



July  
2020

## Responding to Hunger in Urban Areas

Even though the lockdown has been partially lifted, the economic impact of Covid-19 is still felt in urban communities where street trading and small business are the main source of income. During the lockdown, any small cash reserves people had were soon exhausted, so when traders reopened they had no cash to replenish their stocks, and the people had no cash to buy anything. This suffocates the local economy and pushes people into debt and further poverty.

The suburban areas around the city are the worst affected. The people there live 'hand to mouth' therefore when cash dries up they have no money for food or household essentials. As a result, many are now struggling, particularly the widows and elderly who often rely on help from friends and relatives. The rural communities are not so affected, especially at this time of year when crops are being harvested.

In May some assemblies from poorer suburbs appealed to SAZ for help. Brother Eddie identified those in greatest need and requested help from SHAREAfrica UK. Funds were sent as requested and a total of 837 x 25kg bags of breakfast mealie was bought for certain assemblies in areas around Lusaka. The assemblies that received assistance were Chawama, Chungu, John Laing, Lusitu, Makeni, Nampundwe and Sichoobo.

Each assembly benefitted according to the number of believers and the extent of their need. The elders of each assembly were responsible for distributing the food according to the need. Many messages of thanks have come back from the Lords people.

Sadly, we are incapable of responding to every need and the little help we can provide doesn't really address the root cause.

As urbanisation continues to grow, people migrate to the city in search of a better life yet with little prospects of employment. They ultimately end up in informal employment where earnings cannot meet the most basic costs of city life. For most they would be better off in the rural villages.

Nevertheless, there is always something we can do to help. We cannot ignore our moral and spiritual obligation.



We are reminded of the situation in Acts 6 when Stephen along with others was appointed to distribute supplies to the widows in need. Had the elders not responded then their teaching would have fallen on deaf ears. But as a result, many in Jerusalem were added to the faith. Stephen also laid down his life not knowing how much his sacrifice would mean to the growth of the church.

# Delivering a Boat to the Assembly at Chanyanya

The Chanyanya assembly is situated on the banks of the river Kafue.

The assembly started in 1989 when fishermen from the Luapula Province migrated south in search of new fishing areas. Today, about 250, including children, attend the Sunday services.

Some of the believers travel by small boat from islands in the centre of the river. It is a dangerous crossing especially in small dug-out canoes.

One Lord's Day in October when we visited, we learnt of their challenges with fishing. The season lasts for 7 months during which time they hire canoes and try and make enough money to keep their families for a year. However many struggle to make ends meet.

Transportation to and from the islands was also a challenge. They have to pay to cross in small canoes which in rough conditions is unsafe

Following that visit in October which we reported in our December Newsletter, we decided to purchase a boat with a powerful outboard motor (the river is about a mile wide and fast flowing). The boat with engine was purchased in March but lockdown prevented it being delivered.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June the assembly was able to meet again for the first time

so arrangements were made to transport the boat to the hall and hand it over to the believers.

The boat will be used as an assembly asset to generate income and to support other needs. It will be used for fishing, as well as for ferrying the few saints living on the islands. It will also be used as an ambulance to take people from the islands to the clinic.

The income from the boat will go towards an assembly fund to help support their many widows as well as maintaining their building

The elders have appointed caretakers who will be responsible for reporting income and taking care of the boat. It was advised that they purchase life jackets and use them especially when carrying children.

It was encouraging to hear them speak of building a reserve fund to raise money for another boat.

***Elder's note of thanks; To the dear saints who have helped us with the outboard engine and boat. First and foremost, we want to whole heartedly give all the glory to the Almighty God through His blessed son Jesus Christ. We are very much short of words on how to express our gratitude on the works you have done for us, your dear saints who never expected nor deserved such***

*love. May God replenish the source where everything has come from.*

*We have also heard about Covid-19 in UK, we pray for you saints, that's the only thing we can give back to you as we lack so much.*

*Yours the elders and saints of Chanyanya assembly.*

It may seem from the pictures that the boat is quite fragile, but in reality it is much more substantial than the canoes they use now.

This is just one of many assemblies where families struggle to provide the basic household needs. Yet there is a joy that permeates throughout the gatherings. The assembly, including the sisters, are all self-motivated, working hard for the benefit of all.

Very seldom do they have visitors (when Jim visited in September, he was the first white person ever to visit). The way the assembly has grown is a real testimony to the local witness and the power of the Gospel.

We will follow up in a few months to check how they are getting on with their new asset. We suspect the biggest risk will be losing the outboard engine.



# Floods in Luapula and the Northern Provinces

While Covid-19 has dominated the headlines, Zambia continues to be hit by recurring disasters which affect people's livelihoods and further damage an already fragile economy. Some of these rarely reach the international news yet in real terms the outcome can be more devastating than Covid-19.

Drought, crop failure, floods, social unrest, disease, are common occurrences which are often ignored, yet such events can be more life threatening. They affect whole households, towns and villages causing death, hunger, disease, with life-long consequences.

