

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter

Edition XIV

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Greetings and thanks for your interest, support, participation in and enthusiasm for this work we, as a Team, are doing in Africa: sharing ideas, synthesizing resources, and learning how to work together to cultivate and nurture the global oneness necessary for a world we can be proud to share with our children.



SSAAP's Annual Fundraiser at DU 2015:

SSAAP is proud to announce its most successful fundraiser since its origination in 2010. The event was hosted at the University of Denver by DU's *African Initiatives* and *Students for Africa*: two groups created and committed to honoring and serving communities in Africa through whatever means possible. The student groups were accommodating and the venue was stunning; event turnout was phenomenal. Art sales tripled SSAAP's typical fundraiser net amount and attendees seemed to truly enjoy the evening. Gracious thanks to all who participated, volunteered their services, brought food, or showed interest in the event. Many thanks to those who were at the forefront in organizing for the event. It was better than we could ever have expected!



Ebolavirus in Sierra Leone:

The World Health Organization (WHO) will declare a nation Ebola-free only after it has had no new cases of Ebola consecutively for forty-two days and no Ebola patients in the beds of its health facilities. Liberia was declared Ebola-free by the WHO on 9 May 2015 and Guinea and Sierra Leone are yet to be declared Ebola-free; new cases continue to sporadically arise, however, while Sierra Leoneans cross their fingers that the nation can be declared Ebola-free by the WHO, once no new cases are reported.



My closest friend in Sierra Leone, a man by the name of Andrew ('Andy') Conteh, began sending me daily text messages from *Awoko*, Sierra Leone's national newspaper, since the time I arrived back in America: October 16, 2014. He continues to send me daily update messages, alerting me of the current Ebola situation in the nation.

Below are some of the most recent communications:



05/07: Andy

Only 6 beds with Ebola cases nationwide – NERC CEO (*Awoko*).

05/08: Andy

7 May: zero dead, zero new cases. W. Rural goes 2 weeks with no new cases. Out of 225 corpses tested none had Ebola. “NEC has no intention of postponing the 2017/18 elections” – National Electoral Commission Chairman (Awoko).

05/10: Andy

9 May: SL goes 4 days with no new Ebola infection. 261 people died from motor accidents in 2014 which is 17% less than in 2013. (Awoko).

05/10: Andy

11 May: countdown day with no new Ebola infection. Only 4 cases of Ebola now nationwide. Idrissa Kamara leaves SL Commercial Bank as MD to officially become first Sierra Leonean to be CEO of Standard Chartered Bank (SL) today (Awoko).

05/13: Andy

WHO has informed NERC that only after the last Ebola patient is dead or discharged that the country will begin to count 42 days – NERC CEO Palo Conteh. NERC will soon downsize because Ebola is going down (Awoko).

05/13: Andy

12 May: countdown day 7, no new infection. A male nurse working for Emergency Hospital returned home to Italy last Friday but tested positive for Ebola yesterday (Awoko).

05/14: Andy

13 May: zero death and no new infection for 8 days although one suspect (Krootown Road) yet to be verified. Air France announces they will begin flying to SL from June 30 (Awoko).

05/15: Andy

14 May: zero dead, one new case as Krootown Road case confirmed. W. Rural clocks 21 days with no new case. Only 13 patients in treatment centres with 4 being West Area Urban (Awoko).



05/16: Andy

15 May: zero dead, 2 new cases. W. Urban: one new case, Fisher Street. Kambia breaks 11 days run with 1 new case as confirmed cases reach 8,600 (Awoko).

05/17: Andy

16 May: zero dead, Port Loko gets one new case after 31 days run (Awoko).

05/18: Andy

17 May: 2 dead. West Area Urban gets one case from Magazine Wharf as Port Loko also gets one case making two nationwide. Week ending May 17th only 6 cases and 2 deaths. 54 people from Krootown Road taken to PTS-1 and quarantined (Awoko).

05/19: Andy

18 May: one dead, 2 new cases. W. Area Magazine Cut one case and Port Loko one new case. NERC is looking for 5 contacts who escaped from quarantine home in Kambia (Awoko).

