

May 11th

Hello Zimbabwe Friends!

Greetings to you – let me update you with the last week's details in Zimbabwe.

#### JANGANO

Fradreck and I spent some time together preparing a to-do list for the next couple of months, primarily dealing with the newest students' uniforms and research for toilet building. So far, we are sponsoring over 50 Jangano children! Since we are using the template of the Nhimbe project, giving us years of experience under our belt before even beginning, we are moving ahead quickly. The other piece of our momentum is that consciousness has changed since 2000 as well. People stateside are already interested in what they might do to help those in Zimbabwe. That has been an incredible process unfolding over the last 7 years – in the beginning there was far more education to do about the need to help. Now, it is part and parcel of many marimba/mbira student's and teacher's awareness, as well as JQ Public. Currently, Zimbabwe is on the evening news, even being mentioned in a recent State of the Union address by our President. It's not just a music lover who has heard of the Zimbabwe plight. That energy is reflected as well in the ease with which we have managed to get Jangano off the ground.

Just like with Nhimbe, the Mujuru family is getting involved offering their talents. Simba, Fradreck's middle son, is technically trained and so has provided both projects substantial assistance in data capture and transfer. His expertise in this area is much appreciated and is changing a level of frustration on my part, to a smile. The youngest son, Wilson, loves photography and is soon to be trained in helping to take the school photos for both Nhimbe and Jangano. We expect that he will be able to compact them and send them on email. This will be a big boost to the management of the school sponsorship program and we are gratefully looking forward to it! In the village setting, a nephew, Tawenga, is helping manage the rigors of the coordination and organization "on the ground" in Dewedza. He pays attention to detail and is doing a great job pulling together the 4 village effort. We have agreed he needs to be compensated for what he is doing so he is the first Jangano person to be a regular wage earner.

#### SCHOOLING

In a hushed voice the gardener looks over his shoulder and tells me that "the situation" here made it impossible for the Kushanda Preschools to continue operating. They were located all over the country. I remember seeing that name on a playground fence and mini-bus in the past and was impressed by their "look". There were 150 of them in all. They are now sourcing for funds to keep 5-6 alive. They have no help at this point. The Netherlands was the founding country of these preschools but times now are tough and there is little stability to keep the aid coming. I am so grateful that our Nhimbe preschool is not only able to continue running, but it is thriving, and the children graduating from the newly defined Grade 0, are way ahead of their peers as they enter the 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

The progress we are making in this arena is very pleasing but it also "pinches the heart" because they leave our school so bright, prepared and excited about learning and enter a system that is depressed by the economics, lack of intellectual stimulation and narrow focus. We watch these kids gradually being numbed and dumbed-down and pray for alternatives. The best solution has

been dawning for a long time and is clearly our own primary school. That potentiality has become a priority to consider seriously and now we need to begin this planning.

We want to educate the children to be global citizens, locally responsible, environmentally conscious, and contributing citizens, as well as spiritually, academically, and morally developed young adults. "Small" order to fill, but quite within reason. I would expect nothing less of the opportunity, and of the brilliant resourceful minds coming together to manifest it. What does it take to create a primary school? The physical structures, equipment and materials are obviously necessary but philosophically, what is the foundation, the backbone, the underpinning of it all.

## LEARNING

The true nature of education is to teach people "how to learn" so they can do whatever they want in life. That gives the ability to not just learn any subject or skill of their choice but also be a problem solver and someone who thinks "out of the box. If they have a spirit or passion for something then they can pursue further understanding of their special gift, bringing into full manifestation why they are on the planet.

A very large problem here is that the entire system from primary through secondary is designed for the academic learner to proceed to university level. What about all the kids who have no desire for academics but need real life skills instead? They should have enough basics under their belt to achieve simple self-employment as a farmer, builder, or seamstress for example. But the current system does not cater to the simplicity of focus and generates many failures of the academic system, and not entirely due to lack of books and quality teachers but due to channeling children down a path that isn't appropriate for them. Is there a way to solve that problem when the required exams dictate testing for information which is useless? How can an alternative school overcome a government requirement? It can't. But, it can support the children to develop their self esteem in other ways by creating opportunities for success in the area of their chosen interest. Not everyone is designed to pursue academics and go on to the university.

