

November 30, 2011

The One Stop Center is basically a rape crisis center that was opened at Mnazi Moja Hospital in April 2011. The Center is staffed 24/7 by police, there is always a doctor on call for examination and there are supposed to be counselors available for the victims. There were 534 cases in the first six months and I am told an average of 6 cases per day are reported. I want to tell you the story as to how the One Stop Center came to being through the dedication and hard work of Zanzibaris and the support of some foreigners.

As most of you know I have difficulty with international donor aid because I believe that most of the aid is initiated by foreigners in their offices in New York, London (and yes, even in my home). I believe that they (we) often decide what is best for "those people" in other countries without first talking to "those people". Personally, I have realized that I cannot decide for anyone what they should be doing to better their lives and so I am focusing on what I do best – I inspire and influence. I talk to people (my favorite), I listen to what is going on in Zanzibar, I take photos and I write about it in my emails. I believe that I can be most effective by focusing on this work. I love to link people together and I believe that Participate Now can be a great liaison for the donors. I am living here and can help them choose where donations will be best utilized and then I can report on them in the future to see how successful they truly are.

Sexual abuse of children is global and as Americans are learning with the Penn State pedophile case that the cover up of abuse is devastating to many. Pope Benedict XVI spoke out the other day against sexual abuse saying it was the "scourge of all society". Yet, the Catholic church has given an almost tacit acceptance to their priests who they often just move to another parish when victims speak out. How do victims of sexual abuse cope? They are powerless against their abusers alone but if they can tell someone the truth and be heard then they have a chance to be free. Here in Zanzibar the truth is being told – yes there is sexual abuse of children here and yes there is something that can be done about it. This email is about the inception of the One Stop Center that is changing attitudes and cultural norms here in Zanzibar.

I met a most remarkable man a few months ago when I was asked to be on a panel for a local TV show concerning children's rights. Mubarak Maman is a Sudanese psychologist and director of Save the Children in Zanzibar. Mubarak came to Zanzibar, listened and learned and collaborated with the local community to come up with a solution concerning sexual abuse of children.

He asked me to write an email about it and what I find very fascinating is that I chose a used notebook from my bookcase and the first few pages contained notes from a meeting in 2006 with ZACA (Zanzibar Association for Children Advancement) and some women who were concerned about sexual abuse of children back then. They said that at that time the government commitment was low except when they were pushed by NGOs. They wanted better protection and reporting systems and they were interested in having a Q & A talk show about sexual abuse.

So – I want to tell you this amazing story of what has been happening in Zanzibar in the past year and a half. I have finally met the strong women that have been here all along. This is a story about one man who had the strength to support people when they said they wanted to do something that was desperately needed for their community. This is about the women and men who worked together and became a force of nature to create change. They are what I consider the true activists of international development and I would hope that all donors consider listening to "those people" rather than assuming that they know what's best for them.

Mubarak Maman of Save the Children



Save the Children reception area

Mubarak Maman in his office

Save the Children staff

Mubarak actually does things “outside the box”. He has been with Save the Children for many years and was based in Uganda working with child soldiers who had escaped from the LRA in Southern Sudan. The main problem was helping the children to integrate back into their families. Often, when children are taken as child soldiers, they are forced to harm family and neighbors and assume that they can never return. Many children escaped Southern Sudan and had to face wild animals, land mines, villagers and other militias trying to reach their homes. Save the Children, working closely with gov’t agencies and UNICEF helped many of the children to return home. There was the Concerned Parent Association and parents would come to the center where the children were housed to see if their child was there or if they could get information about them from others. Mubarak worked closely with the locals learning about their traditions in helping to reunite the children in such a way that they could move forward with their lives and re-integrate into their community. One tradition was to burn their clothes as a sign that the horrible period of their lives was over. Another was to put an egg out in front of the house as a sign of forgiveness and welcome – the child could then come to the home and step on the egg which meant he was ready to enter back into the family. Partners were not very happy when Mubarak used the budget money to buy hundreds of eggs but he refused to change the way that he believed development should be approached.