05/19: Heather

I am so upset that at this rate Sierra Leone is not going to be Ebola-free. 42 consecutive days with no new case seems like it isn't going to happen! How are you?



05/20: Andy

19 May: zero dead, 1 new case – W. Area Urban. National Electoral Commission validate plans to hold Presidential elections between Nov 2017 and Feb 2018 and Parliamentary elections between Dec 2017 and Mar 2018 (Awoko).

05/21: Andy

20 May: zero dead as P/Loko records one new case. Togo and Gambia oppose 2 term limit to presidency at ECOWAS meeting in Ghana (Awoko).

05/22: Andy

21 May: zero dead as W. Area Urban records one new case. WHO has announced a \$100m contingency fund to respond to future crises like Ebola (Awoko).



05/23: Andy

22 May: zero dead and no new case. Only 5 Ebola beds occupied with W. Area 3 and P/Loko 2. Western Rural goes 30 days with no new case as Koinadugu clocks 35 days (Awoko).

SSAAP will delay returning to Sierra Leone until the WHO declares it Ebola-free; SSAAP's original intention was to wait for an Ebolavirus (EBOV) vaccine before re-entering the nation, but studies show that it could take many years for an EBOV vaccine to be made so that it is effective; usually vaccinations go through a series of many trials as their efficacy increases. As well, the EBOV vaccine will most likely be available initially only to healthcare workers, and will take time before it is not only available but also affordable to common people, such as my daughter and me. For that reason, we will wait to return to Sierra Leone until the country has been declared Ebola-free by the WHO, and has been Ebola-free for, ideally, 6-9 months before my daughter and I can feel confident returning to its soil.

I also believe that a person should enjoy her/his life's work, and I am unable to enjoy our life in Africa if I feel my daughter and I are at risk of exposure to a disease with no known cure. My daughter loves playing with children on the compound of our home[s] in Africa, sharing food/plates/cups with the local children, and bathing with them as well. If any/all of these activities could potentially risk her exposure to the Ebola virus, then I will not be at peace living in a country that we cannot be relaxed and free, and if my spirit is not at peace, my daughter's will not be as well.



My daughter, Radiance – known as ‘Amara’ to the people of Sierra Leone (which is her middle name) is very much looking forward to traveling back to Sierra Leone after the WHO declares it Ebola-free and enough time has lapsed that the virus seems to have dwindled away to nothing, and is the people's story of the past. She misses speaking Krio, she tells me, and it has been too long since she had rice and fish with palm oil: her favorite dish in her [other] homeland.

In the meantime, SSAAP continues to dialogue with its partner Grace Children’s Foundation about the upcoming five hand-dug wells, scheduled originally for January 2015 which now might need to be postponed until January 2016 or 2017 (January through April, respectively, is well-digging season in Sierra Leone). As well, SSAAP still is making plans to work with artisans in both the capital city, Freetown, as well as in Moyamba and Port Loko – its bases in Sierra Leone – and intends to again sponsor both primary-school aged pupils as well as secondary-aged school girls who have become mothers, as done previously in 2014.



Typical SSAAP meeting in Africa; featured is the signing of receipts and contracts for the Mataska School Garden project [rural Port Loko] alongside Taylor Kamara of Grace Children’s Foundation, SSAAP’s local partner in both Port Loko and Moyamba, Sierra Leone, and Chief Mataska, pictured at left wearing ball cap.

Partners Making an Impact:

SSAAP is incredibly grateful to have planned its return to Africa/Zambia around Mississippi State University’s Engineers Without Borders (EWB) Team. The Partners will meet in Zambia’s capital, Lusaka, at the end of July 2015 and will proceed to Simwatachela together, where they intend to revisit wells drilled in August 2014, make improvements/repairs to existing wells, and provide [minimally] three more wells for communities in-need of clean water. The Team’s leader, Dr. Dennis Truax, plans to assess approximately three to five more communities for future well-drilling in July/August 2016.



Engineers Without Borders (EWB)-Mississippi State University drills its first well in Siamabwe Community, Simwatachela, Zambia: August 2014.