For example, last season's drought left almost half the country in dire need of food. This year, weather patterns have been mixed with the northern parts being hit by serious flooding that damaged houses and washed away crops, yet in the southern parts the rain lasted for only a few days which meant crops died soon after they germinated.

## Floods in Luapula

During May torrential rains affected 1.3 million people across 40 districts. The assistance the Government provided fell far short of what was needed. Other organisations mustered support but the scale of damage will take years to repair.

Roads, bridges, houses were destroyed, crops were washed away, shops flooded, and people displaced from their homes. Disease then followed when pit latrines were submerged in water and sewage contaminated fresh water in wells used for drinking and washing.

The most affected provinces were Luapula, Northern, North-Western and the Copperbelt. As the extent of the damage became clear people began contacting everyone they knew asking for help. In Luapula Province alone over 5000 people were left homeless. The areas which surround lake Bangweulu were the most affected. According to some observers, such high levels of flooding had not been seen in their lifetime.

There are many assemblies in the area. Some believers we know were calling for help. While SHAREAfrica Zambia has no presence in the region we felt we must respond. Funds were sent from SHAREAfrica through SHAREAfrica Zambia to assist believers in Mwamfuli, Samfya West, Mulisha and Nkungu.

Many messages of thanks have since been received.

Luapula is one of the poorest provinces in Zambia. For some time the Government and NGO's have invested in programmes to stimulate the local economy but such interventions are unlikely to prevent the same areas from flooding in future.

If changing weather patterns are more likely to cause flooding then the only answer is to persuade people to move to areas where there is less risk, however, when they have lived all their lives in the same villages and cultivated the same fields, persuading people to move will not be easy.

Plans for SHAREAfrica Zambia to provide farming support in the Northern Province similar to what we have in the Eastern Province has always been on the agenda. We are aware of the need among many thousands of believers and we trust, God willing, we may soon be able to help.



# The Seed Farm and Outgrowers

As of early June, the harvest of seed and grain was well underway. This year over 200 farmers were included on the scheme which is divided into three support categories

1. SAZ provides training, seed, weed loans, chemicals, equipment loans, bags, and a commitment to buy back the produce at a fair price.
2. SAZ provides seed to farmers who have been trained to grow seed. These are seasoned farmers who have successfully grown legumes. They are supplied with small quantities of first-generation seed to reproduce under the direction of both SAZ and the Department of Agriculture
3. SAZ provides seed on loan for farmers who either cannot afford to buy quality seed, or who want to expand their production. The seed is provided at the beginning of the season and repaid in grain at time of harvest.

During and after harvest many people are hired to help with harvesting, shelling, grading, packing, and storing. The work will continue until October

The harvest overall has been satisfactory with some crops doing well and others not so well. The soya and maize have done well but the groundnut yields are down due to poor rainfall when the crops were in flower. This resulted in rosette disease

which killed some plants with others yielding very few pods.

The shortage of groundnuts across the region has pushed prices to double what they were last year. This affects our purchasing power. Also, if the groundnuts are used to make peanut butter then additional cost has to be passed on to the consumer and, with inflation continually pushing up food prices, the price of peanut butter may be beyond what most people can afford. We will therefore, scale back the peanut butter production this year and shift emphasis to products made with maize or soya.

The good yields of soya have compensated the farmers for the loss in groundnuts and farmers incomes overall are expected to be better than they were last year. The addition of almost 100 farmers has also made a difference. SAZ is now recognized as a serious contributor to farming development within the area.

A quantity of seed is always reserved to give to the farmers before they start planting in November. Additional quantities will be given to new farmers to further expand the scheme in 2021 which means the scheme is continually growing. The surplus seed is sold at a profit and the money used to support the farm throughout the growing season. The programme overall becomes a revolving and expanding fund.

Not all farmers are assembly believers, but it is difficult to ignore neighbours who are equally in need of help. By

helping others, it creates a positive image for those who think we are only concerned for our own 'church members'. It is also worth noting that most people in the area claim to be 'born again' Christians. But it is not for us to judge.

The introduction of oxen has also helped the programme. We now have about 30 pair which has enabled farmers to increase the size of fields they cultivate. Two animals died which the vet attributed to something they ate. Such loss is to be expected but overall, the oxen initiative has been successful. The scheme will be expanded as resources allow.

We thank the Lord for the harvest. The people in these areas are very aware of their reliance on nature to provide adequate rains at the right time. It is striking to hear people giving God thanks for their food. It puts in perspective our concerns when some food is missing on our supermarket shelves. In these rural communities they know that 'God gives the increase'.

Finally, thanks to all who support the programme. Your contribution is making a difference to many households who now have a small disposable income whereby they can improve their homes, educate their children, and support their many dependents.

Our efforts are tiny compared to the need. We look to the Lord for direction as we start planning for the next season.



# Food Factory Update

Food has become the focus of attention in Zambia for many reasons. Changing climate, the cost of imports, the shrinking global economy, the drop in value of the Kwacha, high unemployment, and the growing number of malnourished people, have raised concerns over the nation's ability to provide affordable quality food to meet the nation's needs. This bleak outlook has caused the Government to encourage growth in agriculture as well as value addition investment in food production.

