

August 2009 Newsletter



Dear Friends,

Greetings from southern Africa. I hope this message finds you well. I am currently in Botswana and doing fine.

### **PERSONAL UPDATE**

Recently I was able to return to Zimbabwe to attend a funeral of one of my uncles and to catch up with folks and check in on ministries. It was a bittersweet time. One thing that struck me was the vibrant energy that has returned to the once despairing, listless people. Now people move around with more purpose. Life in the country seems to have slightly changed for the better. Where once, the shops were empty, the shelves are now stacked with goods and storerooms full with basic commodities. 'Black market' activities that characterized the streets appear to be dying out; instead, streets are now filled with people who walk with a more confident gait. This points to one thing, renewed hope has returned to the people of Zimbabwe. The bad news is that prices continue to rise and because only foreign currency is used in the market, most things are out of reach for poor people.

'Fair Haven Ministry Center,' my home in Francistown, Botswana continues to be 'a home away from home' as Zimbabweans still come across the border to do business transactions. I have received 23 visitors in May, June and July who have spent a night or two at 'Fair Haven.' With security systems in place and the presence of a tenant, Mr. Gwebu, (a black belt in Karate) in the cottage. I feel a great deal safer and more relaxed. Eight parcels/boxes arrived with winter clothing, books and household items. As always we are truly grateful for all the treasures that arrive from you. All the visitors are so pleased for the opportunity to rest and get fed a really good meal even if it is only cabbage stew!

I still have received no news about the permit to go into the refugee camp but there are other exciting prospects. I have been approached to join a team in setting up a counseling, remedial center to help kids who have difficulties. Additionally, I meet with a group of ten Francistown ladies every alternate Saturday who feel they would like to be challenged and motivated to improve their lives and their communities.

### **PRAYER REQUESTS**

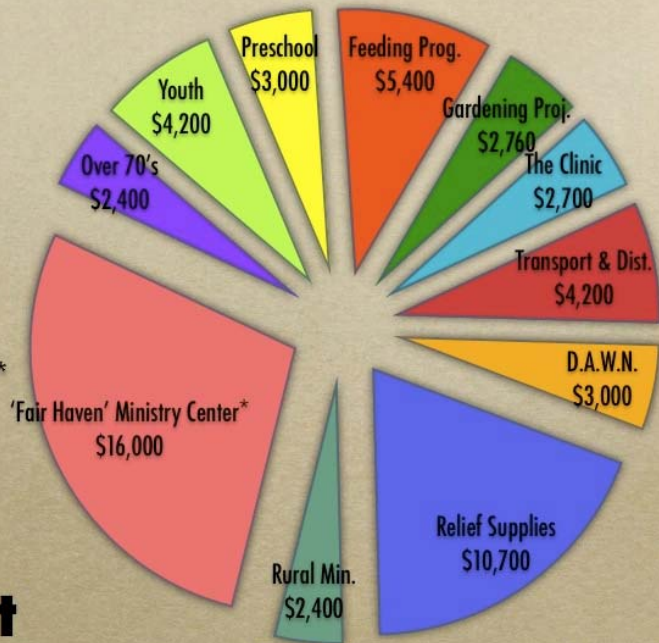
- In September I have an opportunity to travel to Germany, Denmark and Britain to bring everyone interested in the work of ZRF up to date and hopefully do some fundraising! Please pray for traveling mercies and God's provision for ZRF.
- I am leaving the issue of getting into the refugee camps in God's hands at this point.
- I have been approached by a new group of women and the chief of their village about starting programs there. Please pray for direction and wisdom.
- Winter is upon us, please pray for protection and sufficiencies for the poor in Zims and Bots.

### **MINISTRIES UPDATE**

Whilst I was in the States we developed a chart listing the ministries and a projected budget for 2009/2010. Since the ministries are diverse I thought I would give all of you a quick update on them and then spend some time highlighting one ministry in particular. This way friends and supporters in the States and elsewhere whom I didn't get to see, get a clearer picture and understanding of the ministries ZRF is involved in both in Zimbabwe and Botswana.

# 2009 PROJECTED BUDGET

- Feeding Prog.
- Gardening Proj.
- The Clinic
- Transport & Dist.
- D.A.W.N.
- Relief Supplies
- Rural Min.
- 'Fair Haven' Ministry Center\*
- Over 70's
- Youth
- Preschool



**Total Budget**  
**\$56,760.00**

\*Includes overhead expenses, i.e. rent, utilities, etc. in Botswana

Here's a brief update on the ministries we are currently involved in:

