



As you may recall, Joy Longfellow just completed a short term missionary assignment in Zambia where she worked supporting the development of school gardens, educating teachers and lay people about nutrition and gardening and working alongside caregivers for people living with HIV/AIDS. We thought you would enjoy some excerpts from her final emails regarding her experience.

The Teachers

I thought you would appreciate knowing how dedicated the teachers were. In my opinion, the discipleship training program through Pro-Christo is a very valuable experience. I was repeatedly impressed by the teachers' passion for the students, their commitment to their classes, and the joy that was evident in their lives. I was honored to work with them. They have a vision and a heart for the Nakoli community as a whole.

Mevis (the head teacher) organizes days from time to time when the students go out into the community and offer help to older community members- sweeping yards, cleaning, etc. She does this to teach the value of service and being involved. And it works. I spoke with the son of a neighboring farmer who noted the value he felt the school added to the community. He also knew Mevis and spoke highly of her.

I was able to get to know several of the teachers, and in each case was impressed that they viewed their position as an educator at Nakoli as more than a 'job'. Of those I spoke with, each expressed in their own words how deeply they cared about the children they were working with. I sensed many were working out of a deep sense of calling and a love for Christ and these children. Such discoveries gave me much hope and encouragement as I slowly understood many of the harsh realities faced by the children of Nakoli.

The Students

I loved working with and teaching the students. I really enjoyed the opportunity to get to know many of them. I am sure you are aware that many of the children are from broken and very poor homes. I found myself praying for their protection, for their salvation, and for growth in wisdom, understanding, and physical health. I also prayed that they would be able to connect with caring adults within the churches and schools, and that they would come to know their value as children of God.

The School Garden

Under the guidance of Mevis, the head teacher, the Nakoli School garden saw great progress over the past 7 months. Crops planted included: onions, tomatoes,

beans, maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and pumpkin. Our moringa trees are thriving, some taller than me by the middle of the rainy season. After finding sources for fruit trees, the school now has the beginnings of an orchard.

We were able to harvest some of our plantings in March, when we had our first moringa harvest and taste-test. We also enjoyed maize from the school's first maize crop. The school garden curriculum was completed, and distributed to the teachers, as well as some other interested groups.

The HIV / AIDS Support Group

Esther has several moringa and cranberry hibiscus plants thriving in her garden, and the encouragement and seeds to experiment further. The core members of the support group have participated in cooking and nutrition classes, information that will hopefully be passed on to others in their network of clients.

My experiences with Esther and the other ladies in this group left perhaps the most indelible marks on me during this time in Africa. By inviting me to see the realities of life, to face situations of deep pain with them, they allowed me to see the presence of Christ at work in desperate situations, and for that I am so grateful.

During my time in Africa, contrasts were a recurring theme; contrast between beauty and ugliness, hope and despair, brokenness and healing. I found it impossible to avoid the harsh realities of life that often escape notice in places where poverty takes less visible forms. I found myself challenged daily to learn to live in the tension between these contrasts- to find contentment each day in the knowledge that Christ is present and at work.

The Hope for Abba's Children committee thanks you for your continued prayers for those working to help 'the least of these'.