

March, 2009

SOLID exists to facilitate and support the empowerment of HIV-AIDS affected communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Masango Cultural Centre



The Community Center at Masango, Zimbabwe

In the dry grasslands of Zimbabwe, just 25 kilometres from the capital of Harare, Masango Cultural Center is growing hope in this time of struggle. In Seke, locals are gathering to discuss self-reliance, renew their connection to traditional practices, and implement community projects.

The proximity to Harare has impacted how Seke has developed, in both positive and negative ways. Many people travel daily Harare to work, and while this brings money into the community, it also breaks down traditional relationships and practices. Masango provides a central meeting place to discuss how to create self reliance under these conditions. The building themselves reflect the modern and the traditional.

James Mujuru, founder of Masango, comments, "When the visitors came to see the center for the first time, they were impressed with the joining of the ancient techniques and the new technologies."

Ancient techniques of building with cob and thatch for the roofs are cost efficient, easy to learn, and suitable to

the hot days and cool nights.

At Masango, the community center, caretakers' living quarters, and composting toilets are all built using local resources, labour and traditions. Mujuru said, "At the Center, we used nails and rope instead of tree bark, and built the walls thicker than people usually do. These newer technologies mean the buildings will last longer and endure the harsh weather."

Under these thatched roofs, plans to create a locally based economy using available expertise are hatched. For example, two women, Prisca and Stembene, have developed a budget and proposal to raise chickens to sell at city markets. This will allow them to stay home more often, spend less money on transport, and take better care of their families.

Mai Nekati, a community member who works for the Girl Child Network, has been planting a medicinal herb garden at the center, and sharing her knowledge, so that these herbs can not only be used to treat the sick, but also to sell.

There are now two new wells to provide water for the gardens, as well as clean drinking water. These have resulted from the generous donations from SOLID, and caring individuals. The pleasant buildings and gardens of Masango support the re-integration of tradition back into daily life, including playing music, and making instruments, dancing in ceremonies, and growing food.

For more information on the project, please contact SOLID.

Change Amongst the Masaai

by Maggie Ziegler

Amongst the Maasai of Kenya, SOLID continues to support the movement for girl's education and against female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage. Recently SOLID member Dr. Candace Cole and her husband, Eric Field, visited Kenya, following up on educational outreach in remote villages funded by SOLID, and learning about recent successes and on-going needs.

The fight against FGM is spearheaded by Agnes Pareyio, who spoke at our 2006 conference. She is a Kenyan Maasai woman who suffered female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage at age 14, and began to walk from village to village, speaking in opposition to FGM and for girl's education. Candace described her as "amazingly effective in untying the knot of this cultural practice that had bound generations of young girls to the trauma of genital mutilation."

Candace reported that the rescue house for girls, opened in 2002, is now overflowing. The 30 beds at the Tasaru Girls Rescue Centre in Narok are holding 70 girls, many having walked long distances before arriving at the gate.

Candace also noted that more parents are supporting their daughters in the week long alternative rights of passage that Pareyio initiated. Candace and Eric had the privilege to attend an

- continued on p. 2 -

unforgettable graduation ceremony for a group of girls who were just completing this making the transition to adulthood without the excruciatingly painful and dangerous procedure of cutting. Parents who supported the alternate rite of passage signed that they would not get their girls cut.

Afterwards, Candace and Eric traveled with ten of the girls to their homes in remote villages in the highlands of Kenya. Crammed into a small van, the girls, rooted in oral tradition, sang songs that detailed their learning: songs about FGM, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and AIDS. "They sang of their wishes and desires for a chance to attend school, to say no and to take responsibility for their own bodies and decisions," Candace said.

"As we climbed from the van at the end of the 4 ½ hr drive, preparing for the 2 hours of walking still ahead of us, the moon crested the mountains. As the line of beautiful, energetic young women stretched out ahead of me in the moonlight, I became suddenly aware that if it hadn't been for Agnes, for other committed community members, and for international supporters including SOLID, these girls would not be singing their hearts out, but lying on their backs bleeding in excruciating pain".

Despite these successes, FGM continues to be practiced, and the need for FGM education continues. The girls at Tasaru need post secondary skills training. Ironically, only children who leave home have a chance to be educated as the girls at Tasaru are supported through secondary school (which are not free). Girls in remote communities need support to attend school and families need economic alternatives to the traditional dowries that daughters bring.

Support for the anti-FGM campaign, and support for the girls, their families and their communities, means Pareyio's vision – that FGM can be rejected while maintaining Maasai identity – will increasingly be realized.

