves in rainy situations almost every last Office Hours days. We plan in the future to build two cooking shelters on the SSAAP compound – one for women, one for men, so that they may sit comfortably during Office Hours days while they wait to be served, and can even cook while waiting.







When the rain stops and we forge on ahead ...



After the course of 7 Office Hours Days, sometimes working 12 hours/day with SSAAP's Committee, we passed out 173 loans totaling approximately \$7,400 USD.

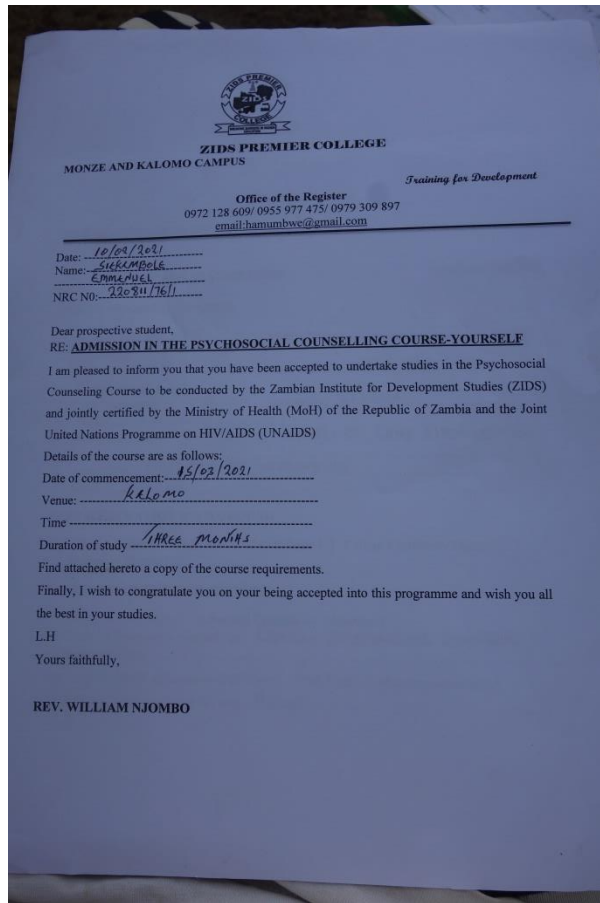
People use their loans in a variety of ways: on agriculture, such as maize-planting (maize is their staple food) or on planting sunflower ('malangazuba' in ciTonga which literally translated means: *facing the sun*), which they use for pounding and then making cooking oil (called 'saladee' here in Zambia).



Others use the loans for vegetable gardens, or simply to start small businesses so that they can better take care of their children through purchasing soap, toothpaste, clothing or through school fees which put their children to school.



The project is unique in that its only agenda is service to people in the ways that will help them most – and they dictate that, not SSAAP. We are simply here to try to serve in whatever ways we are able, trying to find creative solutions to age-old issues or even tackling problems as they come: one by one, person by person, situation by situation.



One man, Emmanuel Siakambole, is using the loan to put himself through a 3-month psychosocial counseling course to work with HIV testing. He is a volunteer at our nearby rural health center (RHC) in Kabanga, approximately 8 kilometers from the village where he and I stay.



The loans have helped people to such a profound extent that some of the recipients are overwhelmed.



Samson Kayoba diligently records notes on the Terms and Conditions of his K400 loan: its due date, what is expected of him in terms of his 25% Community Contribution to the project. It was touching that he cared so much about the loan that he would record the details surrounding it. Most people just take mental notes of the loans but Samson went to the bother of writing it all down.



The 25% Community Contribution piece of the Microloan Program requires for people who receive loans get work days to come to help with the project on our compound. Each loan cycle constitutes one work day. These men have come to put a local fence around the SSAAP compound, pictured above.



The people choose their jobs, typically, based upon both their skill set and their interest. The women above are fetching water (left) and raking/weeding the yard (right) to ensure that snakes don't enter.



Adrian Sikelele paints the fence around one of our front gardens to prevent termites from entering (above) with a toothbrush (!) as I had nothing else and all the paintbrushes we own had paint hardened on them; Shantiwell Chongwe always brings trees to plant in our yard so that we have more shade around the compound (below). It is so nice to get to know people better when they come to the house and we get to spend one-on-one time with them rather than just as a mass group to collect their loans. The intimacy of the project has always been one-on-one. My 'secret scheme' in the Community Contribution piece of the project is having a way to get to know people better and to form deeper relationships and alliances with them, also to know who has what talents and how people's individual and specific talents can be used best in the project and how the project can tailor their needs as well as their dreams.



It is also a way to ascertain who is ready to give back to the project and who doesn't want to work and is only after a hand-out; people who are ready to give back are people who are ready for development and those who only want a hand-out but are stingy to give back are those who prevent development for others. In this project of giving out and giving back, people must learn both ways; we all want to rise together.



The loans are due back again on June 1, 2021 and at that time we will reassess and redistribute them, hopefully also allowing new applicants to enter into the program.

*

Long live the SSAAP Microloan Program! Sharing a space with SSAAP's Water Well Program, the Microloan Program is most sought-after and expresses a desire to work with those even in the most hard-to-reach pockets of the chiefdom. It is far and away our most successful SSAAP-Zambia Program. The recipients Love it, and it keeps me very busy with my mind moving in a thousand directions at the same time. It keeps me on my toes, so to speak. Abundant thanks to the donor who has masterminded this entire operation. We couldn't have done it without you, and we Love you.

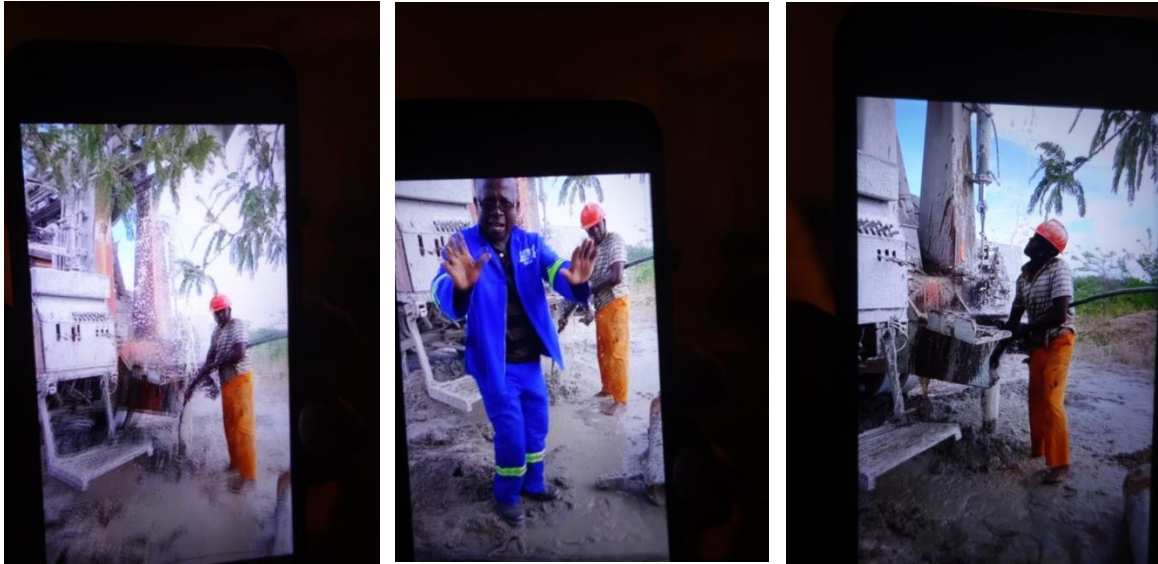


Irrigation Project for SSAAP Land

The SSAAP Land had its borehole ('cikuju') drilled on Saturday, November 28, 2020.



