

February 17, 2006

Dear All,

2005 has been a very good year for ZAPHA+ with many important successes to report. Often when people in the Western world look at NGOs in developing countries they measure success as money raised or projects completed. In Africa, even on the best of days life is quite difficult and especially so for people living with HIV/AIDS. For these people, there are many other criteria that can be used to define success – such as accessibility to life sustaining medications, the opportunity to learn a marketable skill, the ability to regain dignity and self respect and the freedom to make decisions affecting your own future. Based on these criteria ZAPHA+ has had resounding successes this year and I would like to tell you about them.



A little history – ZAPHA+ (Zanzibar Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS) is a local NGO in Zanzibar. In January 2005 they had approximately 65 members – by December 2005 they had a total of almost 160 members. The majority of the members are women, many of whom were abandoned by their husbands and their families once they had tested positive for HIV and they were left alone to care for their children. In the beginning of 2005 there were no ARVS (anti-retroviral) drugs available in Zanzibar so often a positive result was a death sentence. Yet the members of ZAPHA+ would take public transport to come into town on Saturdays for our large meeting to care and support each other – to find out that they are not alone. They received a lot of wonderful training in 2005 helping them to understand their disease, to learn how to live positively and how to be their own advocates. They put much of what they learned to good use during the year. In the center is Nadine Beckman, a researcher from Oxford University, who spent over a year meeting with the women almost every day and gathering their stories. She is fluent in Swahili (and what a help to me there) and cares deeply for the members of ZAPHA+.



Last year, it was often quite difficult, frustrating and often disheartening for all who were involved with PLHAS (people living with HIV/AIDS) in Zanzibar. Every month we lost members - some months up to 10 of our members would die. People came to the office ill, exhausted and with little

hope yet they never gave up. March 24, 2005 is one of the most important dates for PLHAS in Zanzibar. With the cooperation of the Clinton Foundation and the Zanzibar Ministry of Health, ARVS were finally distributed on the island. Kombo, in the center photo, was the very first person to receive the drugs and I can tell you that he is doing very well today. Although ARVS became available there were still some people for whom it was too late – in the photo on the left both Zena and Mwajuma (on the far left) died shortly after starting on the ARVS. Khamis Mtumwa, in the center of the photo, was very close to dying when this photo was taken but because of the ARVS he is now back to work, providing for his family, an elected official and a most respected member of ZAPHA+. By July 1 2005 we had close to 35 members on ARVS and on the right is a photo of some of them who are very grateful to be alive and to have a chance to lead a productive life.



ZAPHA+ was growing and needed to unite in a common vision for the future. Now you have to realize that the majority of the members are uneducated, unskilled and speak only Swahili. That may deter some from moving forward but not these people – they realized that it was important for them to become unified and strong so that they could be their own best advocates. I have never seen people who are so motivated and willing to learn – they have been a great inspiration to me in my life. Two strategic planning workshops were held which helped to define the path that ZAPHA+ wanted to take. They are interested in strengthening their HBC (home based care), learning marketable skills so that they can provide for their families, making sure that treatment is free and accessible to all PLHAS in Zanzibar, both Unguja and Pemba. The members decided that it was time for a change of leadership and they called an election – it was by far the MOST democratic process that I have every experienced and I'm honored that I was present for it. Representatives from Africare, one of our donors, facilitated the election and we had representatives from ZAC (Zanzibar AIDS Commission) and ZACP (Zanzibar AIDS Control Programme) as vote counters and monitors. The members came to a consensus regarding the election procedures, having each nominee giving a short speech (and they were wonderfully short) and then taking a vote, with the monitors helping people who were not literate. The votes were counted and announced and on the right are the new elected officials of the NGO ZAPHA+.



March 2005 was an exciting month but in many ways July 2005 was the epitome of acknowledgement for this small NGO. You have to realize that as people living with HIV/AIDS – they are often marginalized within their communities and live with the stigma every single day. They are very protective and often do not tell anyone, even their own family, of their status. A difficult life becomes even harder to survive – especially if they have children who are also

positive. With assistance from the Clinton Foundation, we were able to move into a new office and it's wonderful to see how proud the members are to walk into the beautiful building. President Bill Clinton visited Zanzibar and was kind enough to come to ZAPHA+ and spend almost a full hour with our members. He respected their need for privacy and so there were no cameras which everyone was very grateful for. He told the members that he had would use his influence to have ARVS continue to be free in Zanzibar so that everyone who is infected and eligible for the medications will have a chance to live. It was incredibly overwhelming and wonderful that he took the time to show these people that they are important human beings. In the center he is standing with Consalata, our elected mwenye kiti (chairman), and others. And on the right he is thrilled to be surrounded by the children, a number of them who are on ARVS and alive today because of him. It was a great honor and helped to reduce stigma and bring respect to the members of ZAPHA+.



ZAPHA+ is very fortunate to have donors that give them an opportunity to improve their living conditions. Africare funded IGA (income generating activities). On the left some of the women are making spiced soaps that are sold to hotels and tourist shops. This and other IGA give the members the prospect of being trained to gain marketable skills so that they can then become self-sufficient and make a living to provide for themselves and their families. Some members want training on starting and managing a small business, others do not have the traits to be an entrepreneur, but they are interested in working within ZAPHA+ doing income generating so that they can make a daily wage. The center photo is of the English class that is funded by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). I interviewed the students (there are about 14 who come to class 3 hours a day 4 days a week) and they told me that they want to learn English so that they can speak to the visitors who come to the office, so that they can advocate for their rights, and so that they can speak with their children who are learning English in school. On the right is the relief committee that was formed with private donations to assist members who are in great need. The members are taking responsibility and learning how to manage funds and make decisions. You have to remember that these people have NO experience in managing an organization of 160 members, yet they are working hard every single day to learn all they can. Yes they make mistakes (as we all do), but they talk about those mistakes amongst themselves and solve the problems that arise and do all that they can to find solutions that will benefit all of the members and in the long run all PLHAS in Zanzibar.



2005 was a year of growth and learning, of hope and positive reinforcement. There is a great excitement looking forward to 2006 as ZAPHA+ is building organizational capacity and has new projects beginning. The Stephen Lewis Foundation has given us a grant for the members to receive nutrition counseling, to cook two healthy meals a week for the others and then to discuss the nutritional qualities and possibilities. At the end of six months, they will publish a small cookbook for PLHAS. And with all that we learn we will know better how to best go forward to provide opportunities for good nutrition to others. On the left, Bi Saide, our part time nurse has been hired full time and here she is in her office. She will be training peer educators, conducting ARV support groups, providing on-going counseling and treatment of opportunistic infections and of course following through with HBC (home based care). On the right is Bi Saide, Seif Juma and our mwenye kiti Consalata John. Seif was hired in December and we are all most excited to have him on board to help ZAPHA+ to become more organized and to help everyone to know what is going on within the organization. He brings NGO and office management experience that will greatly benefit everyone and the best part is that he is kind, patient and committed already to the members of ZAPHA+.

It is not easy to be living with HIV/AIDS anywhere in the world – it can be very lonely and debilitating. ZAPHA+ provides a safe haven for members to come together – to learn from each other – to support each other in good times and bad. We are all so very grateful for all that we have been given and have learned in this past year. Because of all that has happened we have become stronger and are growing more so every single day.

Thank you all for your support and caring

Kathryn