

KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

Issue 8

November 2003

Tales from Kapasseni – Slides and Stories – Friday, November 14th

Come and hear exciting news about this year's trip to Kapasseni – November 14th at the David Lam Auditorium, UVic (McLaurin Building) at 7:30 pm. The evening will feature an exquisite slide show of evocative images by photographer Ben Fox, who accompanied Joseph and Perpetua to Kapasseni this summer. Our MC will be Shivon Robinsong, co-director of the Gettin' Higher Choir. Shivon has been saving her stories of the trip for this special presentation. This is your chance to find out what is going on in Kapasseni and to ask any questions. The evening will also include spirited African singing, refreshments, and sale of Mozambican crafts. Admission is by donation (\$10/\$5 suggested), with proceeds to the Kapasseni Project. Note: At 6:30 there will be a pre-show screening of the award-winning film "Journey To Kapasseni", about the project's beginnings in 1999.

Greetings

My return to Kapasseni this July has left me more deeply connected and committed to our project than ever. In a world so full of devastation and heartbreak, particularly in Africa, Kapasseni is a place where life is definitely improving, in large part thanks to the efforts of our project community here in Victoria – and now also in St. Catharines, Ontario, where Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema and family are now pursuing their studies.

I think back to my first conversation with Joseph and Perpetua about their dream of a school for their village, nearly 5 years ago. They were so clear about it: **"Where there is no school, there is no hope. We will build a school there, and then there will be hope for the future."** The one-room schoolhouse of sticks and grass that we began with in 1999 is now a flourishing five classroom brick school, with a sixth room now being built. Over 300 children and 25 adults are enrolled.

But the most exciting difference I noticed was the brightness of the children. On my first visit in 1999, I found it almost impossible to connect with the kids – they were extremely shy, even fearful, and uninterested or incapable of much interaction with strangers from the outside world. The children of Kapasseni today are very different. They are playful and engaging, their minds obviously benefiting tremendously from the stimulation that education provides. In this newsletter, you will read of many other welcome developments in the village, but it is in this chance the children are being given to develop their potential, that I find the greatest hope.

Everywhere we went in Mozambique, we ran into people who had heard of Kapasseni. The story of the Mozambicans (Joseph and Perpetua) who got to Canada, and returned to their village to help them, is becoming a legend. We are all part of that legend. Together we will turn this world around.

— **Shivon Robinsong**
Gettin' Higher Choir Co-Director



Shivon Robinsong and Kapasseni students turn the world around, linking Canada and Mozambique across the globe

"No Time Not to Love" Benefit Concerts... and Concert CD

Thanks to the many people who supported our annual benefit concerts on June 21 and June 22, \$22,332 was raised for Kapasseni Primary School. We greatly appreciate the Gettin' Higher Choir, KidPower! Chorus, the Hermes String Quartet, and our long-time friend and supporter Ann Mortifee, for their wonderful heartfelt performances. A CD made from the performances will be available at the November 14 UVic presentation. The CD will also be available after November 14 from GHC co-director Denis Donnelly, telephone (250) 598-5186.

Singing In St. Catharines Too!

We also thank the Niagara Area Lutheran Choir and the Kapasseni Choir, whose June concert in St. Catharines, Ontario was very well-received and raised \$2,438 for the Kapasseni Project. The Kapasseni Choir is made up of the Alfazema family and other African people of all ages. Thanks to all of you who supported this concert.

Kapasseni School Notes

by *Perpetua Alfazema*

When we arrived in Kapasseni on Wednesday, July 16, the school headmaster, Mr Chico Fungulane, invited us to visit classes in session. I visited all of them! It was the grade 2 class that I was most moved by. Some of the students performed a very powerful educational play regarding HIV/AIDS. Watching through a window, I was extremely happy to see how much effort the school teachers had put into educating the students about HIV/AIDS prevention. The performance finished with the students singing beautiful songs, some songs thanking Canadian friends for supporting the school and the community of Kapasseni.

