

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter

Edition XVI

This Edition of SSAAP's Quarterly Newsletter is dedicated to the feminine spirit: not only to Mother Earth, honoured on Earth Day [April 22nd, as well a full moon the same night], but also to the strength, diverse beauty and grace of the females roaming the earth, enduring unimaginable feats with both poise and dignity. Thank you to all the Mothers of the world for raising the rest of us up.



The sacred Victoria Falls, or *Mosi-oo-Tunya* in Toka Leya, meaning: 'The Smoke that Thunders'. Revered as one of the seven Natural Wonders of the world as well a World Heritage Site, the waterfall - alongside the Zambezi River in which it originates - serves as a holy place to the local Toka Leyans.

It is a place of traditional worship in which the people thank the bountiful spirits which have provided to them this abundance, divining the waters with sacred prayers and ornaments.

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“Water, on your planet, serves you – fresh water – it serves you. You need it. You need it! It’s a requirement. Yet the service of the water to the human condition is not really understood. You just guzzle it; you don’t thank the being within the water, any of these things.”

~Arthur Fanning, from [The Spirit of Space](#), 2014

Update on the Current State of Affairs, Zambia, Africa/ 'Makani Ino':

Greetings and gratitude to all who have graciously supported this project, be it through resources, emotional support, time, energy, donations, or even offering to come serve in the field together with us. We are so thankful for the opportunity to be here, to learn and grow, pain and laugh, among the very people we strive to assist through Love: the only real resource all of us truly have.

Zambia is currently experiencing the worst hardship it has encountered in the last twelve years that I have lived here. With the death of President Sata in October 2014, and with the stand-by president elected into office upon his death, our Kwacha has inflated from ~ 6.5 Kwacha to \$1 USD (February 2015) to today's exchange rate, ~ 11.8 Kwacha to \$1 USD. It was rumoured to have hit 14 Kwacha ~ \$1 USD in September/October 2015, although I cannot verify that as truth. Anyhow, due to the significant change between the Zambian Kwacha and the U.S. Dollar, prices in Zambia have doubled or tripled; however, the salaries for government workers and other paid workers in Zambia have not doubled or tripled, meaning that the people can no longer afford to live in their own country. The staple food in Zambia, maize, is in shortage and therefore the demand is very high for 'busu', or the powdered maize used to make n'shima. The prices for busu have soared, swollen to accommodate the few who are making money off of others' starvation and suffering. This is the situation in the town and on the urban front of Zambia, where the local currency is cash.

In the rural areas, the drought that is spanning all of Sub-Saharan Africa (the worst draught South Africa has had since 1904) is affecting South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe most-harshly; however, in Zambia, we have been spared very little. The families we live within the village catchment area of Simwatachela, Zambia, the majority subsistence farmers, are currently eating one meal a day ~ 11:00 a.m. They go to sleep very early at night (19:00-20:00) because they do not have an evening meal, and sleep helps to take away the hunger pains. In the village, where the local currency is maize/trading and selling animals, the current 'wage' for a day's worth of work planting/weeding/sowing on the field (06:00-16:00) is a container of measured busu which feeds plentifully three grown men, sparingly a family of six or seven. These days, it has been stretched across our family of seventeen (one elderly man, four adults, two teenagers, ten children) as their 'one meal a day'. The 'cisyu', or relish eaten alongside the n'shima, is plant leaves or weeds; the women go to the sides of the houses where the weeds are growing and pull up various leaves/roots that they know to be non-poisonous and cook them to feed their children and husbands.

In my life, I have never seen, experienced, or witnessed starvation on this exponential scale. It is not a few families who are hungry; in Simwatachela, it is nearly everyone.