SSAAP gratefully anticipates its upcoming partnership with Boston University's Engineers Without Borders (EWB) Team, a collaboration organized by a former Peace Corps Volunteer who served with Heather Cumming in Zambia in 2005-2006. She made contact with Ms. Cumming in early 2015, and as an employee of Boston University, suggested that her team collaborate with SSAAP in an effort to work with bio-sand filters for creating drinking water from filthy, contaminated water in Simwatachela: a project Boston University's Team had already executed in a nearby community called Naluja in years past. Boston University began their Naluja Community Health Program in 2011 and had their first trip to visit the region in August 2012. In return for the instruction and implementation of the bio-sand filters, members of SSAAP's Zambian Team will monitor Boston University's engineering projects in Najula. Out of appreciation for the partnership, Boston University's Engineers Without Borders Team has offered to provide funding for SSAAP to purchase cattle in Simwatachela, Zambia.

This cattle-rearing venture will be the first cattle project SSAAP has attempted since its origination in 2010. Cattle are expensive and must be cared for quite specifically: given daily and weekly vitamins, bi-annual antibiotics, and must be dipped in medicine periodically throughout the year to ensure the cattle do not become sick from disease. A cattle-rearing project is a large undertaking, and SSAAP feels it is finally in a position in which to start such a venture.

The Boston University EWB - SSAAP partnership expected projection extends to 2017 and will include the purchase of 4-6 cows, both male and female, which will be bred to produce more cattle - which will in turn aid in food security in Simwatachela. The cattle, serving as the lifeblood of the Tonga people of Simwatachela, Zambia, are responsible for plowing fields thus providing food for each year's harvest. The cattle are often eaten as meat, and the milk extracted daily from the female cows is a source of great nutrition for the Tonga people as well. The cow is necessary to life for a Tonga; without any cattle, a man is as good as dead, they always say. SSAAP is anxious and honored for the opportunity to work with Boston University's EWB Team on such a promising venture!



Boston University EWB students, President Donovan Guttieres (left) and Webmaster Blake Oberfeld (right) met with Ms. Heather Cumming and daughter Radiance (center) in Fort Collins, Colorado in March 2015 to discuss partnership between their two groups and how to combine/share resources and knowledge to help both Naluja and Simwatachela communities in Southern Province, Zambia.

SSAAP is also working in partnership with a small, local company out of Fort Collins, Colorado; the company donated approximately seventy-five pairs of glasses to SSAAP in hopes that SSAAP could put the glasses to good use in rural Zambia where the need is strong, particularly due to vitamin A deficiency, worsened by measles, small pox and harmful traditional preparations (Sightsavers International). Most of the corneal causes of blindness can be prevented. The estimated population prevalence of blindness in Zambia by WHO is 102,000 and childhood blindness is estimated at 5.5% of all population blindness, therefore approximating 5,610 blind children in Zambia.

SSAAP plans to distribute the eyewear, initially, to half-blind or fully-blind persons in the community, and any remaining pairs of eye glasses will then be given to students who have problems reading from a distance/nearby (near-sighted/far-sighted). This gift from the company out of Fort Collins is remarkable as many people who can barely see have functioned for so long at this level that a pair of corrective lenses could grant a leap of change toward the betterment of their lives. Many thanks and applause to this local company in their realization that what is useless to one person, i.e. glasses with an outdated prescription, could literally change the life of someone overseas living in a nation without one certified optometrist in its entirety.



Mouth-watering meal made for Taylor Kamara (pictured far right) of Grace Children's Foundation, Port Loko, Sierra Leone and SSAAP following the chicken-rearing project meeting in Bureh Kasseh Maconteh village, rural Port Loko in July 2014. The dish is a delicacy: rice cooked with chicken, pepper, and egg, saturated in palm kernel oil.



The simple everyday joyfulness of the African people brings great inspiration and meaning to SSAAP's work.

Partners Making an Impact:

How can you work together with SSAAP, or any project of value to you, to help unite the resources of the world?

