

Good News at Serenje

Amidst all the massive problems and difficulties we face trying to help the poor believers in Zambia it is always a cause for thanksgiving when we see some evidence of progress.

This was the case when we visited Serenje, a town of about 10,000 people and the furthest north on our travels this present visit. We were met by brother Fred Sakuwaha a local school teacher and elder in the assembly who directed us through difficult terrain to the maize hammer-mill we had installed 3 years ago.

There were problems with the hammer-mill following installation but it was cheering when we arrived at the site to see the small mill pounding away and a queue of local folks waiting to have their maize and millet ground into a meal which is their staple diet.

It became clear as we talked to the believers and others that investing in the hammer-mill had been well worthwhile. A modest charge is made for the use of the mill and brother Fred explained some of the benefits this had brought to the assembly and others in the community.

The benefits were obvious as we visited the site of the new assembly hall, most of which was funded by SHAREAfrica. The money gained from the use of the hammer-mill has greatly helped them to finish the construction. In addition, the extra funds have enabled the assembly to hold a conference and pay for transport to bring in believers from surrounding assemblies. Medical supplies have also been purchased to help treat those who are sick, and in general the whole project

has been an encouragement to the assembly. A few folks have gained employment as a result of the hammer-mill. This is vitally important in areas where people struggle to find a means of income.



Hammer- mill

When looking around the hall we were pleased to be told that the assembly had given the small backroom kitchen to four young lads from a nearby assembly (two are on our orphan program) as sleeping accommodation so they can attend a higher grade school to complete their grade 12 education.

We will continue to give the assembly at Serenje support in the future and will consider replicating the success of the hammer-mill in other parts of the country as resources allow.



Serenje Hall



Kitchen where the orphans sleep

Seed Program

Most of the believers in the rural areas are subsistence farmers. Many are living in extreme poverty and are in need of assistance. After many site visits and much discussion we decided to introduce a 'seed' program which will be piloted in Munyeu, a township which includes a scattering of small villages over an area of about 5 kilometres.

When we visited the believers in this area we discovered they were struggling to grow crops in poor soil, with no fertilizer, and no means of irrigation. They did not have enough money to pay their subscription fees to the farming cooperative which would have allowed them access to cheap seed and fertilizer, and the little money they had was insufficient to meet the full market price for seed.

After a lengthy discussion involving both the men and the women we decided to set up a reserve (a micro fund) which would provide 30 households with money to buy seed and fertilizer. It was also agreed, on their recommendation, that the money would be treated as a small loan which they would pay back after 10 months when their crops were harvested.

Treating this as a loan instead of a hand-out has several benefits.

1. The responsibility to repay induces commitment.
2. The money repaid is used to help expand the program to others.
3. It identifies those who have the potential to be successful. This allows us to encourage success by showing others what can be done. This creates conditions which can ultimately raise the standards of others.

We checked on the various 'micro lending' schemes available in the country, some of which have been very successful, but the interest rate charged by these schemes is very high, some as much as 40%. Since we are dealing with our own brethren, and believe those selected have the ability to succeed, we will be delighted if they can repay the original amount without interest. In the event of default either through adverse weather or illness, SHAREAfrica will underwrite any loss.

There are many who could benefit from such a scheme but firstly we must find the resources to get the fund started.



Munyeu - meeting to discuss the options



Mr Njovu in his parched field



Children of one of the believers at a farm in Munyeu

Luombwa - The Plight of the Believers

“Food for our stomachs” was the cry from the people when asked what they needed. It was all too obvious as we observed the condition of those who had gathered in the little community school at Luombwa. We sang a hymn, read the scriptures, and briefly gave a word of encouragement before sitting down to discuss their plight.



All of them were believers; peasant farmers who try and sustain their families by growing a variety of crops such as maize, rape, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes. Unfortunately the soil is very poor and yields are low. They said they had just lost their sweet potato crop due to blight. The situation overall was as bad as we had seen anywhere in the country.