Likumbi's photos from the water spray off the SSAAP Land's well. Likumbi is our well-driller, and I captured these images from off his phone.

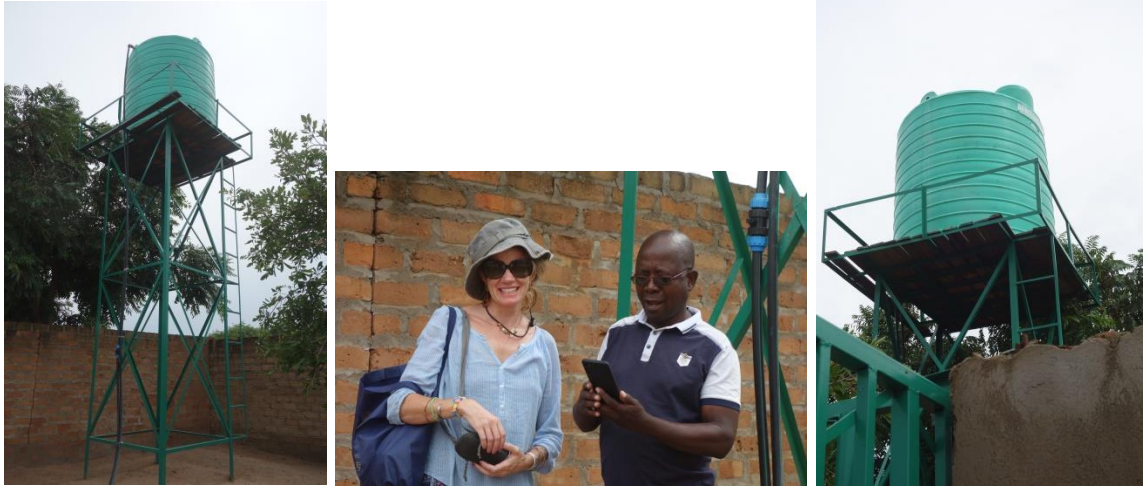


In SSAAP’s 2020 Contract with Likumbi, I made sure this well would be very, very deep so that we could use it for irrigation purposes in the future, for a community farming venture we call the “Plantation Project.” Currently, the borehole is a traditional borehole, but in the future we can replace its pump with a heavy-duty power pump (submersible pump powered by solar panels) for irrigation.

We visited the provincial capital of Southern Province, Zambia, named Choma, in December 2020. Likumbi was touring us around with ideas for how to irrigate the SSAAP Land using the borehole we just drilled as well an irrigation system using solar panels and a submersible pump. We are looking to working on this project in 2022.



At Likumbi’s house, he has implemented such a system with a single borehole he drilled himself. The borehole has the black hoses attached to it, above the ground (see previous page). The hoses then can be connected to a sprayer like the one shown above, to irrigate the crops or the gardens or the orchards. The sprayer may be adjusted by adding another pipe in its body, to elongate it, if the crops are tall (such as maize).



Meanwhile, as the borehole is used, through solar panels the water is pumped into a tank such as Likumbi's green tank, shown above. The water may be preserved or used as a rainwater harvesting system, depending upon the season and needs of the people.



The typical handpump's cylinder and pipes are replaced by a submersible pump, pictured above, and available for purchase in town. The one Likumbi is standing beside is an industrial pump (for a city!) so we wouldn't need that for the SSAAP Land ☺, but the idea is the same.



The submersible pump is aided in its function through these solar panels. The whole system costs less than \$2000 USD (at this time). This was already gifted to SSAAP in 2019 for this specific purpose – so we will be on our way. We already are! I don't want to do any of this until I get some feedback from our engineers for SSAAP on-site and am hoping the COVID vaccine won't continue keeping our precious visitors away. If we can have our visitors come here in 2021, then in 2022 (when I come back from Sierra Leone) we can begin this endeavor. I envision a large-scale garden, orchard, many trees growing, and eventually some staple crops like maize, sorghum, ground nuts and sweet potatoes, and the people can use the land and the irrigation system to farm for themselves with year-round water, rather than water just during the rainy season (typically November/December to March/April annually).

I have a long-term vision for this project, the Plantation Project, as more or less a “Dream Garden”: SSAAP provides the [neutral] land, the water and thus the irrigation system, with bicycles available (through SSAAP-Zambia's Bicycle Project), whereby the people are free to cultivate the land as they wish; SSAAP will provide a “Seed Bank,” and fences around the gardens are the community's Community Contribution. We will grow gardens which host different vegetables which are difficult to find locally (green beans; garlic; chili pepper; bell pepper; cabbage), orchards bearing fruit not readily available to us here (bananas, limes, grapefruit) and many, many trees providing shade to the gardens as well to harvest more rain in the decades and centuries to come. This is my dream for the food and agricultural sect of SSAAP-Zambia. The water sect of SSAAP-Zambia is fulfilled through our water well contribution to Simwatachela. The Plantation Project will fulfill the hunger, nutrition, and food needs of SSAAP-Zambia.



Radiance and I sharing breakfast at Likumbi's house (above left); two of his four children with Heather (above right). In Africa, the people we work with we also have personal relationships with. This is the way Africans “do business,” which is a stark contrast from the culture of professionalism in U.S.A. I am touched by Likumbi's treatment of us as friends, colleagues, and family.

SSAAP has four water wells from 2020 in Simwatachela that need to still be completed, but cannot be until the rains end mid-March or early April 2021; as well one borehole from our 2020 contract still needs to be completed. We look forward to completing the 2020 contract with Likumbi so that we may begin our 2021 Water Well contract which will include, minimally, 3 SSAAP-Zambia wells in April/May/June 2021. I will keep you posted in the newsletter for Summer 2021!



Return to Sierra Leone

We are in Zambia right now, which I call our African home. But we are trying to get back to Sierra Leone – sometime – in 2021. We have so many projects to return to do!

The way COVID has affected us most, I would have to say, is that it has limited our movement around the world. I think I am not alone in this, and most people are “itchy” to get a change of scenery. So I am preaching to the choir. But the COVID vaccine may be more difficult for us to get here in Zambia than if we were in the States, and without it, we can’t leave Zambia.

COVID vaccine ----> I think we who are in the “travelers” category (expats, those working for NGOs, or me working for an NPO – *nonprofit organization*) are about to be given no choice on whether or not we want the COVID vaccine – we are forced to get it when we can. Otherwise the costs of getting COVID tests at the exit and entry points of every nation one moves through is astronomical. I am pro-vaccines and Radiance and I have always had many vaccines before we have traveled: Typhoid, Yellow Fever, you name it we have had it, and she had many vaccines for travel as an infant before we left U.S.A. after her birth. The COVID vaccine problem presents itself where my daughter is concerned. Radiance, age eleven, is going to have to get it as well – even though she is about five or more years too young for it, as most of the vaccines have not been tested for children under age sixteen or eighteen. Despite being under-age to receive the vaccine, she will be forced to get the vaccine, because otherwise it costs an arm and a leg to travel and the travel itself will be too difficult without it. Through my research, this is what I have learned.