The people have very little hope that the elections on August 11, 2016 will be peaceful – far from it. In a country that has never had war (one of the only African nations never to have had war in its history or to have fought for Independence via war) and more proud of its peace than anything else, they now anticipate with fear the upcoming elections. Rioting has already begun in the towns as the campaign for the new president has begun, and the opposing political parties are directly paralleled with the opposing tribes in Zambia. I live/stay/speak amongst the Tonga people (our tribe exists within Southern Province, Zambia and pockets of Zimbabwe) and together with their tribal cousins, the Lozis (Western Province, Zambia) as well the Toka-Leyas (Southern and Western Provinces, Zambia) are awakening to the truth that since Zambia’s Independence on October 24, 1964, their tribe/region of the country has not been represented in the Parliament of Zambia; Zambia has never had a president from this part of their country. However, the Southern/Western Provinces of Zambia supply most of the electricity/hydroelectricity in the nation (via Victoria Falls and the Kariba Dam), as well as feeds the nation through its farming and cattle-rearing. In a nutshell, the very people feeding and powering the nation through their work are not being represented in the nation’s government. A peaceful, sometimes-too-passive group of people are beginning to become enraged. And they have had enough.



Art: My personal inspiration and ally, source of great healing and awareness-expansion available to the masses. In an effort to support local artisans, SSAAP buys/commissions/empowers local artisans in both Zambia and Sierra Leone and sells their art at SSAAP fundraisers in the U.S.A. Above, beaded baskets braided with recycled plastic trash. When all else falls away, art never fails. Art as music, as poetry, as visual, as writing, as Nature.

It is interesting to live in a nation during an epoch of its personal hell.

I tell my little girl, Radiance: “We lived in Sierra Leone through the Ebola epidemic in 2014, and now, we are going to live through the crash of the Zambian economy in 2016. We are very lucky to have food right now, and in 2014, we were very lucky to have money for an air ticket and a travel agent who took pity on us to get us out of the country.”

So, thank you, SSAAP’s supporters, for that! For keeping us safe so that we may continue to try to help the Africans by working together with them, not creating dependency but

rather through sustainability... even if the help is in a small way... it is still something. Is world peace not friendship, on an exponential scale?

In an effort to raise the vibrational frequency of the planet, to balance reality with optimism, darkness with light, let us now focus on the resilience of the human spirit. Zambians are strong people, beautiful people! They are survivalists, and they know that this, too, shall pass. "We have endured much worse than this, Heather," they tell me. "This is just the first time you've been here to see the way we really suffer from hunger here."

Positively, I have witnessed more and more in the last year or so, women in Africa taking a stand: against polygamy and the HIV/STD's it is spreading, against their husbands choosing not to support their own offspring, against the violence of poverty largely inflicted upon them by the men in their lives (fathers 'selling' them to their husbands/husbands 'buying' them from their fathers). They are becoming less passive to the injustices - coming to me, asking SSAAP for small loans to begin businesses of making gardens and selling produce, baking buns to sell within the village, buying fabrics to sew various items to sell. They have had enough of the abuse, the slavery and violence they have endured through the last millennia. It shall not continue, as they awaken to the rights other women in the world experience, and learn what is no longer tolerable in a modern society where true abundance and wealth reside in the hands not of monetary currency, but rather of a nation's standard of human rights.

My personal belief: Africa will come into its own glory as women in Africa rise - not through force and false power, but through recognition of their own beauty, strength, and equality.



Water/ 'Maanzi':

SSAAP continues to work proudly and enthusiastically with its partner Engineers Without Borders-Mississippi State University (EWB-MSU) to ensure clean drinking water via machine-drilled wells ['boreholes'] with hand-pumps. The EWB-MSU Team will visit Simwatachela in July/August 2016 and again in July/August 2017, where they will assess sites for new wells, obtain water samples from previously-drilled wells (2012-present) and drill wells promised for the current year. EWB-MSU hopes to drill three or four wells in July/August 2016.



The water filter program SSAAP offers began with the donation of nine 'Lifesaver' water filters donated in 2011-2013 by Stanley British Primary School, Denver, Colorado. Nine filters were donated with the condition that they only be given to schools without water wells or a clean source of drinking water for its children.

SSAAP has been working to distribute the last of the filters, aligning the restrictions of the gift with the schools within rural Simwatachela catchment area which meet its requirements. Late January 2016, one filter was distributed to Lubanze Community School (pictured on following page), and in March 2016 two filters were distributed to Siapawa and Munenge Villages. Members of the community came in masses to the distribution meeting, remarking that the water filters were like mini-water wells!



Bantu basekelela kujisi maanzi mubotu. The people rejoice to have clean water.



Bantu bali three-hundred bakasika ku muswaangano. More than three-hundred people attended the meeting.



