

August 16, 2007

Hi everyone,

I have to apologize for taking so long to write - my life has been topsy turvy and I was waiting for it to calm down a bit before I wrote, but so many of you are asking me how I am that I thought it was just time to sit and write. The major development is that CHAI (Clinton HIV/AIDS Initiative) had a restructuring of their Tanzania office and I am longer needed as the PLHA (people living with HIV/AIDS) advisor. CHAI focuses on working directly with governments and not the people themselves and this makes perfect sense – no organization can do everything. I am eternally grateful and honored to have worked for Clinton Foundation and will continue to be one of the President's most outspoken ambassadors. This does not change my day to day work – I was the volunteer consultant with ZAPHA+ before and will continue to be. I am involved in capacity building (fancy name for helping them learn to advocate for themselves), documenting with photos and stories and linking them with donors and int'l organizations. I am now hoping to find an organization that will focus on the people themselves – possibly a global PLHA Peace Corps. It makes sense as there are millions of HIV+ people in the world who can help each other – people who can become participants rather than just recipients. As a friend told me recently – I have more options than an 18 year old. I am going to decide on October 15, my birthday, as to what I pursue next year. My options are to start a foundation, do consulting and training for small businesses and NGOs and to continue promoting the great work that ZAPHA+ and many others in Zanzibar do. I can lecture and travel and who knows what doors will open. I have to say that I am enjoying being an independent consultant again – I have always been most comfortable having total control you know. And of course – I am managing the private donations that I have raised – I bought a tent for ZAPHA+ (photos and more below) and we are hoping to start an entrepreneur program soon that is going to be very exciting. I will send more details concerning my projects in another email.

For now – let me try to show you what has been happening in my life here in Zanzibar since I returned on June 1.



My friend Mzee and his wife Asya had twin boys Nassir and Abdul Rahmad. They were premature but I went to visit them with my friend Helen when they were three weeks old. They are now 3 months old and I just visited with them again today – they are getting so big quickly. There is so much that I don't know about Islam and Zanzibari culture but I'm learning a lot. Asya and the children stay home for the first 40 days and people come to visit them. It is the mother's responsibility to care for the children – I don't know if you can tell but Mzee looks like he is afraid he's going to break the baby (very typical of many fathers). I can't begin to explain the complex relationship that parents and children have and I'm hesitant to make any general statements. What I have perceived living here is that children are loved and cared for by the entire community. Children are free to go out and play with their friends (reminds me a lot of my childhood when we seemed to travel in packs) yet the children here are usually being watched by someone – if anyone misbehaves or is in trouble there is an adult close by. Mzee now has four boys and it's interesting that male children are seen differently than in other parts of the world. Here it's just as important to have a girl as the boys may contribute financially to the family but the girls will end up being the caretakers, especially for their parents. This is not a bad thing – many

feminists will complain about the plight of Muslim women but there is a lot of freedom here for women – at least the ones that I know (at some point I'll write a longer email on that topic). Elders (like me) are respected and are taken care of at home – usually the home of the eldest son or daughter. Yet it will often be the daughter who usually cares for the parent not the eldest son's wife. I'm so hesitant to make general statements or judgments as I learn something new every single day.



In July I went to the Makunduchi Festival and again you have to understand that I don't always have the full story or history (this reminded me very much of a Mardi Gras). People tell different stories and it's difficult to comprehend the nuances of someone else's culture. So – Makunduchi is a tribe in the South and they have a festival every July – to bring in their new year. There was a big field and the boys ran around an oval type track for an hour or so with sugar cane rods and palm fronds yelling things about sex – saying that they're excited that they're going to have sex that night and stuff. They then beat each other – in the past they used sticks but it has now mostly ended up a show that's put on typifying what used to happen. The theory is that they get all their frustrations out so that there won't be any major conflicts in the next year. Sounds like a plan to me. The girls are dressed up and hanging out in groups. On the right is the ice cream salesman – always have to have ice cream at a festival. They run around for an hour or so then they go to the beach that's nearby and burn down a house (it's really a small playhouse type thing that they've built to signify a house). Then they party all night long on the beach. Some of my friends are in the sex workers project – they hand out condoms in bars on the weekend and they had a brisk business this day. I only stayed for two hours in the morning as I wasn't quite up to a huge party at the beach. If you're interested in learning more – google Makunduchi Festival Zanzibar.