As stated previously, SSAAP is trying to figure out its third project site – and I had found an incredible ticket through Turkish Airways for Lusaka (Zambia) to Cairo (Egypt) to Freetown (Sierra Leone). The cost of the ticket was quite inexpensive as Turkish Airlines was running a deal; we don’t have many opportunities to fly with a good airline, and are always stuck with the African-low quality airlines, so to go with Turkish Airways sounded like a dream. When I did further research (U.S. State Department has a wonderful website listing every country in the world’s COVID exit and entry requirements), the bad news was as follows: leave Zambia, get a COVID test: \$100 x 2 (each test costs \$100 so for Radi and I both) = \$200. Enter Egypt, COVID test again: \$200 for the two of us. Then we were going to go overland from Cairo to Khartoum, Sudan (bus trip) and again, exit Egypt: \$200, enter Sudan: \$200, and this doesn’t even express either the difficulty in finding facilities to give the COVID test, in Arabic, and in cities I don’t know (have been to Cairo but don’t know it well at

all). Leave Sudan: \$200, re-enter Egypt: \$200 for the COVID tests. Leave Egypt for Sierra Leone: \$200, enter Sierra Leone and there is another cost: \$200 for the two of us to get the test + \$80/each for the Travelers' Card that they give on airplanes that are free, Sierra Leone found a corrupt way to make money: \$160 for the both of us for the little card. So you total it all up, and the cost of the entry/exit COVID tests are higher than the cost of the ticket. I literally cried emailing the travel agent telling him we couldn't get the ticket. So I know the only way around all these COVID testing costs will be a vaccine, which Radi and I will be forced into if we want to keep traveling in the parts of the world where we are now.

Most of the countries' rules governing COVID state that children under age 6 or age 2 need no COVID tests, but above age 6 do. This presents a grey area: if children under age 6 or age 2 do not need any COVID test documents but the COVID vaccine is not suited for children under age 16 or 18, then what happens to all of the children who travel who fall within that interval of age 6 to 16? In our case, Radiance will either have to take the test five years before she ought to, or we simply stop our traveling – unsettling as there have not been any studies on what does the vaccine does to children, or again unsettling not to visit our other project site in Sierra Leone for many years. It seems unfortunate to have to make these kinds of weighted decisions. This has been our experience with COVID – it hasn't affected us all physically, but has affected when and where and how to travel in parts of the world that the vaccine may not reach for some time.

There has been a lot of talk in Zambia that the vaccines we were sent had written on their cartons: 'Only for Africa' and therefore many of the health care workers found it suitable to send them back, claiming that perhaps we were sent low-grade COVID vaccines just as we are usually sent low-quality Chinese products and low-grade everything here in Africa. Many people speculate that the vaccines that the rest of the world did not want are going to be donated to Africa as the Africans believe the value of human lives here is considered less than the rest of the world. They do not want a sub-par COVID vaccine to confirm their suspicions. So right now, there is a heavy debate amongst Zambian officials, diplomats and health care workers as to what to do about the 'Africa Only' vaccines for COVID we have been sent here. I will keep you updated in my newsletters about this on-going situation. I wish I could report better news, but safe to say that acquiring a reputable COVID vaccine here in Zambia will not be an easy task for any of us here, I believe.



Sarvodaya Conference; Tamil Nadu, India

February 10th, 11th, 12th, 2021

Radiance (my daughter), Gail (my mother) and I (Heather) had planned to travel to India in February 2021 to attend the Sarvodaya Conference in Tamil Nadu state, India – but alas, the conference was canceled due to COVID and instead became a virtual one, so we made the most of our 3-day Conference opportunity even here in the village! We now have a small solar panel and a battery to charge our laptop with the sun, but during the rainy season, even this is a challenge – thus chunks of the conference we missed.

I was asked to be a Guest Speaker for the conference; the topic for the conference was *Impact on COVID-19 and the Way Forward* and the topic given to me specifically for my speech: *Agriculture: Impact on Farming Communities of Zambia*.

The following is a summary of my presentation: I spoke on how COVID has affected the rural area of Simwatachela, Zambia – or all the ways that it has not – and how global climate change has affected the people here much more than COVID. We are on a seasonal pattern of every two years having drought and the third year: monsoon rains, such as in 2020/2021 we have had. And no rainwater harvesting systems, no storage containers, no concrete storage tanks to store the water for later use is one of our downfalls. During years where there is more rain, we ought to be storing water for the off-years of drought. I have noticed a weather pattern here in Simwatachela: two years of drought, one year of monsoon – here in Southern Province, Zambia. We need better irrigation systems here in the remote areas, and we need more access to clean water. SSAAP is working hard on both fronts.

This is the time to hit agriculture hard; COVID has taught me the importance of healthy food and strong immune systems, which often come from eating healthy foods; processed food – while potentially delicious – doesn't serve our immune systems and leaves us in a compromised position when viruses come hunting us, needing something to feed off of...



I shared during my speech some of my insights concerning the virus: one of the benefits of COVID in Africa has been hand-sanitizer more readily-available to people and handwashing stations readily available in town which promote hygiene. People don't generally wash their hands very often and the urban African areas are generally quite dirty. So much of the COVID pandemic is more of a human-

fear-pandemic than it is physical at all. We found that even the world's greatest technology could not take on the beast of what lovelessness is in the face of humanity. COVID has almost become a spiritual disease, causing people to live in a fear-realm and a lack-of-trust/lack-of-Love realm. *Inclusion and exclusion*: these two polarities are dangerous because they lead to the have/have-not systems. I have previously lived in India and spent a great deal of time there (7 trips there and want to go again). I study yoga, or shall I say the ancient study of the Soul which is yoga. Our Western-yoga is all about postures and exercise and toning muscles, but those are *asanas* – body postures, which constitute a sect of what yoga deeply is. Yoga, generally speaking, is the metaphysics of the Soul. It's working with the energy within you as well the energy in its fullest force within the Universe. You can travel to all corners of the Universe: you sit within yourself and you find that everything in the external realm is just created by others and the rest of us either follow it or we don't: what we believe, what we do with our lives, our value systems, how we define success. In this way we choose our perceptions ~ what we allow ourselves to believe or not to believe.

And me: I believe only in Love even if it costs me everything I have. I live by Love and will die by Love and that is the only meaning in my existence on this planet. Everything I do should therefore be a manifestation of this Love.



The harsh reality is that in the face of Africa, people die daily of AIDS (caused by HIV), Ebola (West African outbreak), Malaria, Cholera, Diarrhea, Typhoid fever, filthy contaminated drinking water, water with bacteria and animal feces floating in it (for cooking, bathing our children, and keeping our clothing clean). Disease is a part of daily living life in Africa; we are protected here by nothing. Perhaps I can say that we have learned to live with dying here. Africa is a continent whereby nothing stands between man and Nature; we don't have healthcare here, we don't have medications or widely-expansive medical knowledge, and this is not a science-based culture. My stance on COVID will always be tainted by the masses of African people who suffer from disease on a daily basis and very, very little is done or ever will be done to help them. Aid organizations are certainly there, but so much aid funding is lost in greedy hands or at the administrative level that it reaches very few of the poor, starving masses in the village. That is why I am always here to implement my work myself. SSAAP is for the poorest villages in Africa. This is why we have come.



Humanity will advance and evolve depending upon the rate of how ready it is to develop internally, how able it is to sit inside of itself and reflect upon the past, rise to the present, and honor the future.

Humanity's development is directly proportional to the amount of Love we are willing to give to ourselves, which in-turn means how much we are able to Love another. Humanity's advancement has nothing to do with technology; technology is a piece of a puzzle, an ingredient in the batter. But it cannot fix broken systems, injustice, dishonor, disrespect, and the imbalances on the planet that we live inside of each and every day of our lives and that we impose upon others due to our own shortcomings. The key, the secret ingredient, will always be Love. Love is the only thing that will ever change the world. And Love can never be taught to us. We cannot be taught, intellectually, to eradicate the prejudices and racism and darkness which exist within each of us; only through self-introspection can we begin to confront the things within us that we want to change, and change them ~ and then, through changing ourselves, we have no doubt changed the world.