*Ba Sibbuku bambila bantu makani a maanzi filter. The headman of the village tells the people about the filter.
Sicikolo batondezya oombi bana kuti kubeleka maanzi filter. One student shows the other children how to use the filter.*

Cattle Project/ 'N'gombe':

SSAAP continues to work with its partner, Engineers Without Borders-Boston University (EWB-BU) to monitor their WASHE [Water and Sanitation/Hygiene Education] project in Naluja, Zambia (some 175-190 km from Simwatachela) in exchange for one cow every six months as the Zambians' salary for traveling to Naluja. A Team of six SSAAP Representatives from Simwatachela take turns, monthly, traveling to Naluja and monitoring the project.

We enjoyed a wonderful visit with the President of the EWB-BU and the Web-Manager of the EWB-BU Team in January 2016. Below are a few photos of our meeting.



Cattle aid in the resources of the village: labor (plowing fields), provide offspring which can be traded/sold, milk, and meat for the people. Two cows plus maintenance of the cattle have been promised as compensation for monitoring/maintaining the Naluja project with EWB-BU for a year's worth of monitoring their project. The first cow was purchased in March 2016: Lucy.



Left: SSAAP-Naluja Team stand next to the finished 'mulaaga', or cow shelter, just behind SSAAP's Headquarters. Right, SSAAP-Naluja Team can't hold back their smiles after given the money to purchase Lucy. This day, for them, has been anticipated for the last eight months. Royd (far right) holds the money while the rest of the Team cheers.

Loan Program/ 'Cikoloto':

SSAAP has given ten loans to various groups/clubs/individuals (men and women) in the Simwatachela chiefdom December 2015/January 2016. Loans are six months to one year, interest-free, and provide assistance with the following troubles the majority of those living in the rural areas of Africa face:

- *Hunger ('Nzala')*
- *Lack of funds to begin a project (building a small shop, sewing and selling items)*
 - *Lack of capital to begin various income-generation activities*
- *No capital in which to begin a garden to feed their families and/or selling produce as means of income*
 - *Purchase of animals to begin animal-rearing programs (usually goats/sheep/pigs/chickens)*

Loans are given in the form of cash or in-kind, using the currency of goats:



Above, a few of the clubs taking loans from SSAAP have used the funds to begin sunflower farming: profitable for selling and using to generate sunflower oil. Center - Sullivan: one of the SSAAP goats loaned out for the loan program. She is currently pregnant, expecting next month. Right, building the 'mulaaga': goat shelter.

Below, proud recipients of the SSAAP loan program.



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Youth Sports Program/ 'Balla':

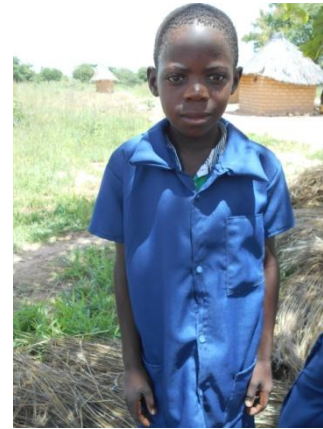


Many thanks for the donation of soccer balls to distribute in the various communities of Simwatachela. Balls were donated in 2013, 2014 and 2015 to SSAAP and are given to

established youth sports teams in the region with a designated coach (to keep the ball). For each ball donated, teams and/or coaches are required to write a letter of thanks to the donor as well as three reports within the year explaining how the ball has helped to uplift the children/youth of their community. EWB-MSU, thank you! What a generous donation you have made to the Simwatachelans!

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School Sponsorship/ 'Cikolo':





SSAAP has sponsored fourteen children grades one to seven (primary school) to attend school in the 2016 school year (Zambian school year is three terms, beginning January and ending December of each calendar year). Thank you to our donors who have made that possible. Pictured above are twelve of the fourteen sponsored children. Please note uniform colors vary depending upon schools. SSAAP is currently accepting applications for the 2017 school year in Zambia, and has funding for twenty primary-school children to attend school in Zambia in 2017 and sixty-two primary-school children to attend school in Sierra Leone in 2017. They thank you! SSAAP thanks you!