- **Relief Supplies:** I continue to purchase basic commodities in Botswana, as well as parts for repairs and other specialty items for transport to Zimbabwe.
- **Rural Ministry** near Francistown- I am working with women wanting to improve their community with gardening and jam-making and brainstorming with them about small business enterprises.
- **'Fair Haven Ministry Center'** - Botswana - has become a home away from home for despairing Zimbabweans who come across the border to regroup as well as assist in taking provisions and supplies back to Bulawayo for the ministries.
- **Over 70's**-Staffer Connie Mabusela gathers our oldest women for encouragement, training, and other events to keep them challenged and engaged. They are always looking for ways to earn money.
- **Youth Ministry**- Elinata continues to work with our youth with small groups, community service projects, and youth seminars.
- The **Pre-School** team continues to provide education, care and social training for the less fortunate kids at Emganwini.
- **Feeding program**- We provide food hampers to 100 needy families as well as food for the pre-school at Emganwini, Bulawayo, two meals, five days a week.
- **Gardening projects** continue in Bulawayo and in a rural village here in Botswana, we constantly provide seeds/seedlings and gardening skills.
- **The WAY Clinic** in Bulawayo is an ongoing ministry for the sick who have no access or money for health care. We provide the much needed medicines, vitamins and supplements. Most of these are sent to us from many in the U.S.
- **Transport & Distribution:** We continue to move supplies across the border and distribute them to the ministry teams in Zimbabwe.

## IN-DEPTH MINISTRY UPDATE: Differently Abled Women's Network (DAWN)

The women of DAWN have been enjoying the support from Zimbabwe Relief Foundation in the form of advice, groceries and vegetable seeds for gardening. This assistance has given them hope through the most difficult times in the country. Here is an update from Courage, the leader of this group with her brief autobiography in her own voice.



‘Differently Abled Women’s Network has been growing steadily from strength to strength. DAWN women have embarked on various activities. Disability per se, has not stopped these resourceful women from taking up challenges brought with the dawn of each day. For instance, the prayer meetings have been giving tremendous psychosocial support to these women. Members have encouraged each other to emulate biblical characters such as Sarah, who was patient until God blessed her with a child late in her life(Genesis 12); be like Hannah who also was patient and prayed to God for her problems (1 Samuel Chapter 1); and have leadership skills and courage of Deborah (Judges). The women further encouraged each other to never give up in life, but persevere until goals have been met and/or achieved.

People with disabilities in general had been the hardest hit by the political and economic turbulence in the country. Women with disabilities in particular face a double edged sword in times like these. That of being a woman – historical who are always at a disadvantage, and living with a disability, the majority being either single or single parents, and unemployed for that matter! DAWN supports women with disabilities in these situations.

The general analysis is that life still remains challenging for those who have no source of income. The availability of basic commodities in the retail outlets does not automatically provide food on the table. Nevertheless, a glimmer of hope is being seen, after our Prime Minister’s visit to the US to have talks with President Barack Obama. The aid promised through various non-governmental organizations is being expected to trickle down to DAWN membership for relief from absolute poverty.’

### *My story...*

I was born in a family of six, and am the only person living with a disability in my family. My parents are both deceased, and all my brothers and sisters are married. I live with a helper in the city of Bulawayo, in a house of a friend who temporarily migrated to Ireland with his family. Living independently has been good but it comes with some challenges.

The beginning of 2008 saw the birth of our support group, Differently Abled Women’s Network (DAWN), which I, together with other women with disabilities spearheaded. The name in particular gives me courage, for one, I am disabled and therefore, most of my daily activities are done differently.

The formation of DAWN came as dawn of a new bright day, to me personally. Although I had no career, the psychosocial support I got from other group members was invaluable. Besides a small income generating I ran from home, I had no other source of income I depended on. My brothers and sister who assisted me in the past could hardly afford to do so as they were also struggling to fend for their families too. However, working with DAWN gave me peace of mind as I was involved in activities such as devotions and peace circles. Prayer meetings also improved my relationship with God on a personal level.

The beginning of 2009 brought me raised hopes. I had been promised a job to run some programmes at King George VI Centre, an institution for the physical handicapped and the deaf, beginning in March. When the time for me to start arrived I was informed unfortunately, that they could no longer afford to embark on the programme. Oh, I was so devastated. I felt that there was no need for me to continue with life because honestly speaking, I had banked on that job, and I am also passionate about developmental programmes. I also did not know where I was going to get my March income



because the small project I ran was not doing well. Who was going to pay my bills, and the salary for my helper? This question kept ringing in my mind, and I had no ready answer. Psalms 23 became my pillar of strength. I volunteered teaching services at King George VI School because other people's presence made me feel much better. I am teaching Accounts to deaf secondary students. I also contacted Delene, Zimbabwe Relief Foundation, who readily organized me a one year contract to write a monthly newsletter on the organisation's activities, beginning the same month of March. I was so excited, God had answered my prayers. Soon after, I was contacted by Dabane Trust, an organization that support grass root people with sanitation services, to give a two-day Disability Awareness Training of Trainer workshop. I was able to share my expertise in disability with these people. Showers of blessing.

Personally, I attribute all these positive things to Delene and friends. By offering me a contract as a newsletter writer, they opened a window of opportunity for me. I am a school teacher, a facilitator in disability issues, a sign language interpreter during school workshops and, a newsletter writer. I hope to continue to do so, and more, as long as God gives me the strength.

**Courage Chipatiso**

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

I do hope that all of you across the seas have been enjoying the longer summer days, warm weather and good health. Thank you all for your prayers, love and support.

Love,

Delene Thomas