Democracy is a spiritual idea with its roots in Love ~ it favors all, equalizes all, includes all. Any system that is exclusive can never be a pure system, therefore it can never be a sustainable system.



We must care for our families as part of our social and biological responsibilities; but caring for our families is not enough, as they are merely extensions of ourselves. We must all care for each other in this family planet and there are infinite ways to manifest this: through the sacred art of communication; through sharing our time, treasure and talent; through being the kind of friend you wish to have in another: a friend who never gives up and never takes offence. Giving back to humanity requires the great task of personal healing, which we must all commit to doing as there is not a single one of us who walks this planet without being broken; we are all varying degrees of brokenness and shades of darkness and Light and this is the Divine Masterpiece. This is the quilt: its antiquity, its threads, its tapestry. This is the Master Plan. The brokenness that exists within each of us is the seed; it is the channel, the womb that births our transcendence. Without the brokenness we can never reach wholeness ~ and that is holiness, which is the essence of our existence on this planet.

So we are all alone no matter how close or intimate we are with another, and there is no exception to this rule; it catches us at death and then again at birth. Therefore the common thread of our humanity is our aloneness, and we are all together in that. This is also the only thing we are all most afraid of: *our aloneness*. And this is the destiny of human: infinite spirit born into finite vessel. The body is simply a house for the spirit within it. The body will get old, it will tire; the mind will get old, it will tire. It is only a vessel, an anchor which keeps us here on earth. When we walk through the shadow of our aloneness we realize the only thing that created the shadow was ourselves, and rather than being in an awkward place it becomes the most comfortable space.

Life is full of risks and the only certainty in life that exists is that after this risk is confronted, then another will arise, then another, and another.... Our lives are about living peacefully and confidently inside of its risks.



Selfishness is the ultimate masterpiece of a closed heart, violence its fear-based counterpart. My daughter believes that being human ultimately and unfortunately involves both. I agree, as degrees of selfishness and violence exist within each and every one of us; I believe they are part of our human condition. But I also have another condition: that we too have within us the tools to rise above this, to overcome our imbalances and master them with Love.

What I have taught my daughter: in a conflict, take responsibility for your side. Only for your side. Apologize if you feel it is right to do so, and own your side. But you cannot control whether the other side will take responsibility for itself, so at the very least you take responsibility for yourself and then you know you have owned your own conflict. You have absolutely no bearing upon whether or not your opponent will take the same measures.

When we are looking at why so many, if not the majority, of educational systems have failed during COVID, we simply look to the key word in the phrase: *systems*. The education itself is not the problem, as education is pure. The problem lies in its implementation systems, superficially. But look a little more deeply and we will see that the failure is not even in the system so much that it is within us. We fail to see that an illiterate man is equal to a man with even the highest level of education, and until we change the way we think, our world will never, ever have pure justice or *Truth*, as Mohandas Gandhi termed it.



Where you have a lack of balance between formal and informal education, a lack of balance between desk work with field work, a lack of balance between experience and theory ~ you will always have a failed system. While the world continues to value literacy, we have no system that can implement it in the hard-to-reach pockets and heavily-populated rural areas of South America, Eastern Europe, or our traditional Asian and African villages. Technology can only stretch so far, and learning online is also a discriminatory system in that it only helps the unique few with privilege enough for electricity, a device, and food in his/her tummy enough that the screen time can be learning time. Most children in rural Africa go to school hungry and are lucky enough if they can have clean drinking water at school.

The baseline is that the human brain is always learning: it is a lump of grey mass with the consistency of oatmeal and yet within it the Universe is contained. The human brain, in fact, is our most sincere thread back to the Universe, because within it our consciousness – our infinity – is contained. The brain is the most incredible thing we possess, as human beings. It never sleeps; it never stops; it is as infinite as the Universe itself. Therefore, the human brain is always learning, always taking things in, always absorbing. If it is not absorbing a book on photosynthesis, then it is

outside watching how things grow with the combination of sunlight and rain and that living things need both in order to survive. We cannot measure one's capacity of brilliance on his level of literacy. Many of the astounding minds I have known in Africa are those without literacy. We must change the idea of what education means to us. We must adapt our own consciousness and awareness out of our comfort zones and think beyond the box of what 'being educated' truly is.



This is the kind of footpath, laced with water and mud during the rainy season, that the school children – pictured above – traverse on their way to school in rural Africa. No school bus assistance and filthy with mud is the way they begin their school day. Is it right to impose a Western system of formal education upon these children – a system where they will always be struggling to “catch up”? I don't believe it is. I believe if Africa is put to this test, it will fail time and time again, as the conditions we live with here are so drastically different than that of the West.

Forcing the world to adopt the Western system of formal education is just another form of oppression and imperialism, as well Capitalism – as educational systems, sadly, have become more about money than anything else; defining 'educated' as those who can read and write and 'uneducated' as those who cannot – this notion is deteriorating humankind. A system of elitism caters only to the part of the world which created it, meanwhile the rest of the world is in a struggle and a never-ending game of catch-up. I can tell you that in rural Africa, the Western education system has failed miserably. Enter a school mid-day, mid-week and you will find children hanging out of broken glass windows in a school lucky enough to even have windows; you find female pupils braiding their teacher's hair and the rest of the students sweeping the floors with our traditional African brooms or writing with a broken pencil that barely has a tip, no eraser, and is about two inches long. Were we to teach African children that the knowledge they already have in their heads about how to milk a cow, how to grow grains, how to feel the essence of a rain storm is serving the world, is serving them, is an education in itself, then you would have a different Africa.



The problem with worldwide educational systems is that the *systems* themselves are rigid, without fluidity and without compromise; there is no balance between the formal and the informal, the illiterate and the literate, the field work and desk work. And the rigidity of the system is due to the rigidity within us. We have decided that the Western system of learning is the only system of learning, and have imposed it on the rest of the world, such that Africans who speak 9 languages and understand the cultures that belong to those 9 languages, but can read and write in none of them are labeled “uneducated” or “illiterate”. The Western person (I will use myself as an example) who speaks one language but has been to so many universities and has so many degrees is strikingly superior because she is literate. But literacy cannot take into consideration the value of life experience, and in the context of Africa I would say that the people here have more life experiences in a week than most of us in the West will have in some decades.

I am not de-valuing the importance of literacy, as I would be lost here in Africa without it (my intimate friends are my books and my journal; I write and read consistently every day and so does Radiance) but rather, I am making an argument that there is some power and magic that comes too from illiteracy. There is also brilliance in it. There is a silver lining to every cloud, a beauty inherent in both spectrums. And from illiteracy one has the wonder of the natural world without science and fact and research to back it up. A flower can just be a flower: you see how it grows, you notice its leaf formation, you might notice the pattern of its petals. Maybe you even watch it grow for some days and some weeks. You will learn about that flower differently than had you learned about it through a book. But you will learn about it either way – with or without the book, and with or without being able to read the book. There is no “better” or “worse.” Everything in life is situational, and for people who cannot read and write there is always a reason why, and there is always a story behind it, and their minds have not been empty vacuums whilst everyone else was learning to read and write. Their minds were still growing, though not through books and literary means. Their minds were busy growing in other ways. I have lived with illiterate people for almost two decades now. They are capable, intelligent, and powerful beyond measure. It is time that they, too, had a voice.



In the balanced universe, a literate world misses the magic of innocence and the illiterate world misses the cosmos of books. There is brilliance in the balance of both. In the words of Rhea Wolf, from *Mother Tongue Ink* 2020: “... opposites create more beauty and balance when they are blended together.” What can we learn from those with entirely different backgrounds and ways of navigating the earth plane than ourselves? So much!

