

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter, Edition XXIII

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Spring 2019: Ethiopia and South Sudan



Dedicated to Alicia, Steve, Adalyn and Alexa Pearl, with our hearts: you guys went all out for us. Thank you for being there at the very end, for hosting a final SSAAP Fundraiser, for being a family to us. Steve, I miss your cooking! Alicia, I miss our long talks until 2 a.m. then being ashamed together that our daughters are still awake playing. Until we meet again, from my family to yours: we adore you and Love you. Thanks for your indulgence in my Africa stories ☺







Any truly sustainable program in Africa is both a lifelong research project as well a commitment to learning as much as possible about the culture, the tradition, and the inner fabrics of the people.



We arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on February 6, 2019.



An Ethiopian counterpart we work with booked us at the SIM Guest House in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for a week so that we could decompress after leaving the U.S.A. but before entering the village realm of Africa ☺ We were fortunate to meet missionaries from all over the world: Germany, Australia, U.S.A., India. From them, we learned so much; they have been living a similar life to Radiance's and mine and had advice and insight to offer us, not to mention support and inspiration. Some had children – now grown – they had raised in the countries they had served, and gave me advice on home-school and how to live between the various worlds, so-to-speak.





Radiance took these photos for Valentine's Day at the SIM Guest House in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



“Development starts in the rural areas – and then it moves urban. Not the other way around.”

- Nhial Jeing, Gambella Children and Community Development Organization (GCCDO)

Field Work and Research



I began working the following morning after we arrived in Ethiopia in the middle of the night – and after three hours of sleep ;). At the SIM Guesthouse, we met Henrik from Germany who works in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well in southwestern Ethiopia, which borders the South Sudan. The main town in this region is called Gambella, where he had worked extensively, and offered me great insight into which areas to visit and which areas near the border of South Sudan were not safe. He introduced me to two of his counterparts, shown below: Peter #1 and Peter #2, from two villages in the Gambella region. We had a meeting later that day. They assured me that indeed this area would be perfect to set up shop for SSAAP.



It is important to me to do clear documentation and follow-up since these projects in Africa are so far away, and many of you will never see the fruits of your labor. It is my responsibility – and my job! – to provide this for you! And so I aim to do my best. I apologize for my excessive detail – so skip the sections of this newsletter which do not interest you. Feel free just to look at the photos; they too will tell you a story.



We took the government bus (\$12/person/one-way) a week following our arrival in Addis Ababa. The bus ride takes two days, with an overnight layover in a random town (Badele). Many of the missionaries fly to their destinations, rather than take the overland buses, but taking the long route helps us in our work for a few reasons. We see the countryside. We learn the local culture when we travel with the local people. We save valuable resources for the project that could be used on the project rather than on Radiance and I (\$150/person to fly, one-way).



Ethiopian kitchen at a food stop along the way from Addis Ababa to Gambella (above); toilet at the food stop (below). The smell of these uncovered toilets, not to mention the lack of sanitation, is unconscionable.





The view while dining.



We made friends with the bus driver and the men working on the bus, so that they could keep their eyes out for us along the way. With the layover, all the food stops, etc. there is too much room for getting lost and stranded.



Radiance has decided to become a vegetarian so for this meal she ate only the bread. She wants to be a Vet, specifically working in Africa with the poor treatment of animals in the village (beating, kicking, abusing cats and dogs) as well work with the livestock (hoofed animals – specifically goats, sheep, cattle) which help to plow the fields, provide meat, milk and income-generation for local people, which die easily in the village due to lack of knowledge when disease hits of how to keep these essential beings alive. She is organizing her own project under SSAAP to work specifically with animals – which she says are just as valuable ~ if not more valuable ~ than human beings.





There comes a depression in the land – the Gambella region is below sea level – as well surrounded by mountains, making the area excessively hot, specifically before the rainy season begins (March/April, annually). We weren't prepared for this kind of heat; it took us by surprise.