The reasons are complex. A combination of no money, little resources, inexperience, a harsh environment, and being far from the main road, all make it difficult to see

how any long term improvements are possible without a prolonged program of development. The problem is made worse because they sell their maize early to raise a little cash but don't have sufficient reserves to see them through till the next harvest. This results in them running out of food from November through to February. The situation is understandable bearing in mind that selling their crops is their only means of raising cash for medicines, school fees, and basic domestic supplies such as soap, salt and cooking oil.



The irony is that on three previous occasions SHAREZambia has provided food as well as money to buy seed and fertilizer, but after a brief investigation only 4 families had shown any real signs of sustained progress. It appears that the others had failed because they were incapable of producing a crop which they could sell in sufficient quantities.

Other than providing temporary relief, the situation at Luombwa is beyond the capability and capacity of SHAREZambia. The best we can do is encourage others to conduct an investigative study and then commit to a long term program of help.

Please pray for these dear believers and their families. There is about 30 in assembly fellowship but including children and extended families the number is closer to 200.

New Web Site Helps Orphan Program

www.shareafrika.com

Our web site has been updated to include a facility for selecting and sponsoring children who are on the SHAREAfrica Orphan Program. It also includes information on how the program works.

Sponsoring a child can be done in a few simple steps:

1. Select 'sponsor a child'
2. Select preferred age and whether boy or girl
3. Choose monthly amount
4. Then print the blank Standing Order form
5. Complete the Standing Order form and take it to your bank

When you complete the procedure the system will send an electronic message to SHAREAfrica telling us you

have sponsored a child. Once the standing order is processed you will receive an email or letter with your ID and password. At that time the money will then be forwarded monthly to SHAREZambia who in turn will start paying the child. With your ID and password you will be able to sign onto the system to see more information about the child you have sponsored.

We have about 20 children waiting to be sponsored and a further 50 at the process stage.

If you want to sponsor a child but don't have access to the internet, please call us on either 01423 879280, or 01592 631146 and we will allocate you a child and send a blank mandate form for you to fill in and take to your bank.

Investing in Jobs

Recent statistics show that only 20% of the Zambian population is in full-time employment. Others earn a living by street trading, subsistence farming, or by providing simple services such as basket making, tailoring, repairing cars and so on. The number of unemployed in the assemblies is even higher since most assemblies are in rural or suburban areas. There is no welfare system so it basically comes down to the survival of the fittest – or to those most capable.

A good education is considered paramount. Young people are willing to sacrifice much to get a good 'qualification' without which it is almost impossible to get a job.

During our recent visit we spent some time with the youths at the University of Zambia as well as within the assemblies. At the University we had the privilege to share the scriptures and then discuss with them their career plans. Their greatest concern was to find a job. While there may be parallels in the UK the problem in Zambia is compounded because there are so few opportunities and also because those with influential relatives seem to get preference.

At a youth meeting in an assembly in the suburbs of Lusaka the mood was desperate. From around 70 young people only 4 had a job. We asked them to explain their plight - some of their stories were almost unbelievable. One young girl appealed for help to get girls 'off the street'. She confessed that she had stooped to such activities because it was her only way to earn money. She claimed to be a believer but not in the assembly. Although prostitution is obviously not practiced by the young women in the assembly, these illegal activities pose great temptations. Almost all of their stories told of how they were totally dependant on their relatives for food and a bed.

As an organization we are intent on creating employment. If we can bring success to even a few then it will have been worthwhile. We believe that paid employment is at the heart of economic growth and is the only long term answer to poverty reduction. However job creation requires investment in equipment, facilities, and



infrastructure. It is therefore our aim to supply anything that can be used for small commercial activities such as tailoring, carpentry, food preparation, fabrication etc.

We feel it is important that we raise the concerns of these youths. Most are dedicated energetic believers with a great zeal for the Gospel. Their ability to earn an income will create stability within their homes as well as the assembly, and will also allow them to enter into married life with some form of security.

David's Resignation

We regret to announce that after a period of seven years David Raggett has resigned as a trustee of SHAREAfrica for personal reasons. David's contributions to the work both in terms of his experience and practical support have been invaluable.

David visited Africa many times on behalf of SHAREAfrica and was held in high regard by the believers in Zambia.

He will be a very difficult person to replace. We trust God will bless both David and his wife Elaine as they continue to serve the Lord.

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