With foreign investment very unlikely small businesses are being asked to persevere knowing how important they are to the future health of the economy.

Like other businesses, our small food factory has struggled with power cuts, inflation, working capital, shops closing and supermarkets that have to squeeze prices to survive. All in all, it is a difficult business.

Nevertheless, the SAZ (SHAREAfrica Zambia) factory has a purpose beyond profit. We see our role not as an investor but as a facilitator focused on improving the wellbeing of others. We train people who otherwise would be unemployed. These are youths, young fathers, and mothers who in normal life would have little prospects but are now proud to be formally employed.

The factory is also part of the overall poverty reduction model that SAZ has developed over the years. The seed growing, farming, milling and food

processing activities are all interconnected but not necessarily interdependent. They share produce where it makes sense, but not at the expense of other activities. For example, we use wheat in one food product, but we do not ask the farmers to grow wheat since they don't have the machinery to harvest it. Another example is where the farm develops other legume seeds such as beans, but it is unlikely the factory will buy beans, at least not soon.

When the factory buys crops from the farms, they buy at premium prices to help improve the farmers income. The factory also insists on grain being sorted and tested for toxin levels to maintain quality standards required by the Zambian Bureau of Standards agency. Sadly, this does not happen everywhere in the food industry.

The factory also aims to make food products that have a high nutritional content. Some foods are fortified with additional vitamins based on advice from the World Health Programme and other food nutritionists.

The foods are distributed to various towns within Zambia, so the consumers can buy them in areas where nutritious foods are least available.

The products are sold in Zambia under the "share-ing's" brand with a "fairSHARE" logo.

One ingredient added to many of our products is Moringa, an ingredient we

make from leaves from the Moringa Oleifera tree. There has been widespread research into the health benefits Moringa, and the science continues to be positive. We grow the trees at our site in Makeni.

After almost 20 years working in the country, we have learned a lot. We believe the model we currently operate has been successful and has benefited many of the Lord's people. We must continue to focus on work and productivity which is the only sustainable solution to poverty. It is wrong to do nothing. If the slogan 'black lives matter' means anything, then as Christians it ought to mean more. It goes beyond preaching and teaching.

We look to the Lord that the small factory will grow, not only to produce nutritious food and provide employment, but also to generate a surplus that through that surplus we might be able to supply the needs of others (a principal taught in 2 Corinthians in 8 and 9).



According to healthline.com *Moringa oleifera* is a plant that has been praised for its health benefits for thousands of years.

However, only a few of its many reputed health benefits have been studied scientifically

To date, studies show that *Moringa oleifera* may lead to modest reductions in blood sugar and cholesterol. It may also have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects and protect against arsenic toxicity.

Moringa leaves are also highly nutritious and should be beneficial for people who are lacking in essential nutrients.



## How Covid-19 affected the Orphan Programme

For fear of contracting or spreading the virus and in accordance with presidential directive to close all schools, bars and churches we stopped all school, home and church visitations. During lockdown we have been working from the office keeping in touch with the children and their guardians.

Schools opened on 1<sup>st</sup> June only for those in examination classes such as grades 7, 9 and 12. By God's grace the SAZ staff and the children on the orphan programme have been spared from this pandemic. Fear and anxiety have reduced, and we intend to start school and, in some cases home visitations, week commencing 15th June. The first visit will be to Siavonga to distribute shoes that were purchased prior to the lockdown.

### College students

All colleges are still closed and so the students are at their homes. We are in touch with the college students by phone. The feedback reports say they are all fine. One of them, Regina Kabwe, a first year student at Chilubi Island School of Nursing and Mid-wifery, visited us at the offices to collect her allowance.

### Guardians

Staying at home to avoid catching and spreading the virus has not been easy for many people especially the poor such as the guardians of the children on the programme. Most of them have no salaried jobs, no savings and no fridges to stock groceries. For those in compounds even the homes are not spacious enough to stay indoors without confinement causing health problems. These people struggle daily to find food. They do this by working in fields, at the market or in homes. With the lockdown and social distancing some people have lost their ability to earn a daily income thereby worsening the poverty levels. This has been difficult for many forcing people to risk going back to their daily activities. It is common to hear people saying "while you are fearing COVID 19, hunger will kill you".



Children the at their school in Siamatika, Siavonga. This picture was taken on 16<sup>th</sup> January when we last visited the place. We hope to go there 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June 2020 to put shoes on those feet

## Covid-19 in Zambia

At 10th June Zambia had recorded 10 deaths from Covid-19 with 1200 confirmed cases. While these numbers are relatively small a team of charity organisations in Zambia carried out a short survey to gather perspectives on Covid-19's impact on society. The survey is not claiming to be scientific but the results are loud and clear;

- 99% of all civil society respondents already felt the effects of Covid-19 in one way or another.
- The 81% felt the anxiety and a feeling of uncertainty for the future
- 71% of the respondents said that they are no longer able to support their families.

It is noteworthy that the majority of respondents (90%) communicate effects of the crisis on their families.

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