

April 2008 DATA and Kitchen Gardens

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As seems to be the norm at my rooftop penthouse, March was another exciting month of having visitors who I would never meet up with anywhere in the world besides Zanzibar! Jamie Drummond, the director of DATA (debt, AIDS, trade, Africa) (Bono's organization) came to Zanzibar and stayed with me a few nights. Now – let me make this clear – Jamie was in Zanzibar on holiday and DATA is an organization that affects change on a very large macro level and does not fund small NGOs like mine. This visit was all about Jamie attempting to relax for a few days. He was introduced to me through one of my Clinton “puppies” who now works for DATA. I was a little nervous about meeting him because, as many of you know, I am very cynical about donors and int'l development after working on the ground with ZAPHA+ (Zanzibar Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS) for three years. I am sad that Africa is so donor dependent and that the donors cycle through without being as accountable as I would like them to be – at least that's my opinion. My complaint has always been that donors (and myself) have good intentions and want to “fix” the problems in Africa and find the “solutions”. But that's not an easy task and I'm learning more and more that it's so important to take the time (sometimes a very long time) to listen to the people to find out exactly what the existing situations are and what **their** needs are. So – with that Jamie arrived and I realized that I have a lot to learn – I cannot criticize and make assumptions based only on my experience but I can acknowledge it and share that with others and listen to them share with me.

Yet what can I possibly expect? How can a donor who is trying to distribute billions of dollars guarantee that it will be done efficiently and effectively? And as I have said many times – the main problem that I see here is quality control and management. It wouldn't do any good to give lots of money to very small NGOs if they don't have the capacity to manage it – so the only option is to funnel that money through the larger government organizations. I think that it's all very complex and complicated but I am grateful that there are so many people in the world who keep on trying – who don't give up. And Jamie Drummond is certainly one of those very special people. He is passionate in trying to make sure that the UN Millenium Development Goals (please google that to learn more) are met globally and especially in Africa. I asked him what it was that he liked best about his work and he said “That I can affect positive change”. Boy – do I identify with that – he can make changes on a global level and I hope to be able to make changes on a very small village level. In the end, the two complement each other and we need lots of us all over the world on all levels communicating and working very hard together. No one can be everywhere at once or know everything that is going on. Jamie works closely with government agencies and is interested in learning how to put mechanisms in place to ensure that the aid money is being spent well.



Jamie and Lyndsay Cruz (Oxfam) had dinner at my house with Mira, my new assistant (who is an angel), Kaesser, who owns a private primary school and Suleiman who is my gardener and agricultural project manager. Kaesser has been teaching English to some members of ZAPHA+ for over two years and Suleiman worked with them on a World Bank sponsored kitchen garden

project. On the right Jamie is standing my Maulidi ya Homu group – it was an honor to have him experience their performance. The group did a great job and of course I am happy to sit and listen to them any chance that I can get.

I cannot explain very well exactly all that Jamie does – you can get information about him and his work on www.data.org (DATA is an advocacy organization dedicated to eradicating extreme poverty and AIDS in Africa) and www.one.org (ONE is Americans of all beliefs and every walk of life - united as ONE - to help make poverty history). He is a brilliant man with a very quick mind – I am so glad that I was able to go to Tufts University late in life and gain enough knowledge to be able to ask good questions. I was a bit concerned because Jamie has worked very hard to forgive the debt to African countries and to make sure that the monies saved are being utilized as efficiently as possible. Now – my first reaction was that I didn't think it was a good idea to forgive the debt – my fear has been that there is so much corruption and bureaucracy that the money will only end up in the pockets of the very wealthy and connected. But as usual I have to realize that I have so much to learn. Jamie had emailed me and said that he would like to meet people in development – I wasn't sure exactly what he meant so I asked and he said that he would like to see the reality. It's easy to take someone out to very poor villages but I thought it would be wonderful if he could meet some of the local project managers that I'm working with.



Jamie had dinner with Kaesser and Suleiman and then had lunch with me and Mzee a few days later. Kaesser was able to tell Jamie that there is a great need for better training of teachers – although there are many schools being built there is a need for a better level of teaching capacity. Suleiman and Mzee are both involved with agriculture and Jamie was quite interested as he is beginning to focus on that now. What was so magnificent was that Kaesser, Suleiman and Mzee were listened to!!!! Usually when someone very important in development visits – they meet with government and large donor officials and then go and visit one or two projects. My experience with ZAPHA+ has been that the donors come to the office for an hour or so to have a “presentation” which gives them an overview but doesn't give them the true picture of what is really going on. Jamie asked all three men their opinion as to how best large amounts of aid money can actually reach the people and then he listened intently when they talked.

He impressed me immensely – he went up the coast for a few days and actually visited the local clinic to see the conditions for himself. I admire that he will take the time to talk and listen to the people to find out their points of view. Again – for me I was in heaven because all of us talk every day about poverty, HIV and development in Zanzibar and Africa. The people are very poor and don't have many advocates – many of the donors are making decisions without taking the time to actually talk with the people or to follow up on the projects to see whether or not they are sustainable. Zanzibar is magic and I'm so fortunate to live here – I have met some amazing people and been able to show them Zanzibar through my eyes – never in a million years would I have been able to meet people like President Clinton or Jamie Drummond in the US or London.