SSAAP also has a secondary school sponsorship program for young mothers to continue school in Sierra Leone and is attempting to open a similar program in Zambia, beginning in 2017. In Sierra Leone, it is widely-accepted within the culture for girls aged 14-17 to become pregnant, leave school, give birth, and return to school while their mothers take care of the infants. There is no stigma attached to this in Sierra Leone. However, in Zambia, much shame was associated with returning to school as a young mother and it was quite uncommon for a young mother to continue school with a newborn at home. At

this time, things have changed a bit and a few girls who are young mothers (age 15) have approached SSAAP requesting help to continue school as their parents refuse to support them and the fathers of their children are too young to have funds in which to educate. SSAAP is currently assessing whether a program similar to the one it runs in Sierra Leone for secondary school-aged mothers could be implemented in Zambia, in an effort to combat the violence of poverty as well as to resist the creative and mischievous methods in which child slavery and prostitution attempt to disclose themselves in these parts of the world.

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Glasses Project / 'Ma glassa':



SSAAP was fortunate to have an abundance of glasses donated in 2015 to take to Africa.

In Lubanze Village, SSAAP has begun an eyewear workshop whereby on certain days of the month SSAAP visits their area and distributes glasses to those who are visually-impaired.



Some of the recipients of the eyewear program, above. Below, the eyewear distribution workshop hosted by Lubanze Village on January 28, 2016. People waited in long lines for hours to receive their glasses.



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Repair of SSAAP House/ 'Kucinca n'ganda a SSAAP':

SSAAP's house in Simwatachela began to leak when the rains began in November 2015. Fortunate for us, when the Boston University Engineers Without Borders Team visited Zambia in January 2016, they brought with them large sheets of construction plastic generously donated to SSAAP. Rich and Laura, thank you so much for keeping us rain-free and dry! And healthy in our home!



No Man is an Island: *And we all have to work together for the greater outcome. Whatever resources are donated to the various villages in Simwatachela Chiefdom, the communities which are the recipients are expected to donate 25% back to the project - usually this is represented in the form of labour. In November 2015, SSAAP's floors were re-cemented, and again in February 2016 the roof was re-thatched with the help of twelve strong men working all day in the burning African sun.*



The SSAAP office/house completed.

Art/ 'Kubeza':



Mosi-oa-Tunya Artisans: SSAAP has worked with artisans crafting wood works since 2009. Above, right, lead artisan Clifftone Sitali sits on the edge of the Zambezi River. Left, one of Clifftone's Team members, James. Artisans learn how to carve various kinds of wooden pieces (spoons, small animals, masks) from the age of five or six years out of indigenous trees (African ebony, teak, zebrawood, acacia wood).



Ginny Sibooli of Simwatachela, great-great-great-grandmother, holding her incredible baskets: woven entirely of tree fibers ('lozi') and which hold the scent of Africa within them.

SSAAP works with traditional crafts artisans in both Zambia and Sierra Leone. In addition, we hope to have an added experience to look forward: a professional seamstress visiting Zambia to teach the women how to sew resourceful items for their homes from rags/garbage. She owns a shop in Philadelphia and is not only highly-talented in her craft but has also been a supporter of SSAAP for years. Please visit www.fabrichorse.com for more information on Carrie and her work.

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New Partnership/ 'Mweenzyinina Mupati': We'Moon Journal

SSAAP is proud to announce its new partnership; the We'Moon Journal, composed of a group of exceptional female spiritual activists, publishes an annual moon rhythms journal also for use as a daily diary; it serves as a book of moon cycles and how one can utilize the various energies of the moon to activate one's own personal strength. Each year the We'Moon chooses a cause to dedicate their journal; in the past, they have supported causes surrounding sex slavery/trafficking young women as well as abuse/kidnapping of women around the world. We'Moon strives to support organizations sustaining the freedom and empowerment of women. They have chosen to dedicate their 2017 We'Moon Journal to SSAAP! A portion of proceeds from the sale of their datebooks will be donated to SSAAP, specifically to be funneled towards education for the mothers of young girls in rural Sierra Leone (Port Loko and Moyamba) about the dangers of female genital mutilation ('FGM') for their young daughters.