Sala Hantle Africa Health Projects

Through funds raised at the hugely successful Sala Hantle Walk and Fun Run 2008, SOLID has been able to provide direct financial aid to HIV/AIDS support and care institutions and organizations in Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho. SOLID has also provided in-kind support in the form of medical supplies, pharmaceutical drugs, and other much needed supplies and equipment for health related work.

We have worked directly with community led projects such as the Ndi Moyo Palliative Care Centre in Salima, Malawi, where Nurse Lucy Finch and her husband Tony have created a dedicated team, providing Palliative Care to the many people in their local area suffering the pain and stigma of advanced AIDS. SOLID has committed to provide \$3000 annually towards a comfort fund which offers basic supplies such as blankets, bedding, clothing, basic medications, and food, amongst other comfort measures for those in the last weeks of life.

SOLID is also very proud to be partnering with Ndi Moyo on the development of a Chichewa version of a Palliative Care Handbook for home based care workers. This comprehensive and applicable guide will assist countless home based care workers in their efforts to provide compassionate Palliative Care and kindness to patients even in the most remote villages of Malawi.

SOLID has continued our relationship with Siphon Mamba, who many will remember from the second Community to Community Conference (C2C2) as the impassioned Grandfather who now provides schooling for approximately 70 orphans and vulnerable children on his homestead in Swaziland.

Dr. Candace Cole, Eric Field and teacher Mary Stebbins spent time with the Mambas late last year, evaluating the health of the children and volunteers at the project, and conducting workshops with the teachers and students.

SOLID has provided \$5000 funding for essential medications and supplies, nutrition, and support for the school that will ensure that the children under Siphon's care are fed not only with learning for their minds, but kept healthy, and provided with nutritious food for their growing bodies, at the centre.

In Lesotho, SOLID continues to work with Mamello Lelotha, also a presenter at the 2006 C2C2, in her considerable efforts to provide care for disabled adults and children at the Phelisanong Disabled HIV-AIDS Orphans and Vulnerable Children Community



Patient at Phelisanong

Project. SOLID has partnered closely with Mamello, as well as Sandy Phoenix, a Nurse from the States who is volunteering her time to establish a community clinic rondavel at the project.

Currently a Basotho nurse, and a nurse assistant, provide basic medical care to not only the project's residents and volunteers, but also to outlying community members. Last year SOLID contributed \$500 towards the completion of the rondavel and for the purchase of essential medications.

For more details on the health projects of SOLID please visit Sala Hantle under African Projects on our new website, www.solidsaltspring.ca.

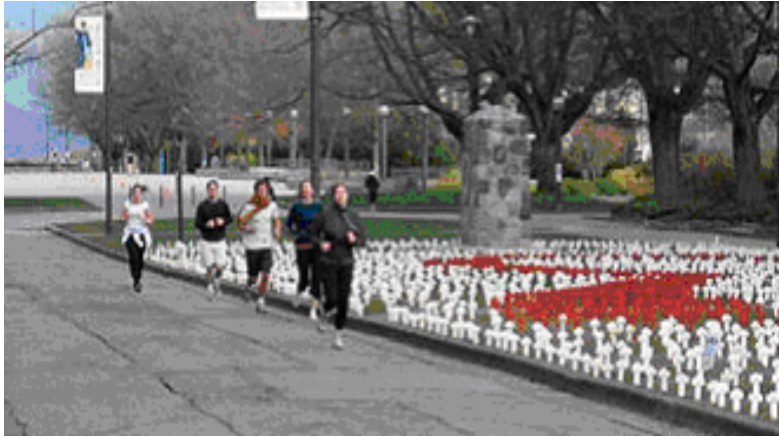
Sala Hantle Fun Run

The Sala Hantle Africa Walk and Fun Run is the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences fundraiser for SOLID. The money raised at this exciting event will support health related and community driven projects for SOLID's African partners in several Sub-Saharan Communities devastated by HIV/AIDS.

This year, in addition to the main event on the UBC campus, a second Walk and Fun Run was held in partnership with VIDEA at

Elk Lake in Victoria on Sunday March 15th. SOLID wishes to recognize the enthusiasm, energy, dedication and generosity of the organizers, UBC's

Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences and VIDEA for all their hard work in making this annual event happen.



We also thank our many sponsors for their generous support: Purdue Pharma, KVOS TV, Joy TV10, Antisense Studios, On Duck Creek Bed and

Breakfast, Oystercatcher, re-FUSE, Body Dynamics, Running Room, Lululemon, Level Ground Trading, Mt. Doug Springs Water, and Curves. For details and photos of the event please visit www.staywellafrica.com and donations to Sala Hantle can be made through the SOLID office at 125 McPhillips Avenue, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2T6 or at www.solidsaltspring.ca.