I always tell people that the reason SSAAP works in Africa is because a little can go a long way there, and that even the smallest things are appreciated by the local rural people. They are appreciative in very deeply endearing and life-changing ways. Their appreciation is both heart-opening and heart-warming. *A little goes a*

long way in Africa, both monetarily and with appreciation is an understatement: one village chicken costs \$3. The cement walls and floor of our home in Simwatachela cost about \$65. The prices of things in Africa, specifically in Sierra Leone which is one of the top-five poorest nations in the world at present, cannot be compared to the cost of things in the West. For that reason, the American dollar stretches very far in Africa – more so in the rural communities where SSAAP works. In Simwatachela, in our village called Sibooli-B, one egg costs two cents. A basket of tomatoes costs less than a quarter. A huge head of cabbage costs approximately eight cents. With this cost of living, small donations to SSAAP are astronomical when it comes to providing necessary resources (i.e. clean water, food security and sustainability).

Money is just one way of supporting the charities of your heart; it is an important resource and a valuable asset to any project, but any successful charity working for a cause greater than itself realizes that there is much more than money required to nourish a benevolent and sustainable project.



SSAAP proudly sells sandals made in Conakry, Guinea – one of the three countries which struggled in 2014/2015 to combat Ebolavirus (EBOV). This young lady, center wearing a red head wrap, holds a pair of child sandals that she sells for her father: Mohamed Jalloh (pictured left), who has family in Conakry and travels often there to collect leather sandals from his brothers who sew them together there, then travels back to Freetown, Sierra Leone to sell them. The Fulani tribe, from which this family originates, is the largest nomadic tribe in Africa and its people are found dispersed in pockets throughout Africa: Sierra Leone, Guinea and Mali, also in Chad, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Cameroon. There are more than forty million Fulanis still living, existing in smaller groups in nations like Benin, Mauritania, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Central African Republic, Togo and Cape Verde. Fulani people are known for their skilled trade, craft, cunning business aptitude, successful and sustained-through-centuries cattle-rearing, and of course their beauty – as is the case with the young woman pictured centered above.

I have experienced great personal healing and self-growth through caring about something outside of myself. To take my mind off worries of myself, my own problems and the hardships in my life – and to transfer and translate that same energy to another source is both humbling and healing: creatively empowering the tools in the toolbox of my mind to come up with fresh, creative and innovative, sustainable

ways of working with people who have a lot to teach, and much that I can learn from – who in-turn wish to learn and grow themselves.

I would say that everyone has resources that can be shared, and the more one shares in his life the more abundance finds its way back to him. Whether abundance presents itself as an outdated pair of glasses, a water well, \$25, time, talent, or treasure, each and every human living on the planet has something to share that someone else will hold of value.

We all have enough to give and we all have something to give; this has been exemplified over and over again to me each time I leave our village in Simwatachela, to come back to America, and then return again to the village in Zambia. I find that the muscles in my body have grown weak and I need assistance fetching water or starting my fire. The people of Simwatachela do whatever it takes to make me feel at home again in their world, and after a week of being in their environment I am happy and peaceful once more; the people of Africa never stop giving to me. They have much to give as well – contrary to popular Western thought that Africans are without anything. There is a balance, and without the people of Africa, I could not live in their village. They realize this, and are grateful for what SSAAP has brought to them. They want me to live in their villages because they believe that if SSAAP were to relocate to a town or a city the rural people of their nations – who need assistance the most – would not be identified and therefore not served.

Therefore, when we work together, the project exists within the framework of this exchange of wisdom and resources: of giving and taking, which is a spiritual cycle necessary for the earth to be the benevolent and abundant place it should have always been – before fear and greed took over.



Woman selling shoes; Moyamba, Sierra Leone.



This young lady in a rural village called Bureh Kasseh Maconteh village, or BKM, outside of Port Loko, Sierra Leone – named for the Loko tribe which originally settled there in prior to the 1600s, was ill with a cough and a sore throat. It was explained to me that the green matter on her forehead, made of crushed leaves and local plants, is an African medicine paste made by the local African doctor to ensure this young lady is healed back to health.