Gambella used to be part of the old Sudan; in the colonial days in this region of Africa (1890's) this area was part of Sudan, but when the countries were segregated by various borders, this part of Sudan was given to Ethiopia in exchange for the area of the [old] Sudan which is now part of modern-day Eritrea.

The people of the surrounding village areas of Gambella are primarily of the Nuer tribe. The Nuer people are a Nilotic ethnic group, located primarily within the Nile Valley. These people are concentrated in regions surrounding South Sudan, with many found in southwestern Ethiopia and where South Sudan borders Kenya, and Uganda. They speak the Nuer language; this language belongs to the Nilo-Saharan family.



The Nuer people were the tribal recipients of the mass genocide in South Sudan in 2013; from December 15-17, 2013, approximately 40,000 people were killed – a full genocide that the South Sudanese government was responsible for. For this reason, the UN intervened. There are five main refugee camps in Gambella town, the UN Refugee Agency responsible for all five.

South Sudan is a cause dear to my heart – and has been for some time. I have been trying to access this part of Africa for some time, but could not secure a visa to North Sudan (Khartoum) and visas to South Sudan (Juba) are not being issued at this time, and so working with the people of South Sudan in southwest Ethiopia is not only a surprise to me – but also a gift.

In the two months I spent in the remote Makoy Village, I saw two other Westerners ~ an elderly man and woman, with a church group. The look of sheer horror when our eyes met – the woman and I – and I felt as though I could read her mind. It devastated me, too, to come to this part of the world and see the reality of how people were living here. I was not prepared for this kind of hardship and an overwhelming desire for SSAAP to serve here haunts me.

Synopsis of the Sudan civil war/South Sudanese war (as told to me by the local people, not any website or news media source): The civil war in the Sudan (a country as large as the U.S.A. from the Mississippi River all the way to the Atlantic Ocean) dates back to the 1950's, although it was scarcely promoted by the media until the last decade or so. The conflict – which became an all-out civil war, between northern Sudan and southern Sudan was religious as well as tribal; I have noted that 99% of African warfare is dominated by tribalism laced with religion. The civil war finally ended when South Sudan was declared a separate nation, on July 7, 1995, Juba its capital. The South Sudanese people enjoyed freedom from 1995 until 2013, when tribal and political warfare broke out in South Sudan in 2013, and is still in conflict today. This was the second of two wars between the Dinka and Nuer people; the first fighting broke out near Gambella, in 1991, between the two tribes. The more recent – and well known – fight between the Dinka and Nuer people was in 2013, and was widely publicized in the media. The political party in-power (leadership with a Dinka president) was opposed by those in favor of a democracy (the vice-president of South Sudan at the time was from the Nuer tribe); from December 15-17, 2013 approximately 40,000 people were slaughtered (murdered, raped, body parts amputated) in a full government genocide. The South Sudan is still in conflict today, although things have eased. Most of the Nuer tribe has been displaced, and are no longer still living in South Sudan. They have been scattered to Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, and southwest Ethiopia.

Khartoum: the capital of present-day [North] Sudan, is a Nuer word, which literally means: 'the meeting of the two rivers'. In this case, the Khartoum is the Blue and White Niles, which merge at the capital of North Sudan.



SSAAP is working with Gambella Children and Community Development Organization, directed by Nhial Jeing (above, right). SSAAP is also trying to pull Friendly Water for the World from Olympia, Washington

into this partnership, as Friendly Water's Founder had expressed interest in working in this part of Ethiopia as well. They are interested to work with latrines and the Moringa Tree project we aim to do in the rural areas of Gambella.



Water is always SSAAP's primary focus prior to any other development activities in every village we visit; however, in the rural communities SSAAP visited and stayed in (February-April 2019) Makoy, Ger-Guer, Batokdol, Kan-Kan and Burbé Villages, they already had water wells. So we will concentrate on other projects: animal-rearing, food-bearing trees, and fishing ventures. As well, in the future we hope to work with the community school in Makoy Village to help sponsor children to school. The community received us well; in Makoy Village, we were surprised to learn that the people already built SSAAP a house in the village – prior even to meeting us!