We attended a community meeting at which the parents were reminded to continue making clay bricks for teacher's housing, to encourage girls to stay in school, and to offer volunteer services at school. Afterwards, we went to the newly cleared soccer field to watch students in bright soccer uniforms and shoes play a fast-moving match. I felt as if the whole Caia District had gathered at Kapasseni! Everyone seemed to be having fun. We also met with the local Kapasseni school committee and the four teachers. The new committee was formed because the nearby communities see Kapasseni as a role model. Issues covered at this long meeting included: the need for higher education in Kapasseni, the form of discipline at the school, caring for school property, loaning goats, the agro-forestry program, and the health centre.

I met with Aissa and Nelita, the ladies who wake early to prepare the much-loved breakfast program porridge. One morning while Aissa was building a fire, I went to the well with Nelita. With a bucket of water balanced on her clean shaved head, she wept as she told me about her baby, who died in late June, just weeks earlier. The breakfast program continues to feed the school children, as well as mothers and babies. This year we started providing 2 servings per day, morning and afternoon. This nutritious staple is badly needed, due to continued food shortages. One dollar provides 25 cups of porridge.



Girls in uniform with breakfast plates on their backs

Kapasseni Health Centre

by *Joseph Alfazema*

Our beautiful Kapasseni Health Centre has been completed, and has recently opened. It is now staffed with a midwife and assistant, and a registered nurse should be arriving any day. Many people will be served from all over Caia District (the wider area around Kapasseni). Women, in particular, are delighted to have a health centre.

We are hoping to soon have the health centre powered by solar panels providing light and refrigeration for vaccines and medicines.

The Mozambican Health Ministry is very supportive, and has agreed to pay the salary of the RN. Dr Olivier Wingi, the district health officer for Caia, thanked Kapasseni Project volunteers for accomplishing so much. He is elated about the health centre, which he thinks will be an important part of fighting the HIV/AIDS problem in Caia District through education and testing.

He told us that the town of Caia (pop. 92,000), on a main transportation route, has a huge HIV/AIDS problem, and about 5,000 AIDS orphans.

After our long and very informative discussion with him, he drove us to Kapasseni in a hospital ambulance.



The new health centre was completed earlier this year

Heartfelt Thanks

In our last newsletter we told you about a Mozambican woman with HIV. We asked for donations to pay for medical treatment that would prolong her life and ease her suffering. At the June fundraising concert, an appeal was also made. The woman we want to help is Lucia, Perpetua Alfazema's sister. We are happy to report that Joseph was able to take \$3,654 to help Lucia with her serious illness. Lucia and her family were overwhelmed by the kindness of people who responded to their plea. Her daughter, Domingas wrote:

"Mum is now in better condition, though she has had serious side effects when she first took the medicine. She has now switched to a fix dose. I am writing to thank all of you for your contributions, though we really don't know all of you. I really don't know if she could have survived if it was not for you. We don't know how to thank you all. Please say our greetings and thank you to all the rest."

If you want to continue to help, please send donations to: **Joseph Alfazema, c/o Redeemer Lutheran Church, 911 Jenkins Avenue, Victoria V9B 2N8.** (This is not part of the Project mandate, so tax receipts cannot be issued.)

The Village Market

by Shivon Robinsong

I remember my dismay upon first arriving at Kapasseni in 1999. I was expecting some semblance of a “village”, but instead we found a collection of ramshackle huts, and nothing else. To call it a “village” was historically true – it had been a thriving village when Joseph Alfazema grew up there in the 1960s, before the long war years. And, “village”, I see now, was a vision of what it might become.

Fast forward to the summer of 2003. On the highest ground in the area, close to the chief’s compound where that first little school was built in 1999, now stands the village centre: the School, the Well, and the Health Post. And now also the village market. Here’s how it happened.

This year, instead of buying the year’s supply of corn for the breakfast program from a big supplier in town, Perpetua and Joseph put the word out locally that the school would buy corn on Wednesday, which would be a general “market day”. People were invited to bring whatever they had to sell, and to come prepared to shop!