The calling of our individuality manifests at a very early age but it is like a bud on a bush and doesn't mature for most people until later. Some lucky children find out early what they are up to here. Most of us wait a while to really develop. As a child I was always trying to take charge and direct things – this was quite out of place coming from a 10 yr old. I was irrepressible - there was something about the power of spontaneity that I treasured. I was interested in group things, sporting teams, choirs, plays, always loving and pursuing music and theatre. I always enjoyed story problems and thought I wanted to be a detective to solve the mysteries, but also help the underdog victimized by some crime. I liked number games, promoting and selling things (receiving 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for selling the most toothbrushes for the swim team), and teaching (I recall setting my grandma down on my toy trunk and telling her to attend my class). How appropriate.

Could I have been developed any sooner if someone watched the indicators in my life? Was it my destiny to creatively take half my life to sort it out? Would it have been less entertaining to get right straight to it instead of taking the winding path? It's not like I haven't been headed in the right direction, as the journey is a deep and layered expansion, but what would it be like to get on the fast train early on in life?

Now, I'm compelled to find ways to prompt children towards their Light-calling and help them sort it out as soon as possible so their precious time on this beautiful planet is delicious, cherished and passionate. Is there training for teachers that help them channel the child's gift towards its ultimate goal, rather than just staying focused and teaching the particular subject or grade they have been appointed to teach? What can we do for these Nhimbe-teachers-to-be to crystallize the importance of that function of their job? What can we do to make this future Nhimbe school address this important feature of true teaching? Is Montessori part of the answer?

It seems appropriate to mention how people can surprise us with the unexpected so I don't mean to imply that just because academics for instance doesn't come easily, doesn't mean they shouldn't focus at all in that area. It's like teaching a beginning marimba player (one of the areas that I have experience). That student might easily shine as lead player but then not really do that well on the bass. They certainly need the rounded-out education of learning all the parts and working some extra on the bass if that's what it takes. But if the bass is the only part we are allowed to learn because that has been imposed as the primary goal, then that potential lead player may meet with many failures and never even find out how they shine on the lead. It seems to me that the "system", particularly in Zimbabwe, needs a redefined goal. Any ideas?

#### ORPHANS, CHILDREN, and SOCIETY

Another serious complication we have in Zimbabwe is that of the orphaned child. A good part of a generation is being lost due to the combined forces of the AIDS pandemic, environmental poisons, and malnutrition. Many children from these homes are being cared for within the family. Most are not on the street in our area. They remain with the old and tired grandparent, who can barely sustain, or an aunt or uncle who has their own children to tend. Over the last couple of years the single head of household in the Nhimbe villages has changed from 1 in 5, to 1 in 3. That significant change along with the burden of extra parenting duty is creating a new home dynamic.

Many children are not receiving what they did in the past as part of traditional Shona custom in the way of structure and discipline, personal attention, of course nutrition, and education in the home. We can't alter the circumstances of the current family framework. But we can change how the children spend the day. How these orphans use those many hours at school can radically change their future. The opportunity at school to succeed with their shining gifts, grapple with growing up in this changing world, and bond with a developing community are keys to their becoming productive members of society. The current schools aren't coming near to touching these goals for any of the children. Can you help us define our new school?

#### FURTHER EDUCATION

As I mentioned in the last Field Report, we are very happy to be sponsoring more children moving on into Form 5 and Form 6. These are the grades beyond Secondary and take an extra commitment by the family and student, often moving away from their rural home to live with a relative in the city, and obviously more financial help from the sponsor to pay their tuition. There is a new level of desperation for the parents as we see the children coming and asking for our help. The children are very serious about pursuing their education and so come regularly to request assistance. Thank you very much for your help with these special needs.

This year we also have been asked to help pay the examination fees for the children. The requirement here is for the parent to pay a fee to have the child tested. They are unable to take these Grade 7 and Form 4 final exams to move on to the next grade without paying. The Form for

exam is about 4 million zim. This is the first year we have needed to pay these fees so that the children can move forward. It is impossible for the parents to come up with this extra payment.

### VISIT WITH THE CHIEF

We managed to squeeze a short visit in with the Chief. He continues to thank us for our great gift to his area. The Chiefs from around Zimbabwe talk together at meetings and so Nhimbe for Progress has become a well-known name among them. He said that it has been mentioned more than once even in Parliament as a model program that is doing so much for the people. So much for being low profile!

But in fact, we do not attract attention purposely. We focus on our precise vision and ignore everything else. We do take steps to adhere to proper protocol culturally so that all the wheels are greased, but that is just good manners and not any effort to wave any flags. We are trying to fly under the radar and are doing okay all in all but it's hard to keep a light hidden. Some people feel that it is our great light that also attracts those who want to "do us down" – it's hard for some people to accept improvements for others if they themselves are not the recipient.

