

The Simon Poultney Foundation - Zambia March/April 2010 Report

Notes on the activities and tasks completed by Gordon Poultney, Executive Director, and Milt Marchiel, Director, during their visit to the SPF Kakulu community development project in Zambia during the month of March and April 2010. (Note : Milt did not attend all the meetings and activities as he was only there for the month of March.)

Elaine Duchesne also visited the project for two weeks in April and participated in some of the meetings and activities.

Base of Operations

The owners of Kakulu Farms, Mike and Adriana Sandys-Thomas, who are now the only commercial farmers in the area very kindly hosted us in their home. Although they had agreed that we could continue to use the house previously owned by Simon's uncle it was not in good enough state of repair to be used for accommodation at this time.

The Thomases again expressed their appreciation for the work that SPF is doing to assist the Kakulu community which borders their farms and where they draw all of the labour for their operations.

They again confirmed their offer of ongoing assistance to SPF with : accommodation for SPF visitors to the project; transport for moving construction materials etc; storage of any materials being staged for construction; the supply of diesel at the bulk farm discounted rate; the use of their post box number for mail; and any other general logistical needs we may have.

Adriana has agreed to join the Board of Directors of SPF Zambia and that will be formalized in due course.

Construction Methods and Project Management

Through our new friends, Bob and Mary Sendgikoski of Every Orphans Hope, who very graciously hosted us in Lusaka whenever we needed a bed for a night or more, we learnt of a new construction method that Bob has perfected for buildings on the projects. This uses a interlocking bricks which require no cement to hold together – they simply stack on top of each other – very much like lego ! This method reduces overall cost of materials by up to 40% over the traditional method of brick and mortar and is infinitely quicker too.

To make the bricks you need a machine with the form and he advised that we would have to put our names on a waiting list for such a machine because the demand is so high and be prepared to spend US \$ 1,500.00 on purchasing it. When we got to the farm and we describing this to Mike he told us that he had found such a machine when he bought his second farm and, not having any use for it himself, had assigned it to the scrap heap !

There we found it in perfect order except for a bit of oiling and greasing and he said that we could have it !

Bob has also offered to have our project supervisor, Tobias aka Mr Banda, come and work with him and his crew when they are next building (in late May and June) so that he can learn how to make the bricks and then use them for construction, and implement that method for SPF projects going forward.

Orphans

Director Justin Kalunga manages the orphan support program and a full review was done with him of the 22 orphans that are currently on the program as well as the accounting records for the use of the funds that we provide for monthly support. With that money we ensure that they have school uniforms, school supplies and any school fees are paid so that they can attend school. They are given food each month and if they require medical treatment that is paid for if necessary.

Only one of the orphans has had to be removed due to poor performance and a replacement was chosen. Another of the orphans had left the community to stay with other relatives in Lusaka so he was replaced by his sister who is still living with their widowed grandmother.

We visited several of the group at their homes to see how they are doing and were happy that their relatives are taking good care of them. We met with four of the orphans from the Chilunga area of the community who had to come across the river as we could not get the vehicle through.

Several of the relatives asked for a group meeting which we held. During that meeting they expressed their gratitude for what we are doing to help their orphans. We also received two letters of appreciation.

We currently have five sponsors donating a total of \$ 330.00 per month (some give multiples of \$ 30.00 – the base rate) so in fact each orphan is allocated \$ 15.00 per month. We really need to promote this program to get more participation so that we can increase the numbers – there are about 400 orphans in the community needing help !

Girls Education Program

One of our original visions was to provide funds to enable young girls to progress with higher education as most of the time boys, in the Zambian patriarchal society, get preference when it comes to further education.

Despite some pledges of financial support for this program we had not yet made the effort to get those donations and get the program going. During this visit we heard of one of the girls from the orphan program – Majory Kapata – having done very well last year

in the Grade 9 final exams. In fact one of the highest set of marks throughout Zambia. Because of lack of funding she had gone to Grade 10 at a low-level school in Kapiri Mposhi and was having to share a house with six strangers as there were no boarding facilities at the school.

It was decided that this was not a suitable situation for a vulnerable teenage girl with such potential so this was the time to launch the program. A couple of highly recommended boarding schools were visited but it was discovered that they only take in girls at Grade 8 and that they could not consider Majory. We therefore settled on Kabulonga Girls High School, a highly regarded Government school, in Lusaka where we found that they had vacancies for the second term of the school year, starting on May 10. Boarding was arranged through Justin Kalunga with friend of his who is also a pastor and has a daughter only two years younger; so the girls will have companionship.

We took Majory to Lusaka to visit her host family and the school and got her signed up, fees paid, uniforms and school supplies obtained and transport to and from Kakulu planned. The radiance of her smile and excitement at being given this opportunity was something to behold. Word of it spread throughout the community like wildfire and we received many accolades for having chosen her, a very humble young girl.

The beauty of it all is that we already have the funds in place - donated by a family in Edmonton - who have committed to support Majory for as long as she goes to school. There are already others wanting to donate to the program which is wonderful as we will have at least two other very suitable candidates needing to go to Grade 10 at the beginning of 2011 !

Micro Loan Fund

A full review was done of the existing funds in two areas of the community – the Kakulu Revolving Fund and the Chilunga Revolving Fund – with the trustees. A few anomalies and misunderstandings in managing the loans was sorted out and the trustees were pleased for that guidance. That being said the funds are both performing well and providing much needed support to the community for economic development. So far there have been no defaults and all the money is accounted for. This is very pleasing as several other organizations we have spoken to in Zambia have attempted micro loan funds and have failed

Much of the money was borrowed late in 2009 to buy seed and fertilizer for the new farming season so it is still outstanding. Milt and Gordon visited several fields belonging to people that had borrowed money for farming and saw that it has made a big difference to the quality of their crops, so that their yields will increase significantly.