***Cover Page Provided for Your Protection as the Following Informative
Section Contains Sensitive, Violent Material***

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******Please allow me to warn you that you may not want to read the following section, as it contains graphic information regarding the tradition of FGM in Sierra Leone. It may be too offensive to read, in which case, you may use your judgment on whether or not you should.***

In the event you choose not to read it and skip ahead instead, please skip to page 20.

Thank you.***

I recognize that it is hard for people in America to listen to facts about FGM, I think, because it offends on so many complex, intricate and emotional levels. We'Moon will be the first group to show interest in/want to work with SSAAP on the topic of FGM.

I have written 2+ books on this subject and really study/research this when I move in the rural areas of Sierra Leone.

My daughter's father's tribe (Krio) is the only tribe in Sierra Leone that does not practise female circumcision – although recently I read a UNICEF report that stated otherwise, much to my dismay. [But in my experience of living here what I have discovered is that among Western statistical groups researching many of the topics in Africa the percentages are off simply because they fail to access the deep rural areas where many of the hardest issues the country faces lie.] The Sierra Leoneans inform me 90-92% of their women are circumcised, although UN/internet data states only 80%. Having many male friends in Sierra Leone, I can tell you that I believe the number to be more like 90%. It is almost every woman in the country who has had her external female genitals removed. Women have spoken to me that they are ashamed to have not had it removed. It is a large money-making business in Sierra Leone, and the village elders (women) who perform the circumcision are heavily compensated by parents' desperate for their daughters to 'fit in' and 'be marriage material' to the Sierra Leonean men.

There are three types of circumcision that are performed, generally in the rural areas (where SSAAP lives/works) – one is removal of the clitoris alone. Two is removal of the clitoris and the labia majora, and the third is removal of the clitoris, the labia majora and the labia minora (as well the vagina is scraped out with a knife, the knife shared by all the girls who are undergoing this 'initiation' – usually 30-40 girls at a time, ages 10-15, relatively- speaking.)

Another procedure performed is the sewing shut of the vagina, disabling the woman from bearing children.

I recognize that this knowledge – although painful – is precious insight into my daughter's culture as well as a large part of my work and responsibility within it; I see it as a responsibility not only to my daughter but also to have her people learn about it and why, historically, they have seen this practice as so vital to their society. I am hesitant to discuss the topic in the newsletter, so for anyone I have offended in doing so, I apologize.

The young girls want to be circumcised; there is peer pressure as well as pressure from the elders that if the girl is not circumcised she will not be 'marriage material'. Most of the Sierra Leonean men don't want to marry a woman who has not been circumcised.

The girls are sent to the secret society in the deep bush (isolated village) where they stay 3 weeks and learn from the elder women how to cook/clean/please their men. The circumcision takes place within the first week of the girls going to the bush; after being

circumcised they cannot urinate for 2 days and cannot walk for 2 weeks. The girls are drugged (intramuscularly, I have been told) while the village elder women (usually 1-2 of them) remove the girls' clitorises. Many of the girls die from (a) infection, (b) blood loss, (c) inability to urinate after the procedure. I don't have the statistics on how many girls die per year from FGM but I know it is high (perhaps more than 30%). Many of the girls cannot conceive children/have problems in childbirth due to the procedure of removing valuable female anatomy (clitoris/labia majora and minora aide in delivering babies).

The Sierra Leoneans (women and men both) have explained to me that the history behind the procedure is that removal of the clitoris makes the girl 'more of a woman' as the clitoris is seen as being a mini-penis (like a man) so by removing it they are removing the 'man' part of the woman.

For many years this practice made me irate, until I realized that the people of Sierra Leone simply do not know better or otherwise. They don't have the science-background about reproductive health drilled into them that our American children are given by the time they are in fourth grade. America has such a strong root in science that Africa simply does not share. Additionally, Africa has the thick traditions that have lasted millenniums, for better and for worse; America as a younger nation does not have such commitments to history. So, the passion of my former anger has now transformed to productive passion. Let SSAAP alongside We'Moon empower the mothers of young girls not yet circumcised to the medical aspects of the mutilations. Let us teach them from a health perspective what possible consequences may result from these actions. Let us empower these people with the tool of knowledge. And then, empowered with their own knowledge, allow them to make informed decisions – not decisions the Western countries has made for them, not what we want them to do but rather, what will best serve them. And that is their choice, not ours.