The measure of ones ideas is whether or not he is willing to test them out on himself. For me, I have tested all that I am presenting here concerning educational systems on that which is most precious to me: *my child*. And the outcome has been remarkable ~ I have learned through her upbringing in both Africa and in U.S.A. the value of both a formal and an informal education, and to me, they both have their contexts and their strengths, but *neither is more valuable than the other*. And this small change in our perception of what educational systems ought to be is a slight difference which will make all the difference.



The best example I will use is that Africans – specifically in the remote areas – have an incredible sense of direction. No GPS, no compass, no map; for me, one path in the African bush is almost equivalent to the next. But to someone living in the bush, something like the shape of a toe mark in the soil tells them who has passed here, where they are, or the plow marks that leave a trail in the soil provide another reference point of direction. The natural world is more readily-available especially to those not trapped in the intellectual mind, but rather in the hand-heartmind. We must have a balance if we are ever to have an impartial global society. Otherwise we will all never be equals, and conflict will inevitably result. I may sound like an optimist, but I am not. I am a realist, and the reality is that the educational system that most of the world is struggling to meet the standards of is an educational system only appropriated to the West – with books and technology and learning materials – that simply does not fit into the context of many, many world cultures. Let me safely say *most* cultures.



This little boy fetching water from the puddles on the side of our main Mapatizya Road that runs through Simwatachela Chieftdom is never going to have the same opportunities that a child in Switzerland will have. Rather than encouraging him to follow a formal education system that in many ways is false in the context of rural Africa, why not teach him to develop his own internal skill set – or encourage him in a trade? He will be an asset to his family, to his society, and in the end could probably teach a course on whatever his trade is that would be of higher value than the professor with assorted degrees and qualifications who wrote a book about the same trade but never actually practiced it in the field.

What we value – the education of an Ivy League institution, and the cost that comes with it reflects our value of it – defines *who* we value in this world. An illiterate man will never be treated in this world the same way as a man who has a degree from Oxford University or Harvard University. And this discrepancy has made all the difference; this polarity is an insult to those who are literate and illiterate alike; we are insulting ourselves in the position we have put ourselves in because we are placing a value on a person’s intellect and ability to achieve academically above all other things, and when we do this, we imbalance not only our fellow human but also ourselves in that all the other things go by the wayside: how well someone works with their hands and heart. Education of the hands and heart is equally important to that of the mind.

The system of academia as we know it is a system that needs to change, as it is exclusive; it does not include all, and furthermore, it does not include the masses. There are parts of the world, or shall I say the majority of the world, that will never “catch up” so to speak – they are lucky to have desks, a rotting 2-inch pencil, a little exercise book beneath their arms. They come to school hungry and leave hungry and may or may not have clean drinking water at their schools. Our Western system doesn’t fit congruently within their system. So why make them “catch up” – unless our hidden motive is to turn the whole world into the West? Or to align education with money and capitalism, which is also an impure motive for educating world citizens. What we see in Africa so often is that those who have been educated to grade 12 or studied at a college or university value themselves higher than those who have remained in villages, learning a trade or how to work with their hands, and so there is a social ranking defined by those who have been educated (“literate”) and those who have not been educated (“illiterate”). Education is more or less the Caste System of Africa. And those who have been educated are entitled to jobs with salaries, whereby those who have not been are subsistence farmers in the remote village areas. People’s concept of empowerment stems from this system – a system that bleeds with injustice and impurity.

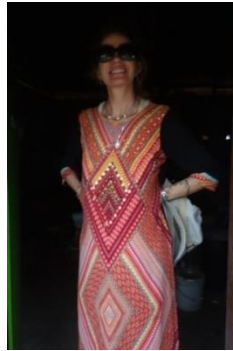
I believe the educational system that we know is not a sustainable system, because it is non-inclusive, and its failure was made evident during COVID. In fact, in many ways we will thank COVID – not now, but in the future, for revealing to us all the things that have been part of our lives for so long that are not serving us, in particular systems that lead to “success” and “failure.”

In short, until an illiterate man is deemed equal to a literate one in our global society, there will be no justice in humanity and an imbalance in the world.

Human being is a unique and unusual blend between animal and spirit. We need to be both. Animal-human needs other human beings, is a social animal; COVID has taught us this. Spirit-human needs only itself; other humans may even be a distraction or a displacement from the pure self, which arises and awakens through sleep, conflict, meditation, work, daily chores, so many ways. As human beings, our test is to find the balance – the Middle Way, or the *Tao* / the *ch’i* – between our animal-nature and our spirit-nature.

To stand in Light, to be genuine, is the key; never a trend. Something popular is different than something trendy. Charity and service work are noble causes but why? Because humanity has decided them as such. Helping others should be a popular idea, but not a trend ~ because trends are always

temporary, and not long-lasting; helping others should be sustainable: part of our daily lives, our daily work, our human existence, our sustainable work on planet Earth.



Heather in her mud-walled and straw-roofed house after the India Sarvodaya Conference ended, February 12, 2021. I wore my Indian *kurta* even though no one saw it but Radiance. I am a blend of Africa and India and U.S.A. and feel that all three of these contexts and cultures are pulsing through my heartblood at all times; I would never want to be without any of our three homes in this world and each of them serve me on an everyday basis in my work here in Africa.

Says Radiance: “Egypt is a land of secrets... India is a museum... and Africa is just a big hard lesson.”

*

A female physician working in Shanti Ashram in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu gave an incredibly moving speech about the importance of coming together, of working together. She spoke of how COVID showed the world that we are not ready for crisis. That the vulnerabilities existing in every culture, in every system were exposed, and the shock of an unequal world was so deep. She talked about what she termed: “the toxic stress of poverty” and that a child born below poverty level rarely gets above it. His/her life is working to try to get above the poverty imposed upon her/him at birth; this situation describes so much of the world, and so many of the communities in the world she termed ‘underachieving communities’.



She also discussed the modern world: analyzing variables, and a balance between field and desk work, and informal and formal education. She said that values need not be divorced from modernization, and that there ought to be a balance between women and men taking leadership roles.

Her speech was widely about what she called “social safety nets” and feeling that we are not in isolation ~ that your progress is connected to my progress.

The most profound part of her presentation, for me, was that she said working for the poor should not be a poor-quality service; rather, it should be a high-quality service. She said that service is for youth, for mothers, for families, for those who are sick and disabled; that all of this is a process of coming together and working together and that our value system should no longer be about making money or social status, but rather the value system of sacrifice, compassion, being dedicated, being true.



Be authentic! Be bold! Be brave! Be genuine!

Do the thing which is the greatest risk for humankind – *be yourself*.

It's the only infinite gift you will ever be to this world.





Valentine's Day 2021: Radi and I share every meal on one plate. Why? This is Love and this is intimacy. In our African tradition, our culture, food tastes better when it is shared, and to share food you share one plate. Africa is not a science-based continent, and here people don't think about or worry about germs – it is always in the back of my mind, however; but I am a hybrid. I am an American with Africa infused into my bloodstream. When barriers of the heart poignantly break down, necessary changes that advance the evolution of the Soul arise. The more we awaken to ourselves, the more clarity is shed upon the truth that we are all infusions of so many things: our upbringing and the specific culture of our family, the culture of our region, the culture of our homeland; things we've studied and things we have seen, experiences we have had. The world itself is the melting pot and the gift of exposure grants us that: not how many degrees we have, but rather how willing we are to bravely face the world ~ in all its tragedy lies its triumph. The two things are circular and weave around together, cannot survive without the other; they are not polarities and dualities but rather they are part of our metaphysical wholeness.