We also visited a few people to see and hear about the businesses that they have started through having a loan. We were also asked to attend a meeting of several other loan beneficiaries to receive their letters of appreciation and hear some of them speak of their experience with the fund.

An additional 2.8 million Kwacha (US \$ 600.00) was added to the fund bringing the total to 13 million Kwacha (US \$ 2,800). With an average loan being 500,000 kwacha this means that 26 “loan units” are rotating on a 3-month cycle.

Sungula School

A meeting with the PTA to review things at the school. The new house that was built in 2008 by SPF is being lived in. They have also completed two new (pit) toilets for the students to replace the old ones which were falling into disrepair. For these they used funds raised by the community.

They were expecting us to come with funds for further development but we explained to them that we did not have any funding available due to the downturn in donations/fundraising. Also that our priority now is to get the water supply at the school sorted out as the lack of water was huge barrier to any further construction projects.

We also found that despite our previous requests to them the community has not been contribution to future construction projects by making the bricks that are required for building. So we advised that was another reason why we could not begin any further construction.

Kakulu Rural Health Center

We met with the new building committee for the center and despite our concerns over the lack of progress on the new addition, since August 2008, we felt comfortable to put the past behind and that this new group would make the effort to move forward.

So we used the little funds we had for project work to buy some materials for construction to continue. The material was transported by Mike from Kabwe to his store room at the farm and will be issued by him as requested by Tobias who will manage the project for SPF.

Rotary

Gordon attended several meetings at the Kabwe Rotary club as a visiting Rotarian, and Milt was at one meeting as a guest. They also visited the site of a playground project being undertaken by the club at a street kids outreach center in Kabwe and were interested by the tour of the whole facility and its operation.

There was little progress on the grinding mill project for the SPF community which the Kabwe Club had received part-funding for from the Edmonton Central Rotary Club. The issue being that the Kabwe club now has to apply for a matching grant from Rotary International to secure full funding for the project before it can even begin.

Gordon also attended a meeting at the Lusaka Central Rotary Club and made some excellent connections in the business community in Lusaka.

Agriculture and Beekeeping

We met with the newly appointed agricultural extension officer in the community and had discussions about plans for further development in agriculture and beekeeping. The officer arranged a field day which was attended by a number of local villagers to see and hear about the success of Pastor Justin in using conservation farming methods in his fields.

Gordon connected with several other key individuals who have agreed to come to the community to assist with further agricultural programs when the time is right.

Gordon also connected with Fiona Paumgarten (a cousin of a friend in France !) who has spent the last three years in Zambia leading a team working on a project to research the beekeeping and honey industry in the country. The result of the project, just ending, was the publication of a 271 page manual called “A Beekeeping Management Guide for Zambia - A manual for extension workers promoting the production and trade of bee-products”, which gives extensive details about the history and background of beekeeping in Zambia and how to go about training people to improve on the process for increased income. She provided SPF with an electronic copy of the manual, free of charge, and it will be a very valuable resource.

Water

En route to Zambia Gordon had met with the head of The Estelle Trust in UK, Nigel Farrow, to discuss Estelle’s previous commitment to our water project, specifically in the form of a windmill to pump water from a well. We subsequently had a visit to Kakulu by their Zambian representative, Glenn Allison, who was very pleased with what he saw us doing and our plans for the future. He confirmed that we would receive a windmill with pump and header tank and stand as soon as we had a suitable site for its installation.

Gordon met Mathews Mhango the Civil Engineer who had produced the report for us on water resources and issues in 2009. They reviewed the report to set some short-term priorities. The biggest problem is the lack of well records for wells previously drilled and we are wary of spending money to test existing wells and perhaps wasting it because they prove to be no good.

So it was decided that the focus should be on raising money for 3-4 much needed new wells to be drilled ensuring that they are properly done for maximum effect. There would be one near Sungula school to replace an old one that needs to be decommissioned, one at the health center (the existing one is not up to standard) and the other two in general areas of the community to serve the people – exact locations to be determined..

Together with the windmill we have also secured the pledge of two solar pumps with header tanks and stands to be used on those new wells.

Kanjanji Village

There was connection several times with Lourie and Gisela Ferreira who are running Kanjanji Village in Choma, Southern Zambia, and for which SPF has a partnership agreement with Lighthouse Church in Stony Plain. Milt and Gordon went to Kanjanji on Good Friday and spent two nights there during which they had the opportunity to fully review the project and see what progress has been made by the Ferreira's during their first two years there.

A lot of details were discussed and Gordon was able to meet with the Lighthouse Church council upon his return to Canada to bring them up to date.

SPF UK

Gordon attended an SPF UK Trustees meeting on February 28 en route to Zambia and on his way back to Canada he stopped again in UK during which time he had several meetings with small groups and individuals of potential donors and supporters. There is a growing swell of support for SPF UK which will soon begin to yield some good results.

Overall this was a very positive and successful trip, accomplishing, as always, more than planned or expected.

Gordon Poultney
Executive Director
May 2010



Above : (Left) Majorj in her new uniform with her books and school supplies; (Right) her host family; Below : Majorj outside her new school in Lusaka