There are few other NGO or aid organizations working in the villages surrounding Gambella town that I am aware of – I am told that the international aid organizations have concentrated their efforts on the refugee camps instead. The only aid orgs that I have seen signs for, that have worked in the village climate around Gambella and ZOA: a German Government Aid Organization, the Danish Refugee Council, and the UN Refugee Aid Network, as well as the World Food Programme (WFP).



Above: Meeting between SSAAP and Gambella Children and Community Development Organization on Friday 15 February 2019. In this meeting we decided to focus on water, following this animal-rearing projects (goats, cows), as well work with women artisans, possibly do a fishing project, maybe even latrines, and work as well with growing trees: Moringa, Neem, mango, and banana. The idea is to begin simple and small (I call these 'seed projects'), see how hard-working the people are with limited resources, then over time grow the project both indigenously (from the inside) as well in terms of more support from SSAAP, and/or potentially Friendly

Water for the World if they want to jump on-board with SSAAP on this – am thinking with the latrines and the Moringa project, as well some water filters in Yowlet village until we can organize for a well there.



Nhial, from Gambella Children and Community Development Organization, recently had his house demolished by the Ethiopian government. They decided to build a road through a compound housing over 20 families and more than 70 people, offering them no compensation and leaving them completely homeless. Left, this is Nhial's compound that was plowed down less than two weeks prior to SSAAP's arrival in Gambella town.



*The Nuer people are stunning: tall, slender, thin-boned and striking. They are a kind and gentle people – hard-working, and their children do not beg on the streets. This has become very important to us as the week we spent in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian street children passing us would smack Radiance on the shoulder - hard. This happened three times to her within a four-day period. At one point, I screamed at two children, made a scene and a nearby police officer saw the incident and did nothing. We cannot – and **will not** – work with people who treat others this way. In all the years of living in Africa, such behavior we had not come across prior to this. SSAAP's resources are a privilege to communities and not for those who abuse others. I will do everything I can to guarantee this!*



Site Visit #1: Makoy Village

The Peace Corps did me well – to prepare me to live in a village, then in-turn, teach my daughter everything I had learned. She is generally much more adaptable than me, and I have seen her eat the local food and sleep under circumstances I could not. Her body is better suited to regulate extreme heat than mine, as well.

Makoy Village served as our base for visiting the other sites for our 2019 visit. The community had already built us a house!



Our house is the one on the right.



We made a program to work with some of the women in Makoy Village on the crafting/weaving/basketry projects for the art sect of SSAAP, as well as the We'Moon/SSAAP 2019 Partnership.



This is Alame Weraeh School, grades 1-8, in the village. School fees are 160 Birr (~\$5.71/year) and the uniform is an additional 200 Birr (~\$7.14) so for approximately \$13/year a child could be fully sent to school in Makoy Village. For those of you who are sponsoring children to school in either Zambia or Sierra Leone (or both) and wish to sponsor South Sudanese children living in Ethiopia for the future (2020-onward) please let Heather or Gail know.



This is Fikadu Worabo Woju, the Headmaster of the school, as well the Civics and Ethical Education teacher.

Site Visit #2: Ger-Guer Village



This is the site of a small banana plantation. The banana plantation is cared for by the Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP) of Makoy Village, under Moses Tut, our friend who also works with Gambella Children and Community Development Organization. The plantation currently houses approximately 100 trees and serves 10 of the 21 villages in the Woreda (like a Chiefdom). Moses Tut has appealed to SSAAP for 250 more trees – a good source of nutrition, shade, and income-generation for the local people, as well a possibility for bringing more rain to the area.



Radiance and Heather with Mr. Moses Tut (in blue t-shirt). A small banana tree project will cost approximately \$350, a larger project \$700, so Moses and his Agricultural Team will have to decide if they want to do a large banana tree project or a small project, and if they choose a large project for bananas then the mango tree project will be smaller. So they will have to organize their resources.