Goat Marketing Project

It is SSAAP's mission to find graceful, creative, innovative solutions to problems the local people face daily. The obstacle that people face, for example, with rearing goats is that they all rear them, so when it comes time for selling there is no one in the village to sell to – because they all have goats. What I am trying to do, through staying with the people and understanding their daily challenges, is find a market in town, or even various markets in town, that the people could sell their goats to and benefit through not only a profit but an on-going business venture or income-generation activity. I am currently working to align people in our local community with people in various towns throughout Zambia – in the Copperbelt, in Northern Province, Central Province, and Southern Province – specifically areas where people do not have access to goats or do not rear goats themselves.

The cost involved will be transportation to move them to the market, as well to the Ministry of Livestock, per animal, for a permit to move each animal. The people in the village will work with the people in town with both of these issues; SSAAP is merely the middle-man in all of this, organizing for a market for them. I am also working to organize cooperative groups in the village with a man in town who has a project buying goats and then selling them again, so this might be beneficial as well.



This poor creature, only a week old, was accidentally strangled to death. The two boys in the red shirts, above, were playing too roughly with it and killed it. Radiance, angrily, took it away to bury it in the bush. She wants to be a veterinarian and one of the things she is most intrigued by and simultaneously irritated to the core by, is animal cruelty in Africa. These boys, ages 2 and 2 ½ approximately, were unsupervised and were never taught that an animal is a living creature, just as they are. Animal awareness is certainly lacking in Africa, and animals are thought of as material creatures here to serve human needs rather than living creatures with a spirit, just as human beings have. As is the culture in Africa, when the mother/grandmother of the two boys came home she was prepared to beat them and I begged her not to, insisting they would learn much more if she sat down with them and taught them about what it would be like to be strangled to death or even what the importance of animals is in our lives. When Radi went to bury the goat, she told me that the mother/grandmother did not beat the children, so this at least is an improvement!

Natural Fertilizer Project

SSAAP cultivates new creations from old ideas: farming: deepening and broadening perspectives and perceptions. We wish to extend the concept of charity, of social justice, of empowerment, of Love. Without Love there is no charity, or social justice, or Love. Love encompasses all of these things.

Each and every farmer in Simwatachela uses fertilizer on his fields in order for her crops to grow. This is despite monsoon or drought, each farmer feels he needs fertilizer on his field. This is often due to the fact that the farmers cultivate the same land year after year, rainy season after rainy season, and like everything growing on this earth: the land becomes tired, worn out.

The fertilizer is not only a chemical polluting the earth but also our bodies when we eat the staple food, maize-based *nshima*. Not to mention it is quite costly: about 550 Kwacha/bag, which is something around \$21 USD/bag and very expensive for the people – unaffordable, really, for them. SSAAP is organizing a training in Simwatachela in late March or early April (after the rains end) for a group to come teach us about how to make homemade fertilizer. The recipe is below:

Bokashi Fertilizer

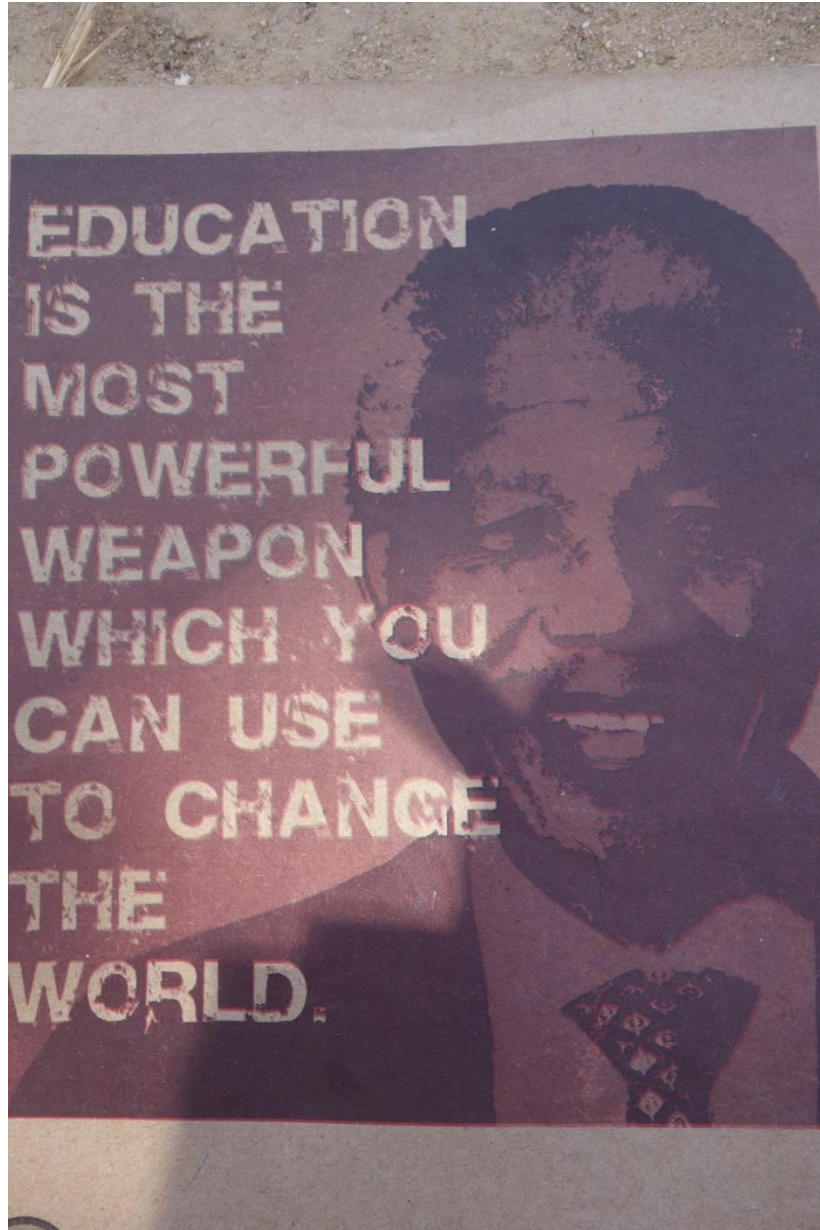
The bokashi fertilizer is comprised largely of dried manure and forest soil. The dried manure provides nutrients and organic matter, while the soil helps to preserve nutrients, absorb bad smells, and provide a comfortable living space for microorganisms. If charcoal is added (i.e. charred rice husks or wood charcoal powder) the effects of the soil are greatly enhanced. The following is a list of recommended bokashi ingredients but can also be made with fewer ingredients:

- **Dried manure** from cattle, sheep, and goats, pigs chickens etc should comprise 50-60 percent of the materials in a batch of bokashi and can include cow, pig, goat, chicken, duck or water buffalo manure as well as bat guano.
- **Soil from the forest** should constitute 20-30 percent of the materials.
- **Rice bran**, a carbohydrate source for beneficial microorganisms, should make up 10-20 percent of the mixture.
- **Sugar**
- **Yeast**
- **Rice husk charcoal** should comprise 5-10 percent.
- If available, small amounts of beneficial **indigenous microorganisms (IMO)** collected from forests or fields as well as **fermented plant juice (FPJ)** or **Effective Microorganisms (EM)**, which helps with the fermentation process, should be applied to other bokashi materials via a water solution

Although these supplemental microbe solutions are recommended to help stimulate the fermentation process for bokashi production, lack of access to such supplements should not deter anyone from making fermented bokashi fertilizer as beneficial microorganisms are already likely to be present in the soil and manure.

G-MAP Program

SSAAP-Zambia's Adult Education Program



The G-MAP Zambia program is designed for women who are age 35 and above to return back to school, grades 1-7.