A special heartfelt appreciation for all the volunteers and participants who contributed to a fantastic event, raising awareness of the HIV/AIDS cause, and much needed funds which will allow SOLID to continue to assist our African partners.

Local Partners Make a Difference

SOLID's success is due largely to the dedicated efforts of our local partner organizations including the Frances Kelsey School in Mill Bay, the Global Youth students at Gulf Islands Secondary School and the women of the Knit-wits of Meadowbrook on Salt Spring.

Schools in Solidarity

Frances Kelsey student, Janet Whitney-Brook, was inspired when she heard Mamello Lehlotha speak in 2006 at SOLID's Community to Community conference on Salt Spring Island. This past year she has worked tirelessly with her peers to raise, not only funds, but awareness of the HIV/AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Through various fundraising efforts, such as Christmas cards, fair trade markets and 'A Day of Silence' for students, the school has raised over \$2000 for Mamello's English School in Lesotho.

In addition, SOLID director Meron Moroz led the group in the production of a peace tiles mural workshop which has travelled to Lesotho with fellow student and member of the Current

Global Issues Club at Frances Kelsey, Julia Pakstas.

Knit Wits

The Knit Wits of Meadowbrook have been busily crafting school-bags, hats and socks available at the SOLID Exchange at 125 McPhillips Ave on Salt Spring Island. The items can be purchased directly or sponsored for shipment to African children of SOLID projects.

A New Year, A New Website

Thank you to Tina Kempling and Dave Lettinga at Imagine That Graphics for building, hosting and providing technical support for the new SOLID website at <http://www.solidsaltspring.ca>

Grandmothers to Grandmothers

The Grandmothers campaign of Salt Spring Island recently raised \$4000 with the first Stephen Lewis Scrabble Fundraiser. A series of public matches

involved teachers, students and island grandmothers that raised funds to help support African grandmothers supporting orphaned children in Africa due to the HIV/AIDS crisis. SOLID was proud to support the initiative by providing an online presence on the new SOLID website.

How Can You Make a Difference?

Our current economic climate has created challenges and difficulties for even our closest neighbors. It is critical at this time that we keep vigilant in our efforts to assist grass-roots projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, for the impact felt by our poverty afflicted partners may prove catastrophic.

Please help SOLID continue its work by providing either financial donations, or your time. SOLID always needs volunteers to assist with the SOLID Exchange, fundraising, direct project work, event planning, and office administration.

Please contact the SOLID office at 250-537-0863 if you can find some room in your life for a very worthy and rewarding cause.

A Day of AIDS



Students of the Global Youth at GISS installed the public art display of 'A Day of AIDS' for World AIDS Day on December 1, 2008

SOLID Exchange

The SOLID Exchange is an effort to address global wealth inequality by creatively linking our island with African communities for exchange of goods, ideas and much needed resources.

The SOLID Exchange will be open every Thursday - Saturday from 10:30 - 2:30 at 125 McPhillips Avenue. There will be a variety of handcrafted items for sale. Please stop by to view our ever-evolving stock

All these crafts are purchased directly from the artisans at a living wage price. The proceeds of craft sales will go directly to support SOLID projects in Africa and to re-purchase stock directly from the artisans. The direct linkage through fair trade practices means the African craftspeople receive much needed resources as a hand up, not a hand out.

Since opening, the SOLID Exchange has been able to fund: fruit trees through the sale of 'Apples for Orphans' cards; donations to the Grannies in Lesotho; a well in Zimbabwe; and coats for kids in Swaziland.

About SOLID

SOLID — The Salt Spring Organization for Life Improvement and Development — is a not-for-profit society based on Salt Spring Island, BC that is dedicated to supporting projects in HIV/AIDS impacted communities of sub-Saharan Africa with a particular focus on health, education and food security . Please see the SOLID website for more information and video of SOLID projects and issues.

SOLID is completely funded by the generosity of private donors. The success of all of our projects is due in large part to the amazing support of the Salt Spring Island community. THANK YOU!!!

The SOLID board of directors for 2007/2008 is: Anna Callegari, Meron Moroz, Sam Sydneysmith, Melanie Furman and Margery Moore. We can be reached at

125 McPhillips Avenue
Salt Spring Island, BC
V8K 2T6

Ph (250) 537-0863

email: solid.saltspring@gmail.com

<http://www.solidsaltspring.ca>

WWW.SOLIDSALTSPRING.CA