The Chief also told us that he happened to be at the district police station when the ring-leaders behind the break-in at our Center were brought in. There was much satisfaction to everyone knowing it would help with the local thefts, as there has apparently been a syndicate, adding another stressor to the economic situation. Our crew still wants their things to be returned as a matter of principle. The case will be in court for a long while so we have been replacing many items spending millions of zim to do so.

### HOME-BASED CARE

We were able to donate supplies to the Chief for his Home-based Care program. Iodine, Calamine, gloves and gauze are all necessities when caring for the hospice needs of those dying. These are primarily AIDS related cases and it's the Chief's job to see to it that they are fed and cared for. There are about 80 people in his villages that need this special attention. (A couple of years ago I recall there were a few more than 20.) We have volunteers coming from our Nhimbe residents who help with this program, providing quite a service to their neighbors. Everyone is so grateful for our donated supplies.

### FUNERALS

Not only have the hospice numbers increased in the rural area, so have the deaths all over Zimbabwe. Each week there are more and more funerals. This bizarre abnormal pattern has become such a routine and accepted part of life. It doesn't help to resist it so compliance makes sense. But the helpless and demoralizing characteristics associated with the regularity of family members falling sick and dying has an underlying disturbing effect on the psyche. Everyone is continually affected every week. Of course, besides the tragic losses personally, a Shona funeral is easily a couple of days long for all friends and relatives so there are so many people who are missing work, which means the productivity of the work world comes to a screeching halt.

There are so many people dying whose family can't afford to pay the fees of a funeral home, buy a coffin, or transport the bodies to the rural home or even a city plot. The bodies are left piling up in the hospital and mortuary. It's hard to get one's mind around the atrocity of it all. There is also the families' suffering over their improper behavior regarding the dearly departed. Culturally taking care of the dead is handled with the utmost care and in a disciplined and respectful way

with many steps to accomplish the proper burial. There is much heart ache over this broken cultural system. The economics is determining the evolution of new ways, none of which are potential future traditions, but instead something borne of a dysfunction. Very sad indeed.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Doing business continues to be dependent on an infrastructure which is not improving. There is no money going into rebuilding it. Many businesses have closed. Those who are managing to stay open have found some way to deal with the inflation, as that is the worst enemy. The lack of and extreme price of petrol, the phone system requiring so much effort and high prices to use, lack of consistent electricity, and the challenges with the computer's internet access, are all debilitating:

- We managed to get petrol all month but it cost about \$1 usd per liter. No queues this time.
- I had a cell phone this trip which was an incredibly powerful tool but cost a great deal to use it. The land line costs \$1 to \$2.50 per hour to use depending on whether you are calling another land line or a cell phone. With both the cell and the landline you can dial incessantly for hours and get through only a couple of times to the party you are looking for...the rest of the time you are just redialing. I easily spent hours trying to phone people and businesses, getting through very little or just giving up.
- The dialup internet is the only type available and the phone lines are limited in their allowance of transfer rates. This means that downloading from the internet, or even getting on a search engine or webpage can take a long time. I know that people sent me web pages to read or links to follow, but the slow internet speed and cost would not allow me to check it out.
- The one thing that does work the best is receiving email directly into Outlook for example. That requires only a short time of phone time hence cost, internet download time and then you can peruse the information at one's leisure. I spent one day at the internet café hoping to print a few scanned documents which I left at home. I spent an hour just trying to accomplish this and I managed to get 3 pages completed. 20 minutes per page to download and print is more than I can spend in terms of time, but it is also costing to buy that internet time and to print.
- The only problem with the Outlook type of mail delivery is that the government is making it their right to stop and read all incoming mail. I'm sure this is being justified as national security in some way. To the person on the street it means that the mail is no longer private and takes longer to receive. It can take days to get an email. Cyberspace now has a holding tank where mail is held before being spit out.
- There used to be a certain time of the day, and part of town, we could expect an outage but now it doesn't matter which part of town one is in, or when, there are outages, and one must be prepared with matches, candles, gas stoves, or if you can afford it a diesel engine.

## SUMMARY

Thank you very much for listening. It helps me so much mentally to be able to process the difficulties, its relieves some of the pain in my heart, and it lifts my spirits knowing that there are so many people caring "on that side". Thank you for holding Zimbabwe and our projects in your prayers, focusing attention on the crisis here to bring Light (all it takes is a glimpse to transform an experience), and Love (all it takes is a touch to alleviate suffering), and Power (all it takes is hope to transform a victim's mind). Your decision to participate in this vision at this time is a remarkable experience for all of us and you also offer so much as you tell the story. TATENDA!

Blessings.....Jaiaen