And the next weekend President Clinton came to Dar for two days to publicize the lowering of the price of malaria medications in pharmacies. Most people don't go to the clinic or hospital when they have malaria – they go straight to the duka ya dawa (pharmacy) and the drugs are too expensive for the majority. You know – Clinton has saved probably millions of lives so far with all of the work that he has done to bring medications to people in developing countries – his is a great man. I was at the "event" and I wasn't able to shake his hand or anything – but I had one better. John Gartner (in the center) is writing a biography about WJC and John was on the Africa trip with the President. I met John in Dar and he came to Zanzibar with me to see the results of CHAI's work here in Zanzibar. He is a fabulous man (also has twin boys) and we had a great time talking non stop for two days. I took him to the clinic (that's his photo of me there on the right), then to ZAPHA+ then along the shopping route where I took Clinton in 2005. John took photos of my friends with their photos of them and Clinton – it was great. I think more than anything I love showing people just how incredible the ZAPHA+ members and Zanzibaris are – I am most fortunate to be able to live here.



And then I had friends visiting. Ruth and Mustafa came for a few days – they are my friends from Boston. Mustafa is Tanzanian and he and Ruth have built a house in his family village in Karatu – near Arusha and Ngorongoro Crater. I had Bi Saide (she also has twins) our counselor at ZAPHA+ come up and visit with them. I cannot tell you how exciting it was to have friends of mine come to visit me!!! In the center is my friend Leila Ingrams and Michael Bauer. Leila's British – her father was private secretary to the sultan of Yemen and Leila is carrying on her father's work as an advocate for the Yemeni people – especially their music and art. Michael is an American and related to Princess Salme who was the daughter of the sultan of Zanzibar. The Princess married a German and Michael's a descendant. Leila and I went with another friend to see Maulidi on the right. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. They are a group of Muslim men who sing praise to Allah – it's really a religious ceremony and it was a great honor for us to be there. Maulid means birth in Arabic and in the past the men only performed the month of the Prophet's birthday – but they do perform at other times (usually at Zanzibari events – not tourist events) but we were able to see them where they practice. They sway in unison and sing and often eventually go into a trance. They have performed at ZIFF (the int'l film festival here) and in Paris but I have heard that many Muslims feel that it is a religious ceremony and not a tourist attraction. All I can say is that I was utterly mesmerized and honored to have seen them and hope to see them again.



Now – back to ZAPHA+ and the work that I do. The members have ARV medication and can live positively with HIV but they want to learn all they can about nutrition. They have wanted to grow healthy food and here is the kitchen garden project. On the left the members and Suleiman are putting together the proposal that was accepted by World Bank. They are training 20 members in Unguja and 20 members in Pemba and will supervise and assist throughout the months helping the members to achieve a successful objective (that's development speak). So – we had a training and here is the group on the right – they are all so happy to be able to take control of their lives and to learn how to be able to provide for themselves and their families. In the center the chairs are being delivered – we don't have Speedy Delivery vans but we do have oxen – it's a good thing that we're used to living on Africa time.



I wanted to show all of you the tent that I bought with the private donations. It's hard to explain but there is an open courtyard at our offices. The tent cost \$200.00 and was the best thing I have ever spent money on. I had thought that it would be used for a childrens play area and it will but it is used every single day and has brought a lot of joy to everyone. On the left is one of our ARV support groups – it's nice to have a breeze and not be confined in a small room with so many people. In the center they are doing a soap making training – we have 8 members who are really good at making soap and so they are training others. On the right is an event we had where the children spoke out about issues in Zanzibar – it was a research project sponsored by Save the Children. We also had an event with some people from USAID and now it seems that many of the donors and government organizations want to have their events at ZAPHA. For one event the members decorated the tent with garland and balloons – it was great. I really like that I have the ability to see a need for something and then I have the funding to pay for it – it's a tremendous relief.

I'm busy this month – I have two fabulous American students here and another arriving on Saturday. So – you can look forward to my August newsletter telling you how they're doing. And I will send out an email detailing more of the projects that I'm doing at ZAPHA+. Life is never boring here and I'm happy and content. I'm so fortunate that I can live here and do meaningful work – I love the people and all that I learn. I am by far the most fortunate woman in the world. Thanks for all of the support during these past months – hard times are always followed by good ones. The most important thing is to never never give up.

Kathryn