

July 2008 Back Home in Zanzibar

July 22, 2008

Dear everyone,

I have returned to Zanzibar and it's good for me to be back home and to know that this IS my home – for now. The electricity came back on but the cable was only fixed, not replaced, so the odds of another blackout happening are quite high. I have been hearing many stories about the blackout – people standing in long cues all day waiting to get 10 litres of water, jobs being lost because businesses had to shut down. Many people lasted almost two weeks before buying a generator that they could ill afford. The taps in the villages cannot work without electricity – thankfully most mosques have a well so there was some water for the people. The other option was bringing water from town on dalla dallas (buses) or walking for kilometers to find a pond with water that was unsafe to drink. The presumption by many is that now that the power is back on all is well – that is not true as how do people recoup their losses? In Illinois and Iowa I have read that the people who were affected by the floods will receive federal aid but there is no such thing here in Zanzibar.

I am humbled by the resilience of people here – they don't give up. I would be ready to curl up into a ball and wait for someone to take care of me but if anything there is more energy and happiness because the power is back on. At least June was the low tourist season so there is hope that they can get business now that the high season is approaching. People are grateful that there was some rain during the month so that not all of the crops were destroyed. In the face of this I have returned and I feel helpless – yet in the end the people are not asking for handouts – they are asking for help in rebuilding their businesses – to recoup their losses. The price of petrol is up to \$2.00 a litre, that's over \$7.00 a gallon and it won't go down. Food prices are very close to the same as food in the US. The major problem is that many salaried employees receive as little as \$100.00 per month!!!! The minimum wage here is \$70.00 per month. How can anyone possibly support themselves and their family on those wages???

The priority is immediate jobs so that people can recover from the blackout. The question I ask is "If there are no tourists and no donors in Zanzibar, what's left?" There is a vibrant community of people who are striving to build up their own local businesses – they are looking for advice, not just loans and handouts. Below are some of the ways that Participate Now! and ZEDO (Zanzibar Enterprise Development Organization) and others are collaborating to improve the quality of life for people in Zanzibar.



Participate Now! and ZEDO do small pilot projects in which we listen, learn, collaborate and share the results with others. On the left is Mzee Mohammed consulting with a member of the entrepreneur project. Women met to learn how to manage their businesses, such as selling charcoal, juice and other products. In the center Suleiman and Mama Love are looking over her kitchen garden that Suleiman was the consultant for in a World Bank project for ZAPHA+ (Zanzibar Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS). Suleiman will be starting a new agricultural project within the next two weeks in a rural village and we're very excited. We will be collaborating with 7 to 9 farmers and helping them to improve their plots and learning what other

support is needed. On the right is a group of women who have come to us asking for technical support for training, financial management and marketing skills. I will be sending out an email in a few weeks to show the progress of both of these projects. Please help us to provide immediate jobs for people who have the desire to better their lives and those of their children.

I am grateful to everyone who donated to Participate Now! while I was in the US fund raising (boy is that difficult – I don't want that to be my full time job). I am imploring you to please give to Participate Now! if you are able to. The money will be used IMMEDIATELY to make a difference in peoples lives here in Zanzibar. Please remember what Suleiman told me last year – being rich is having enough to share with others – help us to help others

Please send a check or visit our website www.participatenowfoundation.org to use the PayPal if you wish to pay with a credit card. We can also accept stock donations – please contact me if that is what you would like to do. All donations are fully tax deductible. Thank you for any help at all that you can give us.

Participate Now!
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