SSAAP will be working with *Jokwe Basic School*, which is on the main [bumpy and vomit-inducing] road from Kalomo town (town nearest to us) to our village; *Jokwe Basic School* is under Zambia's *Ministry of Education* (the head teachers are paid by the government and the textbooks are distributed

by the government) approximately 2.5 km from our home and SSAAP's Headquarters, which is nestled deep into the village off all the main roads as you have seen in these photos.

SSAAP has been working extensively with the two Head-teachers and the Headmaster from *Jokwe Basic School* to ensure the program is well-organized prior to its commencement.



The program is open to women only. At this time, no men can apply. In the future, if the program is open to men, the men will be in a separate classroom than the women. Often the women are intimidated by the men because of the patriarchy deeply- and anciently-embedded into the culture so they will not shine at their highest Light if they don't feel free in their own classroom. As well, because the majority of men in the village have been educated, on average, to grade 8 or 9 and most of the women, on average, to grade 3 or 4, this time the advantage goes to the women. In order for advanced civilization/evolved humanity to truly enhance we need the sacred feminine: *the receptive*, in order to balance the sacred masculine. The energies must fuse together – not collide. Without both essences empowered within us we can never be whole, as individuals or as a collective humanity. That's why world patriarchy needs to phase out, but I am not convinced feminism is the answer. I think at this point balance between the two essences, the feminine principle and the masculine principle, is the most sustainable way forward.

- SSAAP will sponsor 200 women to attend school in 2021 through the G-MAP Program. If all the spaces do not fill in 2021, we can continue to enroll students as the enthusiasm develops. It sometimes takes things a bit of time to catch on in the remote areas.
- SSAAP will pay *Jokwe Basic School* for each woman for three terms (one year) of school @ K30/term x 3 terms = K90 per student per year. This is approximately \$5 USD/student. It has recently come to our attention that four additional schools in Simwatachela Chiefdom would like to work with this program, so we may extend the program to *Mukamba, Sikalele, Kabanga* and *Sibooli* schools as well.
- SSAAP will give each woman a *chitenge* fabric wrap that they may wear for school attendance purposes only. The *chitenge* serves as a uniform for the women.



We visited a large fabric store in Lusaka, Zambia (our nation's capital) back in July 2020 when the seeds for this program were being sowed to ensure we would have enough of the same fabric for all 200 women.



I allowed my Boss ☺ to choose the fabric and have the final say in the matter. The Boss chose the one, above, stating it looked 'school-y' and 'fun' at the same time, and that it was a unique *chitenge* fabric simply because neither of us had seen any women in the village wear it before!

- School will commence under Zambia's *Ministry of Education* policy: schools will open when the threat of Coronavirus diminishes.
- Adult Education Sponsorship includes the women's commitment to attendance, to studying, and to a serious attitude concerning furthering their education. Upon the ending of each term, SSAAP will collect Report Cards and Attendance Reports from each school. If the attendance is low for a single student, or the report card shows a lack of concern for her education, the student will be terminated from the program. Her *chitenge* is expected to be returned, and another student will be filled in her place.

- SSAAP will photograph each sponsored woman wearing her uniform, as well collect official receipts from Zambia’s *Ministry of Education* for each student’s sponsorship.
- In the future, if the program is a success, perhaps SSAAP can sponsor adults from grade 1 to grade 12. Currently, the program is grade 1 to grade 7 only, but we would like to incorporate grade 8 to grade 12 in the future.
- SSAAP will continue the program in 2022, if successful in 2021, as we already have the funding for two consecutive years for this program! The 2021 program is a trial run, more or less. We just have to wait for the schools to reopen once people get their COVID vaccine, I suppose. It is hard to keep waiting for life to move ahead, isn’t it?

The enthusiasm that this program has been met with is truly inspiring. Women have come from far and wide to apply, and to fill out their application forms during SSAAP’s Office Hours. They have articulated to me that they wish to change their world by *reading*, which many are unable to do currently, as they realize now as adults that literacy is the passage into a further universe, a deeper realm, as well literacy is the world wide web that they cannot, at this time, participate in. They want to learn how to read!





Many women have come for this program and are sitting this way because of the COVID social distancing – otherwise they sit closely-knit together, which is how we interact in the village: in close proximity. So far we have no cases of COVID in the rural villages of Zambia; I could be wrong about this, as accurate news about COVID seems difficult to find – rumors are always so high in Africa – but what I have heard is that the COVID is contained only in Lusaka, our capital city, and a few of the larger Provincial Capitals of Zambia ~ not in the rural villages. I feel that Radiance and I are safer here in the village and feel protected by the poverty and isolation of the village: people don't have any cash to travel out of the village and rarely leave, and so there is less opportunity to spread the virus this way. I feel that over the years our home in the Zambian village has provided us safety, protection, good health, and healing: physical, psychological, emotional and metaphysical. Its slow and nonviolent approach to daily living has taught me everything I need to know in terms of my personal happiness, although they are much more practiced than I am at maintaining low stress and slowing down! I still have so much to learn from the people in the village...





Peggy Pukeni, class 2



Mainesy Siansay, class 5



Junita Balla, class 3

I want to spread the project to various schools so that women won't have to walk such far distances and to share the wealth of the project; the Adult Education Program is a gemstone for these women.





More updates to come regarding this incredible new program for SSAAP-Zambia! Our first Adult Education Program we have ever started and I have my fingers crossed for its success.

Friendly Water for the World Partnership with SSAAP



Photo courtesy of Wayne Medrud

Radiance dates this photo as it was taken in January 2019 just weeks before we left U.S.A. for Africa. We visited the Friendly Water for the World project site in Washington state and in-turn, the Friendly Water folks visited the SSAAP project site in Zambia in May 2019. We anxiously await their return, as they have been delayed **for years** now due to COVID to return to our site to begin our plans of concrete rain catchment systems in densely-populated pockets of Simwatachela, as well to assist with water filters for individual family units in the village. We hope you will return soon so we can continue in our partnership – the people of Simwatachela anxiously await you!

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SASSO Village Chicken Training in Livingstone: December 2020

Heather attended a workshop in the town of Livingstone, Zambia (at the border of Zimbabwe, just some kilometers from the mighty Victoria Falls!) in December 2020 regarding how to raise chickens in the village for sale in town. This might be another future prospect for the people in rural Simwatachela to assist them in a tangible income-generation activity which would also provide them with more food (chicken and eggs) as well a sustainable business venture. More to report on this project in the next Summer 2021 newsletter!



Bicycle Project



Above are two wonderful representations of the average bicycle in Simwatachela, Zambia: seat is falling apart, tires are bare, rusty, broken pedals, paint chipped off: machine run ragged.

The Bicycle Project will do more than provide people with quality bicycles! It will provide outreach for all the hard-to-reach pockets of Simwatachela Chiefdom. The chiefdom is massive, and through provision of bicycles, we can allow more and more participants into each and every one of our programs ~ specifically the Plantation Project which will involve produce (fruit and vegetables), nutrients, vitamins and minerals and ideally a stronger source of income for the local people as well as food variety. If more and more people are able to participate in such a project (not just the nearby villages, but rather the far-away areas that deserve the chance at equal-opportunity development), then the Bicycle Project will have been a success!