And with that – I want to tell you about my visit to some of the kitchen gardens that Suleiman is managing for ZAPHA+ funded by the World Bank. Suleiman has learned so much from this project and we are very excited to expand this through Participate Now! and ZEDO during 2008. I am most excited to start focusing on agriculture, nutrition and cooking. Jamie can work hard to make sure that there are roads, clean water and electricity and we on the ground can develop

small scale projects so that the people can utilize the benefits realized by all of the work that people like Jamie have done.



Suleiman is a wonderful man – he always has a smile and is patient and kind (which is very important to everyone that I work with). He trained 20 members of ZAPHA+ about kitchen gardens and nutrition as they are happy to be alive with the ARVS (anti-retrovirals) and now want to grow their own nutritious food. The majority of Zanzibaris have small plots or farms but most of them grow cassava, bananas or maybe rice for their own consumption. While Zanzibar is considered a “food rich” country people do not eat healthy well balanced meals. Out of the 20 kitchen gardens Suleiman feels that 10 of the members are doing well – the others have had issues in that maybe they have been ill, maybe they didn’t really understand the work that would be involved and some of them have moved to different areas. But here is Rashid at his plot in Bububu. He is a soldier married to Asha with 5 children. I thought a kitchen garden meant a small area outside your house but for Rashid his plot is quite a walk from his house so he has a fence around it. On the left is the “nursery” as Suleiman calls it – it is small square protected areas for new plants. In the center is Suleiman walking to the upper plot – Rashid is a soldier and therefore has access to land that other people might not. There is a very small river (brook really) where Suleiman is walking and they are using that water to irrigate the plot – often by carrying the water up the hill in buckets. What I like best about this project and about Suleiman is that he believes that follow up is very important – it’s not just about giving people a few days training and then leaving them on their own. He goes out to visit each of the members at their homes to see how they are doing and answers any questions that they have.



Senga is my driver and translator and Mira is my new volunteer assistant who had arrived just a few days before this photo – she was certainly getting acclimated quickly. On the walk back to Rashid’s house along the “river” we came across these women washing their dishes and their children playing. Senga was surprised that there wasn’t water piped in to the village because it’s not very far from town. Water projects are being done on a large scale throughout much of Zanzibar – many villages now have a local tap yet the majority of rural villages still use water from a river or a well to wash, cook and drink. On the right is Rashid’s new house that he’s building. Since starting on the ARVS he’s been feeling much healthier and able to work. He has a good business sense and with Suleiman’s guidance and advice he is doing well selling his produce to

people in the village. Having a home is the most important asset for any African – it gives them a place where they can be with their family when they grow old and can then pass that on to their children. It is the best way that they can help to ensure that their children will have a brighter future and more opportunities.



Here we are at Mama Love's house – her name is Diyaes but we call her Mama Love because that's her daughter's name. She used her "fence" money to build a small well (on the left) so that she would have water close by for the plants. She is growing many different kinds of vegetables and has neighbors coming by to buy from her all the time. Suleiman taught her how to make the rows so that she can weed them easily and she is very proud of the work that she's done. She is clearing some land on the other side of her house to increase her plot. She has two daughters and a son and is building a new room on the house for her son. I asked her what she does with the money that she makes – does she put it under her bed or in the bank? She told me that she is a member of a 9 woman cooperative and gives her money to the treasurer who puts it in the bank. I asked her if she could take a loan from them if she needed and she said yes - because they can see how well her vegetable business is doing – they would have no problem giving her a loan. That gave me more to think about as far as micro-loans which are what Mzee and I are doing with our entrepreneur project. I have always said that it's most important for me to find out what the existing situations are and try to build on them rather than create new ones. I'm hoping to go visit with the womens cooperative in the next week or so with Suleiman to find out more about how it works.

Suleiman is excited to use what he's learned a do a larger project. We are working together now to develop a short proposal and budget for Participate Now! We will focus on doing 10 plots with training, follow up for at least 3 months or more, start up costs for seeds, fences, wells, and other things. Suleiman and I both want to focus in the most rural areas where people are often neglected because they're so hard to reach. We know that a good portion of the funding will go into transport but we both believe that it will be beneficial to do that. These small scale projects are not easy to "quantify" but I always talk about people gaining self respect and dignity – with that they have the strength and confidence to do more for themselves. And I believe in the "pebble in the pond" effect – Suleiman has found that when he goes to visit the members that he is seen as the "kitchen garden" expert with neighbors coming and asking him how they can learn to farm like that. The benefits of these small scale projects can be effective and sustainable – just often not in the "Western" sense of thinking.

I am excited about the future and am confident that the knowledge we are gathering will be useful to others to help people raise the quality of their lives. My foundation Participate Now! has been approved by the IRS to accept tax deductible donations – I'm now completely legal!!!! Mira is working very hard on designing the website - please visit it at www.participatenowfoundation.org but remember that it is a "work in progress". I am going to be visiting the US from May 6 to June 8 and hope to see many of you. I will be in NY, CT, Boston, DC and SF with a stopover in London on the way home. Mira is helping me to put together a short presentation to be able to show to various people and small groups. There is so much to tell people about HIV, poverty, resilience,

strength and hope here in Zanzibar – and I always want to help to explain the joys of living in a country that is predominantly Muslim which has such a wonderful rich community.

Remember to look around you and appreciate all the gifts that we have and that we share with each other

Kathryn