Site Visit #3: Batokdol Village



This is the site where Mr. Moses wishes to put a mango tree plantation.



We have not yet planted anything here. But the soil is virgin soil, and rich in nutrients.



The mango tree project costs approximately the same as the banana tree project, so again, the people will have to organize their resources to decide if they want a large tree project for only one kind of tree, or two smaller projects for two different kinds of trees (banana and mango).

SSAAP will sponsor these tree projects, then will appeal to Friendly Water for the World to assist on the Moringa tree and possibly Neem tree project[s].



Radiance and I were admiring the way the Nuer people build their homes – so different than the Zambians and Sierra Leoneans. There is an artistic style to these homes and their design that I have never seen before.



Site Visit #4: Burbé Village

The Baro River, a tributary of the White Nile, marks the boundary between Ethiopia and South Sudan.



To be honest, I was shocked by the level of destitution I saw there. I had never witnessed anything like this in my life – but am fairly certain that if I had been to Sierra Leone just after their civil war (1990-2001) I would have seen similar devastation. I didn't enter Sierra Leone until 2008, however, so perhaps I was spared some of this. The Ethio-South Sudan border was a real wake-up call for me, to see this kind of mass devastation and widespread suffering.



There are more than 4,500+ inhabitants of this village. I am told that many of the people living in this community were part of a refugee camp, and left the camp due to violence, unrest and quarreling inside the camp.



Long and slow, deep and steady relationships – lifelong partnerships, with the commitment of time and the building of trust– this is the best technique I have discovered for sustainable rural community development, as well as with personal relationships in my life. Through the essence of time, profound growth and shifts in thought and consciousness can result. When we can shift the way we think of things – and therefore see them – we can make positive changes: in ourselves, in situations, in our work.

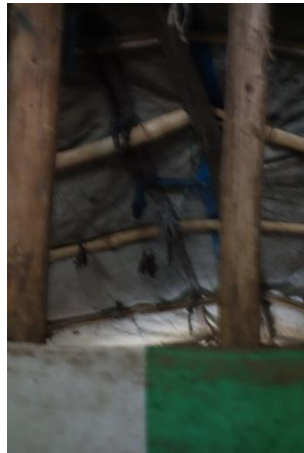




During a meeting with the Chief, Nhial, Moses and I discussed the idea of making latrines as well as doing a fishing project with Burbé Village.



Radiance even had to leave the meeting due to the excessive amount of bats flying in the Chief's office (below).



The people here don't mind the bats; their presence with them is commonplace, and are quite concerned by Radi's and my excessively-fearful reaction to them. When I have attempted to explain that bats carry disease –

specifically Rabies – they laugh like it is the funniest thing they have heard in a long while. So there is a cultural disconnect.

After the meeting, the Chief took Radiance and I on a tour of Burbé Village.



This is the medical facility for the 4,500+ inhabitants of the community (above, left). Open defecation is everywhere in this community, and it is difficult just to walk a few feet without accidentally stepping in human fecal matter.



The Chief even navigated through the area with two sticks, to move fecal matter out of our way as we walked.



There is clearly a deep need for latrines in this village as the open defecation contaminates the entirety of lives for these people - they cannot even walk without stepping in human feces. I don't know why they don't hand-dig latrines like we do in Simwatachela (our chiefdom in Zambia), but when I asked, the answer I received was given to me in very broken English: the river will grow when the rains come (March/April) and when it does, it will swallow the toilet with it. So for that reason they don't have hand-dug latrines – which I still believe would

be better than nothing. The way things are in their community right now is difficult for an outside observer to even comprehend.



When asked why I am so interested both to live with and learn about the local people, I explain that without this piece of my project, it is both unethical and irresponsible for me to ask people to support a project I know nothing about; I don't want blind contributions for SSAAP. Rather, I would prefer those supporting our work are well-informed and share a passion for the community, country, culture, or situation they are supporting.