He told me that he believes that his work from day one is to dismantle his job so that he is no longer needed. He came to Zanzibar in 2009 to close down the Save the Children office but he spent 3 months visiting different ministries and agencies and listening to people. He was told that sexual violence against children was a major problem. Mubarak said there has been a shift towards a systems-building approach to child protection. Such an approach emphasizes prevention, coordination between sectors and integrated responses that benefit all children. UNFPA facilitated a visit for different stakeholders to Zambia to visit a One Stop center there and they came back and actually utilized what they learned and implemented it for themselves.

Children's Voices at Save the Children



Mubarak tells people (including children) what it is that they are doing right. He is patient, calm, kind and listens intently. He had his daughter, who is 8, and other children come into the office and draw on the walls. They drew messages of their hope for a good life and protection of their rights.

He created a children's advisory board and has published some fascinating booklets with the children's voices themselves talking about their opinions, fears and problems with sexual abuse in Zanzibar. I am always in awe when children speak – they often have a wisdom that sometimes seems to get lost as we grow older.

I did not quite believe him when he told me that there were people in Zanzibar who had actually taken on the project as their own. As you know I have worked with some NGOs here and have come to the conclusion that most are vehicles for the donors – they are willing to go to the trainings to get their daily allowance but seldom utilize what they learn to benefit themselves or their community. I told him that I would like to meet them and write about the project and this is what I found out. I am very excited to tell you that the women that I have met are amazing – they are committed and working hard to change attitudes. They are the true activists on the front line in changing the way that people live – they are doing their best to raise the quality of the lives of children and others in Zanzibar.

Halima Maulid Salum of Social Welfare and the Child Protection Unit



Halima at her desk



Child Protection office



Maria of Child Protection



Siti and High Tide on the committee

“Yes We Can” are three of the most powerful words there are. And that is what Halima and others said after visiting the One Stop Center in Zambia. Halima did her Masters on Gender in Holland and has chosen to come back to Zanzibar to work. She told me “I am a Zanzibari and I have to do something to help my country”. I think that between her and Mubarak working together as a team they will be unstoppable. Halima met with the team after the Zambia trip and they agreed “We can do this – it is possible and we will make it possible”. How can anyone fail with that kind of attitude?

It was a challenge in the beginning because when people from the different agencies met they would blame each other for the problem. They believed that the police pushed it off to the hospital who pushed it back to the police and there was no coordination. The One Stop Center in Zambia had a building with police, doctors and counselors together so that the victim could be treated, counseled and have a police file.

I asked Halima how she actually got this started in Zanzibar – I have been here long enough to know just how difficult it is to get anything accomplished. Halima, like Mubarak, listens very well and is kind and patient. She believes that we can only change ourselves and she does that in her own actions. She is the Director of the Department of Social Welfare and she treats everyone who works with her with respect. She feels that trust is very important and she gives that to people – “it is up to them whether they take it or misuse it”, she said. That is against the grain of society here – usually people do what they are told without question – by the elders or those with more power than them. Halima has asked her employees and others to voice their opinions, take the initiative and to have faith in themselves. I think as we all know – we each need to have a purpose and to feel that we have value – Halima gives that to people.

Maria, the manager of the office of the Child Protection unit, always has her door open and her phone ringing. She is creating a “network system” to handle the cases. Just last week there was a case of a young girl abused by her father. Maria called in “her committee” and they are seeing it through – using their own money for phone and transport. They are working with the police (who say the case should be opened somewhere else) to make sure they implement the laws that have been enacted concerning children’s rights in Zanzibar. Maria does a fabulous job of delegating and of inspiring people to be as committed as she is.