In the village areas (where SSAAP works), rural Port Loko and especially in rural Moyamba, SSAAP and We'Moon have decided that the best way to use any funding provided for this cause would be educational workshops for the mothers of young girls who have not yet been circumcised. The workshops would have a health slant to them, rather than a political one, and could teach mothers about the health issues surrounding removal of female anatomy, as well about reproductive health and why nature has designed every part of our body for a specific purpose – even the parts our scientists don't understand at-present. Funding will be used to photocopy sections of the Sierra Leonean constitution dictating the rights of women (re-written post-civil war in 2007). Other costs for educational workshops would be lunch and water/soda (minimal, maybe \$20-30 per workshop for 50-75 women) and pencils/pens/notebooks for the women who are able to write. As well, funding will cover the costs of photocopies for handouts and hopefully the constitution.

As SSAAP has never had funding for this cause, we are unbelievably grateful for this opportunity. Thank you graciously to all the We'Moon staff. I am sure many women connected to SSAAP would also like to get on-board this particular cause. Please do let Gail or Heather know if you are interested or have ideas!

I highly recommend the We'Moon Journal as a daily life-changing force, for men and women ['we'moon'] alike. The journal contains a daily calendar, alongside art, poetry, cycles of the moon and short stories written and created by women all celebrating and honouring the female experience of life on our sacred earth. The journal is inspirational, enhancing the spiritual quality of the work being done all over the planet in all sects of life, and how this is changing the world by giving women permission to access their sacredness. Please see www.wemoon.ws for more information, or email: weorder@wemoon.ws if you wish to order a 2017 Journal/Planner or have questions for the We'Moon ladies.



We'Moon Journal is also employing female artisans in both Sierra Leone and Zambia to make art that they will include as a holiday gift for their 2017 calendar packages. Above is a sampling of a few of the products they have commissioned the women to create.

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Empowerment/ 'Nguzu wa moyo':

What is empowerment? What does empowerment look like to women in Africa? What does empowerment look like to you?

- *Action versus reaction*
- *Refusing to be the victim in any aspect of your life*
- *Taking responsibility for the imperfections in your life, owning them, and using them as a solid foundation in which to rest the best parts of your being, i.e. the parts of yourself of which you are most proud*

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*Please note that all the women depicted below have granted written/signed consent for their stories to be shared/told in hopes that fellow Americans will understand not only the reality of the hardships they personally face, but also that they will come to understand that the plight of every African woman is essentially *the same*, only that their details differ.*



Brief Biographies on the Women Working for We’Moon [whom We’Moon is assisting in their venture with SSAAP]:

Above: The ‘Kupenga Club’, sisters born four years apart have found themselves in similar situations.

Their Stories: Radiance Sinan’gombe-Muleya (left), age 35; left school during grade ten when she became pregnant. She and her husband, Eugene, had six children together (oldest age fifteen, youngest age three). When their youngest child was born, she discovered Eugene had had many girlfriends and proposed to Radiance that he wanted to marry one of the girlfriends. Shortly after, it was unearthed that one of the girlfriends was HIV-positive. The following year, Eugene was caught stealing a cow (cost approximately \$500 USD) and was jailed for five years, leaving Radiance to support all six children, i.e. send them to school, feed them, clothe them, etc.

SSAAP has assisted with school sponsorships for two of her sons during the 2016 school years.

Brenda Sinan’gombe-Muleya (right), age 39; left school during grade nine when she became pregnant with her first-born child. The father wanted nothing to do with the child, and so Brenda raised her alone. When she met her current husband, Cipeego, he initially refused to marry her unless she gave her child up ~ as the child (age 3 at the time) was evidence she had ‘had another man before him’. She gave the little girl to her parents to raise, and married Cipeego. Together they had five children, ranging in age from fifteen to five. Three years ago, as is the custom among the Tonga people of Zambia, when Cipeego’s cousin died, he was made to marry his wife, thus engaging in polygamy. The ‘new wife’ not only beat Brenda’s children, but also denied them the family’s food when Brenda was not at home. The children became sick, undernourished and dirty as the additional people for the family to support left Brenda and her children even without soap. To make matters even more abysmal, Cipeego began beating Brenda, two years ago, so violently that she was forced to move back to her parents’ home.