Additionally, I explain to the Nuer people that in the West, we know perhaps one percent – maybe two – about what went on here. We are told stories by news stations that evoke drama: guns and fighting and violence, but in terms of understanding both the Sudanese civil war (1950's – 1995) and then the South Sudanese political/tribal war (2013-present, although peace treaties are being put in-place to date), we do not. We aren't given the information, or the coverage simply isn't there in terms of facts. But we do care! I explain; I don't think the West was even informed about the Sudanese war until the late 90's/early 2000's, actually.





When I visited this community, I had a vision that although one small person (me!) or one small project (SSAAP!) couldn't change their fate, if we were committed to chipping away at the situation through well-organized, structured, creative and small projects, over time we would see differences and the people would know that we had not forgotten them, which I think is so much of the healing process that needs to take place in trauma/war/poverty scenarios. Other than ZOA (German government aid program), USAID (providing food relief) and UN (concentrating their efforts on refugee camps), there is no other evidence of international aid programs in this area.





Our dream/target is to make a fishing project with Burbé Village. They are already fishing (above and below, they are preparing the fishing net), but it is not organized and it is not benefitting the whole of the community. We will purchase a fishing canoe, nets, and hooks (property of SSAAP and Gambella Children and Community Development Organization) and loan the canoe and nets to various communities along the Baro River so that more than one community can benefit from this endeavor. The fishing project will cost approximately \$700 USD.





The fish that the people are already collecting are dried, then sold. They keep them in large piles such as these, but the flies contaminate them, as well many of the fish are eaten by stray dogs and cats. So I told them that we need a better system for food storage if we are going to make a fisheries project in their community.





They are farming sorghum in this region, but the amount is not enough to feed the people. I saw truckloads of USAID food aid (bags of sorghum) being off-loaded from a few trucks while I was there visiting.



These birds are huge and they are everywhere; I don't know their names but they are found in the marsh or swamp areas as well as along the riverbank.



Our Team: Gambella Children and Community Development Organization (GCCDO), Makoy Village Agricultural Department, and SSAAP by the Baro River, which is the natural boundary between Ethiopia and the South Sudan.

Across the river from where we are standing (the land on the opposite side) is South Sudan.

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Cultural Studies



Let me now address your safety concerns with Radiance and I being in this region of Ethiopia/border of South Sudan. I am with local people and they are being protective – if not overly-protective of us – and would never allow us to enter an area that was volatile, a conflict or war zone if you will, and I trust them on this. Why?

Because it is to their severe disadvantage if something happens to Radiance or I. They will be questioned not only by their own government, but also by the U.S. State Department – which, I trust, they do not wish to have any negative involvement with. Additionally, if anything happens to Radi or I, their opportunities for the projects we have dreamed up together (water wells, fisheries, latrines, goat-rearing, crafting with women, and tree-germination [Moringa, Neem, mango, and banana]) dissolve. They do not wish to lose SSAAP, our resources, our partnership, potential groups and individuals we may bring to the area, or any assistance we would hope to give them. So it is to their extreme disadvantage to take Radiance and I into an unsafe area. I trust them; I have always trusted the Africans with my safety. Were it not for them, I could never, ever have survived all this time in Africa. They don't have a reason to put us in harm's way – not to mention they don't even think in this way. They are not malicious or calculating. They are warm-hearted, warm-blooded, loving people.



In all honesty, I worry much more about our personal health as the sanitation/hygiene conditions leave a lot to be desired, and because this is a new country for SSAAP to be in – unlike in Zambia or Sierra Leone – we do not have control over our bathing or toileting situation. Above left, the bathing shelter for taking a bucket bath. Please note people also use this to urinate in, so the scent of stale urination stagnates inside – as well attracts flies.

I keep our latrine at our house in Zambia clean; I sweep it daily, there is a bucket for washing hands and a bar of soap inside, toilet paper is there, and even a curtain for privacy. Every morning I dump the ash from the fire in the latrine to keep it from stinking. I have had the same toilet for over ten years. It doesn't smell badly, because I take care of it. Above right, the toilet we are expected to use. I specifically tell Radiance we will **not** use this toilet, but rather we defecate into a plastic bag and then throw it into the latrine later. I won't even permit Radiance enter this toilet (above, right).