On the day of the market, there was an exciting buzz in the air. Perpetua had a gaggle of teenage girls working hard packaging beads, displaying clothes brought from Canada, deep frying mouth-watering doughnuts, cutting lengths of brightly coloured fabric, and making little piles of dried fish and onions, spread out on grass mats.

Starting at the first light, people arrived from all directions bearing loads of corn for sale. Deals were made, cash was traded for corn, and then the shopping began! Perpetua is a brilliant business woman, and a natural in community economics. The money spent on the year’s supply of corn was put into the Kapasseni community, and re-circulated again that same day, with ample opportunities for people to buy their essentials locally. All proceeds from the goods Perpetua had brought went back to the project’s budget. A number of other people also sold produce, and went home with money in their pockets. There had not been a market in about 30 years, since before the wars. By the end of the day people had decided to make every Saturday “Market Day”. Now, Kapasseni feels like a real village.

We Welcome Victor Saeni

With the increasing activity and complexity of our project, we took a big step forward this year by hiring Victor Saeni as a full-time local Development Officer, to live and work in Kapasseni. Victor’s duties include supervising all aspects of the project, keeping workers motivated and on track, communicating with the Project Committee in Canada, and dealing with various levels of the Mozambican government concerning education, health and agriculture in Kapasseni. Victor is well-qualified, having worked for an NGO as a loans officer and also as an English teacher at a high school in Caia. Victor’s fluency in Sena, Portugese, and English will be very useful. So will his personal qualities of being kind, understanding, and willing to work with people at a grass roots level. We are thankful to have Victor as part of our team, and look forward to working with him to assist Kapasseni.

Newsletters – Let us know if you want current or future newsletters mailed or emailed to you or a friend.

Micro-Credit Financing

by Mona Ahtzener

The Project Committee believes that a healthy economy, where local people participate and benefit, is key to Kapasseni’s future. Currently, cotton is the main cash crop and “jack-of-all-trades” is a source of income for some, while the Kapasseni Project’s breakfast and sewing programs also provide cash flow. Recognising the need to have more opportunities for villagers to generate income, and with the help of presentations from representatives of Results Canada and Erra BC, we have been studying the feasibility of a micro-credit program.

“Micro-credit” means very small loans, generally under \$50, to local entrepreneurs. Borrower groups vouch for each other and no new loans are issued until all the current loans have been repaid. Repayments are very small – some as little as 15 cents – and are made at weekly or bi-weekly repayment meetings. These meetings are also an opportunity to educate the loan holders about finance and savings.

A variety of small businesses in numerous countries have been started using micro-credit loans. In Bangladesh, one villager used his loan to buy a cell phone and sells time to other villagers. Projects in Eritrea include tea shops, beer making, basket weaving and embroidery. Items produced are marketed in gift shops and airports, providing an outside source of income for the community.

There are a number of important issues to consider before offering micro-finance to the Kapasseni villagers:

- We would need a field representative (loans officer) on site who is knowledgeable about the needs of the community and the workings of micro-credit.
- It is important to work with the local people and their needs, and to educate them about micro-credit.
- Loan recipients must be taught how to produce a simple business plan.
- 80% of micro-credit in the world goes to women, and women are more likely to put the money back into the community or their families. However, in Kapasseni, it is the men who make the decisions.

There may always be people in Kapasseni who would need direct assistance. However, micro-finance could provide opportunities for those who have the capability to generate income, which by circulating locally would benefit others in the community. Some of these small businesses could be providing goods and services not currently available in Kapasseni. As the village market shows, there is plenty of local entrepreneurial drive. Micro-finance may be a way to help Kapasseni develop a sustainable economy. If you have expertise in this area and would like to help these villagers, please contact us.

Kapasseni Gift Cards

Think of giving a contribution to the Kapasseni Project in the name of someone special. Our friend Heather Fox has made beautiful gift cards which indicate how much has been donated in the name of the recipient. This is a way to help people who need it most, in the Christmas spirit of love and caring. The cards will be on sale at the November 14 presentation at UVic. They can also be obtained from Sylvia Gledhill at 478-6922.