She filed for a divorce in September 2016 and was granted a divorce *on the condition* that Cipeego have possession of all five children as he paid Brenda’s father ‘*lubono*’ (dowry) when he married Brenda (two cows and

\$300 USD), thus owning both Brenda and their off-spring together. Due to starvation and unwillingness to leave her children with Cipego's second wife, she forfeited the divorce and moved back to his home a few weeks ago (March 2016).

Brenda and Radiance have sewn all the belts and scarves for the We'Moon/SSAAP Project.



Alice Kanyumbwe, age 56, pictured left. She has sewn 20+ handbags for the We'Moon/SSAAP Project. Married to the village headman (*Sibbuku*), they had two children together. Unable to conceive more children, her husband married another woman to give him more children [in Africa it is believed that the failure to conceive always comes from the side of the woman]. The second wife is HIV+, thus Alice tells me it is only: '...by the graces of the heavens that I haven't found myself positive yet'. Through the We'Moon/SSAAP Project she will not only be supporting her children and husband but also her husband's second wife ~ too weak and frail at this point even to fetch water or cook for herself.

She brought me two beautifully-sewn hand-bags as a sample of her work, and when I asked her to sew twenty more she smiled at me like I was Christmas. See above! When asked what she would do with the money she would receive from the We'Moon program, she said: "...buy soap! Buy washing paste! Buy toothpaste! The whole family hasn't had soap in months, and so we wash [our bodies, our dishes] with only water. We haven't had toothpaste, so that will be something the children will cheer over when I bring home to them."

Peggy Pukeni-Clotilda Mtonga, age 67, pictured right. Peggy was commissioned to sew five to ten tote-bags for the We'Moon/SSAAP Project. Recently, she had quite a scare. The mother of fourteen children (four deceased, ten living), her last-born daughter, age 21, came home one day to announce she was marrying an older man who had four wives. Outraged, Peggy told her to re-think her decision, warning her about the dangers of polygamy. Her daughter, a few hours later, went to the village clinic and there received pain-killing pills. Peggy discovered her daughter had eaten fifty-seven of them, in a suicide attempt, and made a mixture of cow's milk with raw eggs for her daughter to eat, thus vomiting up the pills. She rushed her to the clinic, where she vomited up black blood. It was only then that her daughter confessed to Peggy that she was five months pregnant with the man's child. Peggy told me that the money she would receive from the We'Moon/SSAAP Project she would use to buy the newborn baby soap, lotion, clothing as she was sure: "... the father won't be supporting his child in any way."

Thankfully, the baby was born a few weeks ago and shows no signs of fetal distress, and Peggy's daughter seems to be healing.



Selena Sibooli, age 57 (above left). Mother of seven, four deceased at one to two years of age, is the proud artist of the change-purses for the We'Moon/SSAAP Project. Her husband, not very skilled at managing the family's money [family consists of herself and husband, two grown daughters, two teenage sons, one elderly man, one orphan, and eleven grandchildren], went to town and with the money for two month's worth of maize-meal ('*busu*') bought himself tea, buns, and sugar, returning home a week and a half later empty-handed. She speculates he was in town with another woman and used the money on her, but has no proof of that. When given the job of sewing change-purses, she beamed and said: "...now we can eat! Now we have food. Now we can eat more than one meal a day - *thank you*. And tell your women in America I said: *thank you*. Thank you for giving me this work, for giving me my own money that I will manage for this family so that all of these children and grandchildren can eat. If I have my own money, I can ensure that we won't starve. If I give the money to my husband, I am certain: *we will starve*. Let us work to raise our sons up to be better men than our husbands have been."

Edna Sioni, age 46 (above right). Mother of six, one deceased two days after birth from a C-section performed at our local clinic by an untrained staff member, will be sewing handkerchiefs and napkins for the We'Moon/SSAAP Project. Edna suffers from domestic abuse; her husband, Bees, is a beer-drinker and drinks the local brew in the village, consuming the family's money. When he comes home at night he beats Edna. The headman and other families in the village were forced to get involved a few months ago, counseling Bees that he should not be consuming the family's food money on his addiction, while simultaneously instructing Edna to be a 'more obedient wife so that her husband would not have the urge to hit her' - as many of the men in the village believe Bees's abuse towards his wife to be Edna's fault for being such an opinionated woman. With the money from We'Moon, Edna will buy cooking oil, maize meal ('*busu*'), vegetables, and other staple food items for the family, as well send two of her six children to school. Her daughter is age eleven and is in grade two due to years of not having enough money to pay the school fees to send her to school.