To stay here long-term, we would need our own toilet and bathing shelter and failure to provide such amenities on the part of the community would result in SSAAP not returning to the area. We can tolerate this for a few months of our life, but long-term it isn't fair to inflict this on either Radiance or myself. It makes bathing or using the toilet an emotionally-scarring experience – I say this in all seriousness, not in jest.

I have noticed this condition all over Ethiopia, in fact: poor hygiene, and a lack of concern for the spread of germs, fecal matter, etc. Nearly every village I have visited in Ethiopia has no toilet and therefore, open

defecation is the trend here. There is a cultural piece I fail to understand, because in Zambia or Sierra Leone we would never dream of leaving fecal matter out in the open and the people we work with and stay with always use toilets. So there is something here within this culture whereby either they haven't been taught the importance of having a toilet for every household, or they simply don't care. The medical care in this part of Africa is abysmal – although I can say the exact same thing about SSAAP's other two countries – thus the lack of science and medical awareness in Africa is, I believe, at the deepest root of what separates Africa from the West. Western culture is science-based, medically-oriented, and intellect is valued. In Africa, the culture is survival-based, heart-oriented, and kindness is valued. This is what I have seen; it is only my perception. I expect someone else could come here and have an entirely different experience, therefore summarize quite differently than me, but through my various experiences living with local people in rural Africa, this is what I have learned.



Health clinic, Makoy Village. Above, the pharmacy.

Below, the outside of the health clinic building (left) and a sign advising against open defecation (right).



This is a prime location to do a sanitation and hygiene education project.



Ministry of Agriculture Office (above) in Makoy Village; meeting with Head Administrator of Ministry of Agriculture in Makoy Village, Moses, and SSAAP (below).





The Nuer people are Nilotic ~ they are excessively tall!

The Nuer tribe is spread out into Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia – only the land demarcations separate them but the tribe is the same. The Nuer people, specifically, are nomadic – cow-herding people – and so for this reason boundary demarcations mean next to nothing to them; as well, the people guarding the borders of these countries are usually part of the indigenous South Sudanese tribes (primarily Nuer, Dinka, and Anyuak) and so they allow the people to cross the borders between these nations. I am told that for someone originally from the South Sudan, to cross between South Sudan and into Uganda, Ethiopia, or Kenya is very easy for them. Not for a foreigner! – but for the Africans.





The National Museum of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa is home to Lucy; according to Wikipedia, Lucy (Australopithecus) Lucy is the common name of AL 288-1, several hundred pieces of bone fossils representing 40 percent of the skeleton of a female of the hominin species *Australopithecus afarensis*. In Ethiopia, the assembly is also known as Dinkinesh, which means "you are marvelous" in the Amharic language. Beside her in the National Museum of Ethiopia, is Selam (DIK-1/1) is the fossilized skull and other skeletal remains of a three-year-old *Australopithecus afarensis* female hominin, whose bones were first found in Dikika, Ethiopia in 2000 and recovered over the following years.



Our gratitude for your Love and support of SSAAP



SSAAP is a 501(c)3 organization, registered in U.S.A. (Colorado), Tax ID #: 27-2033029. We believe in working in the hard-to-reach areas of the society, remote village areas where the people are kind, resourceful, hard-working, appreciative of our efforts, and humble. We work with clean drinking water, food security and production (usually through small produce gardens or animal-rearing projects) and once we have established these fundamentals, we can move to another tier of development with health education, sponsoring children attending school, adult education, micro-loans, and village art projects.



We love our work – despite its various difficulties or hardships – and have the advantage of good health to do this project ~ hopefully as long as I live.