Kheriyangu Khamis Police Headquarters and ZAFELA



Kheriyangu in her office



The door of Zanzibar police headquarters



ZAFELA (Zanzibar Association of Women Lawyers)

The One Stop Center has been a team effort. Kheriyangu is a top female police officer who has incredible enthusiasm. She aspires to have the Zanzibar police force be one that is professional and ethical. She is also a member of TPFN (Tanzania Police Female Network) and said that “we fight against crime but also help women and children”. She is grateful that Mubarak of Save the Children came along and supported them to start the One Stop Center. There are police there 24/7 working 8 hour shifts. It has to be very stressful for them and they have made a commitment and have kept it. Kheriyangu would like to give them a Certificate of Appreciation for their work – one more person telling people what they

are doing right! This immediately set my mind to thinking of the Celebrate Women Dinner that I was involved in in Connecticut for 10 years – honoring women as unsung heroes. It is most important to acknowledge the good that people do. I know for myself that I want approval and praise and so I will work even harder for someone who recognizes my strengths.

I also met with ZAFELA (Zanzibar Association of Women Lawyers). These are women who have graduated law school and again – want to help their country to grow and become strong. ZAFELA is an NGO which is different than a gov't agency – they are dependent on donors to do their work. They told me that sometimes the victims will ask them for help to either make sure that the abuser is arrested or to help get the case moving through court. The police sigh heavily when Siti Abbas comes into their precinct. They know that she will not leave until she gets the information that she needs for her victim and the victim's family.

They would like to focus on educating society about the requirements that are needed to prosecute a sexual abuse crime. They want to teach people about their rights and what they should do if they are abused – they are interested in doing TV and radio shows. They provide assistance to the victims who are going through the court process. Again – I am in awe that after 7 years in Zanzibar I am now meeting strong and resilient women activists!! They have accomplished so much and it's important to help them build on the work that they are doing. I am proud to be a participant by writing about their accomplishments.

Official Launching of Child Protection Programs



Young girls singing taraab



Mubarak giving his speech



Official launching of Save the Children programs

I am attempting to tell the story in sequence and the official launching is most important. Many gathered to speak out loud and tell the truth about sexual abuse in Zanzibar. The Second Vice President was the honored guest and also the EU Ambassador and the Swedish Ambassador. Both the EU and Sweden are big supporters of Save the Children and of the child protection programs in Zanzibar. Mubarak would be unhappy if I forgot to mention that he is also working to end child labor here in Zanzibar. He is passionate when he talks of giving children their voice and of listening to the communities to help them choose how to end child labor. He doesn't just decide what should be done – he listens and learns and then moves forward.

This launching was important because the government of Zanzibar has now made these programs legitimately theirs. The Ministry of Finance has included it in their budget which means that they are not totally dependent on donors. That is a good thing because this is truly sustainable – the systems are set

up, it is in the budget and the partners (such as Save the Children) are there to help those who are mandated to carry out the government policies. In the end it is a win win situation for all – the government is taking responsibility, they are financing the work and the people themselves are benefitting. I think that this is what is most important in development, especially when we are talking about ending corruption. This project is showing the world that Zanzibar truly cares about their people and are willing to do something about it.

One Stop Center at Mnazi Moja Hospital



Mnazi Moja Hospital women's center on right One Stop Center through right door

Dr Fatma of the One Stop Center

I went to the One Stop Center and just sat on the bench for 30 minutes on a Monday morning (the busiest time at the hospital). Five cases came in during my visit. I went with my friend Hashim Pondeza from Save the Children (who got me started with all of this) and told him that I did not want to interview anyone – I just wanted to sit and observe.

I saw a young girl about 10 or 12 who was standing by the door and looked very frightened and defiant at the same time. I thought – she must have been abused and was courageous enough to tell someone (a teacher, sister or mother) who then brought her here to the One Stop Center. She was going to go in to give the report to the police and then go to be examined by the doctor. The next step would be to have a counseling session but there was no counselor there that day so she would be going home afterwards. It was up to the police and the doctor to give her whatever counseling they could. I wondered – what will happen to this young girl? Zanzibar is very small and almost everyone in her neighborhood or village will know what happened but she will not be allowed to talk about it. The Child Protection Unit only has 5 caseworkers and over 700 cases to follow up on. I have been talking with everyone about establishing support groups for these victims – it would be less money than trying to do one on one counseling and would be very effective. Inshallah – we will see what happens.

