

Hi everyone,

I know it's been awhile since I wrote – I'm back home and thrilled to be here. My US trip was wonderful but terribly busy – I am finally relaxing and it feels so wonderful!!! But of course I haven't been bored –there is lots happening here. We had our election on October 30 and it was violent for a few days but things are calm again although the majority of the people aren't very happy. The government brought the army in (23,000) and I find them scarier than anything. The election was between two parties, CCM the ruling party since 1964, and CUF the opposition party. It's extremely complicated and I still don't understand all of the history and details but CUF ran with Seif Sharif Hamad as it's candidate in 1995 and 2000 and lost both elections. Now the problem is that the elections were fraudulent and in '95 and 2000 the international observers were aware of it and many of the international donors pulled out after the 2000 election. This year Seif was running again and lost again – and again it was fraudulent. I'm friends with Ben, a Brit, who's the campaign strategist for CUF and he has a count of all the votes that does not jibe with the ZEC (Zanzibar Election Commission). Also, I have a friend who's an int'l observer who saw truckloads of people who were NOT from the area brought in to vote. And then just before the polls closed some of the army (who are mainlanders and can't vote here) voted which is illegal. There were also all kinds of tricks going on around voter registration and many other things. So suffice it to say that the election was rigged and the people weren't happy so there were protests and two days of violence but very few died so that was good. I was up here in my penthouse watching it in safety although I have to say that it was tense and scary. So many people I know are CUF supporters and they were SO excited before the election – they really thought that their voices would be heard. They had over 80% voter turnout – that's amazing when you realize that many people were physically threatened yet went to the polls anyway. Afterwards, I heard a man yell at some CCM supporters "Huyu ni wizi" – You are thieves!!! And one of my friends said "CCM won by using tricks, CUF tried to be honest and they didn't have a chance". So people are trying to move on and adjust to daily life around here again.

Here are some of my photos:



Here are very happy CUF supporters after their rally the day before the election. And in the center are Red Cross workers running towards the protest down the road. And then on the right is the ambulance with the injured on the way to the hospital. There was lots of tear gas and bullets and it was amazing that no one died on this day.



The town was completely deserted for 3 days – on the left are army walking towards the center of town where the protest was being held. In the center is the deserted market – usually there are vendors and their fruits, vegetables and wares and people teeming in the area. On the right are some army who were guarding the main road that had been shut down.

So – now I'm back into my daily routine. I go to ZAPHA+ (Zanzibar Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS) almost every day and I'm getting much better at conversing in Swahili which is great. I'm finalizing a proposal whereby we will come up with healthy recipes, cook two meals a week for all the members (membership is now up to 140 from 45 last January!), get nutrition counseling and then we'll publish a cookbook. I'm very excited. We have set up a relief committee with a fund of money that came in from a friend of mine. The members write a letter asking for assistance (usually for food or medicine) and the committee does an assessment and someone is assigned as a "case manager" to go with them to buy the food or medicine. It is ABSOLUTELY amazing what a difference food can make – my friend Salma came up to me after I returned and I didn't even recognize her with her chipmunk cheeks – she gained at least 10 lbs and looks amazing. The members are happy, healthier now that they have ARV (anti-retroviral) treatment, and have some self-respect and dignity. Now I'm hoping to get funding to help to give some of them small business loans and management training and set up some income generating activities for the others who are not cut out to be entrepreneurs.



Here are Salma and Mwashamba when they were first getting food support and here they are after I returned from the US. It can be difficult to look at a photo and say "But that person doesn't LOOK like they're starving". But many of them are – and it's a horrible situation. I'm also going to be working with World Food Program from the UN to set up a nutrition program for all the PLHAS (people living with HIV/AIDS) in Zanzibar. I'm very excited about that.