The psychological manipulation of Africans for hundreds of years – dating pre-slavery times – which allowed foreigners to enter their lands, take natural resources and even enslave human beings, crippling Africa of its strength but, even more significantly, still continues today although in varied forms of its past. It is my personal belief that Africans have not yet risen to their innate power; they are strong beyond measure. Beautiful, powerful, resourceful people who have answered to many of the world's civilizations who entered their lands through corrupt means, took whatever they wished and left the people in conflict which ultimately resulted in vast poverty, over time disempowered the people of Africa and disabled them, causing them to forget the ultimate beings that they are.

SSAAP is of the mindset that although things may have historically been this way – they will not always be. The world needs Africa; it can offer the planet something that no other continent can: the people live off the land in the Age of Technology yet are almost entirely untouched by it – while surviving off of minimal food, water, and resources. Living in harmony with and respecting the land and the earth as they do has resulted in very few parts of Africa being contaminated and polluted to the degree that many other portions of the world are.



There is so much to respect about Africa. There is so much to learn from the Africans. I consider myself infinitely fortunate to live with them, learn from them, and see the world through their perspectives. I deem this project of great worth because it provides a bridge for the West to see Africa in Truth – not romantically (as portrayed by the safaris), or grotesquely and savagely (as portrayed by the media), or as a platform of pity (as portrayed by many aid organizations to gather support and emotionally-manipulated funding) – but rather, in Truth, doing justice to and a true service to the people of Africa as well the people of the West who support the project as well and are interested to learn as much as they can about daily life in Africa.

Come to Africa! I will assist you here (cooking, bathing, washing clothes, providing a safe space), until you no longer need my help and can be here on your own. I am not the expert, but with SSAAP you have a free place to stay, and as long as you don't mind bucket baths, Africa can be yours, too ☺ It is the best part of my life – the strongest part of me, that I would never want to live without. Africa is infused in my veins.

The Village Life

There is a road. It winds. The way is everywhere. Where you place your feet, tiny villages of lichen and bone are born. Where you breathe as you walk, birds sprout on the ankles of clouds. The gods are watching. Feed them your life.

Thunder claps visit each afternoon. Between chores, we pause to listen. We fill our own bellies with water, we would drink the Lightning if we knew how. We would weave each drop of water to make a boat that cannot sink, will not sink as long as form persists. We would grow each seed in our cheeks, trailing thick green vines from our open mouths in summer.

I lay in reverie, bound within a body in a broken time. This is one story that we tell. But even as we savor it, the story ends, broken time sits on its hind legs and looks skyward, having licked all its wounds to gold. We go off in all directions without ever leaving home. The sun's light pours into our skin, gives birth to our vegetable and animal kin. We know that it's inside this fire that all life begins.

Dinner bells resound through the mountain on a day between the seasons. The rain of early winter is here though the peaches on a tree are green. The sun is missing. We take what comes. The season's rhythms begin to syncopate, change without warning. Perhaps the wise among us have some new story to keep us tethered to the cycles. The village matters now, more than ever. The world turns on a thread spun from grief and love, a thread dipped in blood and dried under the breath of song. The world will spin long after humans have outlived their usefulness. Rise up now. Remember.

~ by: Emily Kedar, 2015



Correction from my last newsletter: I made an error in my previous newsletter (Edition XXII); in 2019, we will construct 16 wells in Sierra Leone in 2019 (7 in rural Moyamba, 7 in rural Port Loko, and 2 in a new district we will begin working in Sierra Leone: Bombali District), and 4 wells in Zambia: three with True Thabo of NYC, NY, and one funded through SSAAP – hoping to put that well on SSAAP’s project land (140 hectares of land) so that we can begin to develop the area with a forestry project, water filter project, rocket stoves and a large rainwater catchment tank so that people can have water even in the dry season! Sorry for the confusion.



Thank you for your resilient support, interest, Love, and appreciation of SSAAP. Sincerely, we could not do this project without you. In every newsletter I reiterate this point, but every time I come back to Africa, I mean it more! Without you, none of this is possible. I am just distributing all the resources you have given to SSAAP. They are not my resources; they are yours. My only resource is my heart. The journey has been mind-and-heart-opening.

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My Love for the people of Africa is undying, unwavering, and uncompromising.