A sampling of Alice's tote-bags (inside and out, above) made for the We'Moon/SSAAP Project.

Edna's napkins (left, below) and Selena's small change purses (right, below).



Edna (left) proudly shows off her embroidered handkerchiefs, and Selena (right) displays her scarves.



Radiane and Brenda Sinan'gombe preparing the scarves and belts for the We'Moon Project.

Abundant thanks to the We'Moon womyn staff ~ this has been one of the best projects SSAAP has ever had the opportunity to participate in. Development is happening here; I am a witness to it. And in the most powerful way; thank you for empowering these women. They are happy!

*

Culture/ 'Tunsiya-Nsiya':



A group of children ages 3-6 years old cook breakfast over an open fire. Children in Zambia grow up quickly in terms of learning life skills: farming, cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of younger siblings. However, they remain quite innocent as their exposure to the 'outside world', i.e. Internet, television, movies is limited if not nil.



This uninvited houseguest was found in my *cikuta*, or cooking shelter, just outside the SSAAP house. 'Inkombolo', it is named in ciTonga, or the black mamba is among the fastest snakes in the world, often found on the ground. It bites even when not provoked. This *inkombolo* was within a few inches of my African father Gibson's foot when I saw it slithering up the pole of the *cikuta*, and Gibson killed it on the spot with a large stick. As it died, poison bubbled from its mouth. It was only that evening I came to learn it was a black mamba: one of the most poisonous, deadliest snakes on the planet.



Making *busu*: Prior to the maize harvest in May when the maize is dry, in an effort to make *busu* (maize meal powder used to cook the staple food *nshima*) with fresh, wet maize, in the Simwatachela area it is not uncommon to find the women beginning their work at 05:30 a.m. and finishing by 18:00 p.m. They grind the fresh maize by hand in order to extract the maize from the cob before they put it into the *unchile*, or huge mortar and pestle to pound it into powder. The powder is then used to make the *nshima* by boiling water and then slowly adding the powder until the substance becomes firm, with a consistency just a bit firmer than mashed potatoes. Above, Radiance Sinan'gombe grinds fresh maize using the bottom of a rusty old pot with a hole cut into the center and small nail holes beside the center in which to shave the maize from the cob, then collect as a lump beneath the hole to later pound into maize powder.



The Way Home.

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Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program [SSAAP] is a humanitarian-rights, grassroots-based organization dedicated to equalizing the resources of the world, serving in the most rural and remote areas of Zambia and Sierra Leone where the need for education, clean water, healthcare and women's empowerment are most needed. Additionally, with its arts initiative, SSAAP works to commission artisans in both nations to paint, bead, sew, weave, batik and draw.

We are a family-run organization; my daughter and I run the programs overseas in Africa, while our 'behind the scenes' Team: my mother, Gail, manages the programs States-side and my twin brother, Ian, designs/edits/organizes SSAAP's website. Gail is the other half of the project; SSAAP wouldn't be what it is without her. Ian is my humor; he keeps me laughing, as humor is a necessity to pack in

the suitcase when traveling to Africa; slide it in alongside the toothbrush and malaria pills. Living is laughing. In addition, the members of SSAAP's Board are a dedicated group of supporters who have loyally been with the project since its origin in 2008. We thank you and we Love you.



An old friend: policeman Neene Johnson at the Zambian/Zimbabwean border (with Heather and daughter Radiance), where three intoxicating forces: a tropical rainforest, the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls create a natural border between the two nations.

Thank you for taking time out of your lives to read this extensive report and detailed newsletter. Thank you for giving SSAAP its energy, resources, and inspiration.

*Only Love,
Heather*



“Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world’s great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs.

I am haunted by waters.”

~

by: Norman Maclean, from [A River Runs Through It](#)



All photography in this newsletter taken by H. C. Cumming

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