Word-of-mouth travels fast in Simwatachela (!) and there are already people gathered around my doorstep asking me how they can get an 'ncinga': bicycle in ciTonga. One of SSAAP's Board Members is working diligently to make this project become a reality. He is working to organize a partnership between SSAAP and Bicycles for Humanity (BFH) which will ensure that a container of approximately 400 bicycles will be delivered to Simwatachela Chiefdom. One of BFH's policies is that the bicycles are not handed out, but instead *purchased* by project beneficiaries. The bicycles will be used bicycles from the U.S.A. The Board Member and I have decided that each bicycle will cost approximately \$20 USD and the communities/participants will have access to a bicycle mechanic who can assist them to fix the bicycles when they need repaired; as well BFH provides a tool kit for maintenance and repair of the bicycles. More of a synopsis will be provided in the Summer 2021 Quarterly Newsletter on this project, as it gets underway. Thank you abundantly to the Board Member assisting with this project! I truly hope we can activate it because the enthusiasm level for it in the village is sky-high!



Women's Crafting Project with We'Moon from Wolf Creek, Oregon



SSAAP's most sustainable and successful partnership to-date has been with We'Moon; this group of crafty womyn from Wolf Creek, Oregon annually publish a journal full of art, poetry, astrology, moon rhythms and cycles, international cultures, and generally-speaking: Light and Love. SSAAP is ***honored*** to be working hand-in-hand with them, as well since 2016!, to empower womyn artisans in Africa to bead, craft, paint, sew, weave, knit, carve, and as seen above: *smile* (!) as We'Moon buys their art every year. I would be dishonest if I tried to claim that visiting all the beautiful womyn artisans and purchasing their art, month after month and year after year, wasn't one of my absolutely favorite parts of SSAAP! Radiance is growing up to be an "art trader" as well, critiquing the art and requesting certain pieces that she knows the We'Moon would like. We have so much fun and the program is changing the lives of a multitude of womyn who are encouraged to be creative from the heart ~ a value that isn't mainstream in Africa, to put it mildly. Thank you to the wonderful We'Moon for empowering womyn in a circle around our globe - myself included. We Love you!

If you are interested, please visit their website: www.wemoon.ws or email: weorder@wemoon.ws.



Photo courtesy of Barb Dickinson

Zambia Red Cross Society



SSAAP drilled a well in Sianziba Village in 2019 with Mr. Moonga, pictured above, and his community. In 2020, our driller, Likumbi, had to re-do the hand-pump piece of the well as it had not been installed correctly since we had worked with an incompetent driller/contractor in 2019. The water well, according to Mr. Moonga, is now gushing with clean drinking water. They are going to install a submersible pump and grow a large-scale vegetable garden with the same water well in Sianziba Village (the same model SSAAP will use on its Irrigation Project for large-scale watering of crops and vegetables) and he is truly happy with SSAAP. He is also greatly encouraged by SSAAP, seeing our Microloan Project, our Adult Education for Women's Project, and of course the Water Well Project. He feels that SSAAP is not only good at organizing money, but also with using funds as specified by SSAAP's donors. In short, he was impressed enough with our work that he nominated me to be the Financial Advisor for the Zambia Red Cross Zimba-Branch.



We had the elections for Officers on February 24, 2021 and I was elected Financial Officer. I explained that my commitment to SSAAP will always be first priority and that Red Cross will simply be a secondary project for me, and thus they will elect a Vice-Financial Officer who can report to me so that I don't have to attend all the meetings. Being over-committed has never appealed to me and I deeply value having down-time, time to read and write or stare into space or spend a whole day cooking, and realize that I accomplish just as much when I rest as I do when I stay busy because, again, the human mind, heart and hands need that balance between work and rest. The meeting was so informative and I think I can learn so much from not only the Red Cross but also many of their trainings; for example, when the COVID vaccine comes to Zambia it is the Red Cross who will assist in vaccinating those living in remote areas. I want to be a part of that! They also offer First Aid training so I look forward to helping teach that, as I am certified in First Aid and CPR.

I also see this as another educational opportunity for Radiance, my daughter, to grow and thrive.



The local Red Cross branch for our Simwatachela Region. Mr. Moonga wants me to be the lead Financial Advisor for the Province (we stay in Southern Province, Zambia) and even the national Financial Advisor for Zambia, but I am skeptical and value my time. I don't want to be running around like a crazed busy person, but rather enjoy my days of solitude and silence and SSAAP's Office Hours are hectic enough! There are also long durations of time when we are either in Sierra Leone, India, or U.S.A. that we are not in Zambia, and so I wouldn't want a large group of people depending on me that I end up disappointing.



A group of women cooked for us after the meeting.



As the chakras are activated and awakened, man not only becomes aware of the higher realms of existence, but also gains the power to enter those realms and then, in turn, to support and give life to the lower dimensions.

~ Swami Satyananda Saraswati, from Kundalini Tantra



Interview with Heather Cumming

If you are interested, please see the following link for an interview that a friend of mine recently did for a water project she is doing:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rHMGxJB65HMJG46vToJjOt9IEbwrUnW5/view?usp=sharing>

The interview is approximately an hour long, so please do not feel obligated to watch it in its entirety or at all if time does not permit. Thank you so much for your time! The interview is also available on the SSAAP website: www.ssaap.org, on the 'Media' tab of the toolbar.



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The imperfection buried within me, my war wounds, the incompleteness and the brokenness in myself I notice is where I grow most. Every day I work at completing the masterpiece: *myself*, but it is never finished; I am a work-in-progress: the artist chewing at the tip of his paintbrush who cannot *quite* figure out what is wrong with his painting, only that he knows it is not yet finished and that something is just a bit off with it; the poet who writes twenty drafts of her poem and even after she declares it is complete, finds better words to say what she means: draft twenty-one. I am a piece of art but I am not being sculpted; rather, I am the pure piece that needs only what no longer serves me to be removed, and I am not unique in this. This is the story for us all.

Every day there is a challenge; every day there is a breakthrough. Every day I am older in age and wiser in experience and younger in spirit. The photosynthesis is that which entices and arouses growth, that empowers the seed to take courage to grow. Africa is my photosynthesis. It has allowed me to grow ~ in ways nothing else ever could have.

Human being is animal and human being is spirit and the real trick is on how to fuse the balance and find the Taopoint between.

I have observed that a project is like a child; it is conceived from an idea, an intuition, a spark. It must be well-nourished. It must be well-cared for. It must be bathed and fed and watered and Loved. It will grow. It must be evaluated. It must be educated! And it must be educated in the mode of education best suited to the project, not an education based upon Western standards because here in Africa, if that is the standard, then we will continuously fail. Project continues; it must be evaluated again. Mistakes must be assessed – no space for wounded ego, and move on. Keep trying, do ones best. Keep going, give ones most. And that is the pinnacle: the best we can do during the moment we are doing it. Nothing else matters.

Projects in Africa should not be dependent upon the West if truly sustainable development is ever to manifest; the West should be utilized as a tool, a resource. People in remote villages in Africa are generally in tragic circumstances – tragic based upon *their* standards, not Western ones. In other words, they feel tragic regarding their situation. They need a push and then a reassurance, but the rest: they do on their own, solely and Soul-y.

Ndakuta: In ciTonga, this means “I am satisfied.” The Zambians use this term only with significance to eating/hunger or lack thereof; I use this phrase when I am talking about my state of affairs. They always think it is funny that when I am happy, or feel fulfilled, I tell them: *ndakuta*. I don’t use this term to express a fullness of my stomach; I use it to express the presence of deep fulfillment within me, that which originates from the source.







SSAAP is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, registered with the IRS and Colorado's Secretary of State. We are oriented to serve at the grassroots level because that's where we feel most free, most home, most welcome, and most valued; we are honored to be staying in the village together with the people we serve. SSAAP is a Love-based mission and we believe that the only sustainable work we can ever do on the planet is through the channel of pure Love. Thank you for being a treasured part of our work and our daily lives here.