SSAAP Domestic and International Contact & Timeline:

SSAAP will continue with its updates via quarterly newsletters even while overseas; Secretary Gail M. Cumming will be SSAAP's Acting Executive Director while Executive Director Heather Cumming spends time in the field with her daughter, Radiance.

SSAAP website: www.ssaap.org

SSAAP email: ssaapafrika@gmail.com or heatherflower6@gmail.com (Please note, both email addresses are checked by Gail while Heather is in Africa once a month, minimally.)

SSAAP phone (U.S.A.): 303-408-5775 (text or calling)

SSAAP phone (Zambia): 011 [international code] 260 [country code] 978058678 [actual phone number]; call or text: 011260978058678 or +260978058678

- July 28, 2015: depart for Zambia
- July 30, 2015: arrive Lusaka, Zambia
- August 2015: SSAAP will work with Mississippi State University's Engineers Without Borders drilling/assessing wells in Simwatachela; SSAAP alongside two local SSAAP beneficiaries will work with Boston University's Engineers Without Borders in Naluja, Zambia to meet community partners and establish relationship
- September 2015 – December 2015: Assessments in Simwatachela, Zambia for future wells; implementation of Eyewear Program, sanitation and hygiene project, primary school sponsorship program, begin cattle-rearing project

IF SIERRA LEONE IS EBOLA-FREE:

- January 2016 – May 2016: Sierra Leone – digging five wells in rural Moyamba, assessment for future wells, sponsorship of primary/secondary girl students to school, school gardens and chicken-rearing project in rural Port Loko, pig-rearing project in Moyamba, sanitation and hygiene project, introduce Eyewear Program and Ebola Outreach Projects with partners Grace Children's Foundation and Save the African Child Foundation
- June – July 2016: Ethiopia – layover between Zambia and Sierra Leone in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia will provide cost-free travel therefore access to Ethiopia. Ethiopia allows for free layover in its nation up to 364 days and 90 days without visa to American citizens. SSAAP will take this opportunity to research project opportunities in rural areas of Ethiopia.
- August 2016: Zambia – Mississippi State University EWB visits Simwatachela for well-digging/assessment of future wells; Boston University EWB visits Simwatachela for bio-sand filter workshops and SSAAP/Naluja Community assessment trip
- September – December 2016: Assessments in Simwatachela, Zambia for future wells; implementation of Eyewear Program, sanitation and hygiene project, primary school sponsorship program, sustain cattle-rearing project

IF SIERRA LEONE IS NOT EBOLA-FREE:

- January 2016 – December 2016: Continue Simwatachela, Zambia programs

IF SIERRA LEONE IS EBOLA-FREE:

- October 2016 – April 2017: Sierra Leone – digging wells in rural Moyamba, assessment for future wells, sponsorship of primary/secondary girl students to school, school gardens and chicken-rearing project in rural Port Loko, pig-rearing project in Moyamba, sanitation and hygiene project, introduce Eyewear Program and Ebola Outreach Projects with partners Grace Children's Foundation and Save the African Child Foundation
- May 2017 – July 2017: Ethiopia – layover between Zambia and Sierra Leone in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia will provide cost-free travel therefore access to Ethiopia. Ethiopia allows for free layover in its nation up to 364 days and 90 days without visa to American citizens. SSAAP will take this opportunity of a lifetime to implement projects in rural areas of Ethiopia.

- August 2017: Zambia – Mississippi State University EWB visits Simwatachela for well-digging/assessment of future wells; Boston University EWB visits Simwatachela for bio-sand filter workshops and SSAAP/Naluja Community assessment trip
- September – December 2017: Assessments in Simwatachela, Zambia for future wells; implementation of Eyewear Program, sanitation and hygiene project, primary school sponsorship program, sustain cattle-rearing project
- December 10, 2017: Return from Lusaka, Zambia to Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.

IF SIERRA LEONE IS NOT EBOLA-FREE:

- January 2017 – December 9, 2017: Continue Simwatachela, Zambia programs
- December 10, 2017: Return from Lusaka, Zambia to Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.



“The world in which you were born is just one model of reality; other cultures are not failed attempts at being you, they are unique manifestations of the human spirit.”

~ Wade Davis