Dr Fatma is sitting in the photo on the right with a file of a patient – she was very proud that they have started the filing system (it's folders piled in the bottom desk drawer). She examines the victim and if possible takes a semen sample which is then sent to the lab and available for the police and prosecutors when the case goes to court. I am only writing about the beginning of this project – I am hoping to continue learning more about the court process in the future.

One Stop Center Zanzibar



Police and counseling rooms Hidaya Hussein Issa - policewoman Dr Fatma with police on duty Counseling room for victims

The One Stop Center opened in April 2011 and there were 534 reported cases in the first six months. I have been told that an average of 6 cases are reported daily – and that is just at this center. There is a great need to have centers like this opened in the districts in rural areas. The police do not wear uniforms because many, and children especially, are frightened of the police. There were 15 young boys who reported abuse from a teacher in a madrassa (a Koranic school) and he was arrested. He was later acquitted (I need to learn more about the court system here) and has moved to Mombasa, Kenya. Not all of the boys agree with the acquittal and are appealing it. Halima of Social Welfare is working with others in the legal system to make sure that justice is done.

It is not my place to judge anything – to say “Oh Zanzibar is so bad because they have so many victims”. I know that there are victims all over the world and the biggest challenge is telling the truth and helping them to stay safe. Zanzibar is beginning to do that – God has helped to bring together Mubarak, Halima, Maria, Kheriyangu, Dr Fatma and many others at just the right time. They have accepted the challenge and started the work – please help them to continue.

It's a challenge for me to try to tell you everything that is important. So I try to show it through photos with as little text as possible. Let me tell you the current successes and challenges concerning this project.

- A children's advisory board works with Save the Children concerning the issues of child labor and sexual abuse
- A Child Protection unit has been established to manage the cases of sexual abuse
- The One Stop Center opened in April 2011 in Stonetown Zanzibar
- A diploma course in child protection will be available at SUZA (State University of Zanzibar)
- A private room at court will be available for victims to give testimony via video rather than in an open courtroom
- The truth is being told about sexual abuse in Zanzibar and there is hope for the victims

- There is a great need for counselors – interns from Western countries to help to motivate and train people
- The police and lawyers are paying out of pocket for phone and transport – there is a need for a fund for these costs
- TV/radio programs to get information to the public as to their rights and options

- Database software and training – there is a great need to gather all of this information together in one place
- Training of hospital staff and police as to how to deal with victims
- Support groups for the victims and all of those who work with victims

The photos above are “those people”! They did not wait for a donor to tell them what to do – they went ahead and started it themselves. Is it perfect? Of course not – there are many things to be worked out but I am in awe that they did it. “Yes We Can” are very powerful words. They need unrestricted funds to use where and when they deem necessary – let’s help them continue their hard work.

If you are interested in supporting these programs you can easily do it through Participate Now which is a US based charitable foundation and a 5013C tax deductible organization. Any donations received will go directly towards the One Stop Center in Zanzibar.

Participate Now is dedicated to continue working for the welfare of the people of Zanzibar. We strive to make the biggest impact possible with very little resources. We do have a wealth of love and caring to share with others who are interested in raising the quality of their lives.

“Being rich is having enough to share with others”

Please send a check to the CT address below. Or visit our website [Participate Now!](#) to make a donation through PayPal.

Participate Now!
424 Riverside Drive
Fairfield, CT 06824

Kathryn

If you wish to be removed from this mailing list – please reply with remove in the subject line

Kathryn Sutton
P O Box 3311
Zanzibar Tanzania
TZ Mobile +255 755 800 326
<http://www.kathrynsutton.com>
<http://www.participatenowfoundation.org>