And then yesterday my friend Helen and I went to visit one of her employee's at his shamba (home in the countryside). Helen is the director of Chumbe Island, an ecologically correct tourist resort and it has a protected coral reef that is wonderful for snorkeling. She has lived in Zanzibar off and on for many years and was married to a Zanzibari for 5 years until he died. She's fluent in Swahili and cares deeply for the people and so she goes out to visit each of her employee's every month or so to see how they live. Yusuf Mtabu is from Chejuu and it's in the middle of nowhere – we had an interesting time driving there. We turned off the main road onto a road that was very bumpy because there was lots of loose coral rock (this island is made out of coral) and we drove

for at least 2 km without seeing any houses then we saw some people and kept asking where Chejuu was and they would direct us. Finally Yusuf came up on his bicycle, he put it in the back of the truck and we drove down a smaller dirt road that turned into a footpath!!!! We drove for at least another 1km until we finally reached his shamba. He lives there with his mother and 3 of his sister's children (there may be more there but I'm not positive). There are 2 girls, Amina and Sofia and a boy named Fred (go figure). His grandmother lives in the next village and he and the children go there often to care for her. Yusuf grows coconuts, bananas and sweet potatoes. We sat on the "veranda" in the shade and Yusuf brought a bowl of water for us to wash our hands. We chatted awhile (I think the women were very nervous having us there – we may have been the first wazungu (white people) to ever visit. Then Yusuf husked and cut two coconuts for us – we drank the delicious milk and then he cut up the meat and we ate it – there is NOTHING like a fresh coconut right off the tree. They had a cooking fire going around the corner and made us banana in coconut milk and some tea. Yusuf brought Helen and me into the hut and put the food down on a piece of linoleum that was there for us to sit and eat. Now, no one joined us in eating – they ate in the back after we left. So Helen and I had the bananas and tea and there was also a carafe of water that had been boiled (best thing next to bottled).

After our "lunch" we walked over to the next village, maybe ½ mile away, with the kids and saw his grandmother's house and visited with a friend who just had a new baby. As we walked along we gathered more children and others who came out to greet us – it was quite a reception. Now, Yusuf has "bought" (you can only rent here) this plot of land and he farms it while he also works at Chumbe Island. He's a maintenance man on the island and will stay there for 2 weeks then come home for 1 week – he's been working at Chumbe now for 8 years. He's 49 years old and his wife lives in Tabora on the mainland (I'm assuming because her family is there or she has a job there). They have 4 grown children who live near Tabora and Yusuf goes to visit his wife every holiday that he gets. He visited her last May and contracted cholera the first day there, was in the hospital for two weeks and barely survived. I don't know what his mother, grandmother and the others would have done if he had died.

Now, Yusuf lives 8 km from the main road and has no electricity or water. When he goes to work he has to walk to the main road and take the dalla dalla from there. The children attend a school that is 2 km from there house and they walk every day. The well for water is over 1 km away and they have to walk there every day also. I thought afterwards how generous he was in bringing us water to wash our hands before and during our meal. And to make tea and then give us water from the carafe after we returned from walking to the neighboring village. After I came home I took a shower and the dust and dirt ran into the drain and I was only there for 3 hours!!!! Obviously they would not waste water on bathing every day. It reminded me of the time that Denny and I drove through Ethiopia and weren't able to bathe for over a week –whew!!! How fortunate I am to have water any time I want and electricity – what luxuries that I take for granted.

So – I'm hoping to have more adventures as this – I want to meet more of the Zanzibari people and find out what their needs are. I'm going to work harder on trying to set up a foundation so that I can get money for these "small" projects. These people aren't asking for anything extravagant – just what we consider necessities. Here are some of the photos that I took of Yusuf and his family – I'll be making copies this week for them so that they can put them up in their house.



Here's a shot of the door from inside (yes the rain and mosquitoes do get in). Here's Helen (on the phone as usual) eating "lunch". The hut consisted of this long room and 3 rooms off it – one bedroom for Yusuf, one for his mother and the kids and the kitchen area. Here's his mother is her best kanga!! And here is Amina in her new sikuku (celebration after Ramadhan) dress standing in the outside veranda.



Here's Yusuf's family with some brothers also and here I am with Yusuf, his mom and some of the kids. And here are the kids sitting in front of grandma's hut.



Laundry drying outside a hut and in front of the "outhouse".
Visiting friends in the neighboring village

Helen and Yusuf



Yusuf's grain storage hut and little I don't know what. Yusuf has a bicycle, which is like owning a Mercedes! Yusuf's fields – there is no irrigation so he is totally dependent on the forces of nature for a good crop.



Helen and Yusuf's mom

Woman getting water at the well over 1 km (almost

2 miles) away Three little girls dressed up for CCM day (the ruling party) something was going on – we saw hundreds of people celebrating on the way home.

Okay – that's it for now. As I have said – I love living here and do believe that I am by far the most fortunate woman in the world. I hope that everyone is well – please send me emails and tell me how you are.