Agro-Forestry

by Shivon Robinsong

Joseph Alfazema tells us that the land around Kapasseni was once a forest, thick with all kinds of trees, with many uses – some bearing fruit or nuts, others excellent for building, or firewood, some with medicinal uses. But during the war years, forests all over Mozambique were burned, in an effort to flush out the guerrilla fighters.

Some attempts over the past few years to plant food bearing trees have been made, though not many trees have survived. This year, we brought in 450 seedlings – mango, tangerine, coconut, cashew, prickly pear, passion fruit, avocado and pineapple. What fun it was first to find these seedlings. There are no commercial nurseries, so it is a matter of finding enterprising people who have been raising these trees from seed. One woman proudly showed us her collection of around 100 young trees, raised in 1 kg sugar bags, and beamed with pleasure when we asked if she would sell us the entire lot. With delight, we spied a pile of sprouted coconuts for sale at a market place in Beira. Benjamin, one of our hard-working project helpers in Beira, found the rest of the trees and then organized for wooden boxes to be specially built to transport them.

Some trees planted last year were eaten by marauding goats, so this year, a huge orchard was cleared and fenced, in preparation for the trees' arrival. We hired two enthusiastic and knowledgeable young men to plant the trees and take ongoing care of them.

This year's tree-planting was funded by a grant from the Harmony Foundation and a cash gift presented to Shivon at the June concert, "in lieu of flowers", by the Gettin' Higher Choir. What we got going this year was more an orchard than a re-forestation – but it is a start, as was the sticks-and-grass school four years ago. We are hoping that much will be learned this year about tree care, that can be built on in future years.

We have a much larger sum (\$4,500) set aside to expand the program. This includes a gift of money provided by Denis Donnelly from funds collected in memory of his former wife Becky Bernson, who died in February 2000 (Becky was a fine musician and a strong environmental advocate). It would be great to have someone with experience in and passion for re-forestation to enter the picture in the next year. If you or someone you know would be interested, please get in touch with us!

Want to Get Involved? - We welcome any who would like to work with us on this project. You can contact us in Victoria at 478-6922 (Sylvia Gledhill) or in St. Catharines at (905) 935-9161 (Perpetua Alfazema). Email kapasseni@becon.org. Donations to: Redeemer Lutheran Church (memo "Kapasseni Project"), 911 Jenkins Avenue, Victoria, BC V9B 2N8.

More Information - We have a brochure, video and other materials available. Our eight newsletters, with more pictures of Kapasseni and information about the remarkable start of this project, can be found at <http://www.kapasseni.org>

Newsletter Production - Edited by Ian McLachlan, with pictures by Ben Fox, article authors indicated, and much help from Project Committee members and Shivon Robinsong.

Finances – As At October 2003

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Balance from 2002	\$41,586
June concerts (Victoria)	22,332
June concert (St. Catharines)	2,438
Individual donations	13,375
Agriculture gifts	4,000
CIDA/CLWR grant	33,547
Sale of crafts/books/cards	<u>1,245</u>
TOTAL	\$118,524

EXPENDITURES

School: Salaries	2,877
Breakfast program	2,725
Building materials, labour	8,774
Desks	4,747
Supplies and uniforms	1,749
Other	431
Health Centre	
Building materials, labour	8,774
Equipment and furnishings	8,504
Salaries (including RN & midwife)	2,490
Transportation	5,861
Development officer and assistant	2,996
Mozambican contact persons and travel	1,590
Coordinators' travel	7,500
Video and photography	5,000
Agro-forestry	1,213
Wells repair	1,764
Communication	615
Bank fees	2,002
Office supplies	639
Pamphlets and newsletter	<u>588</u>
TOTAL	\$70,840

FUNDS REMAINING

In Victoria bank	4,662
In Mozambique	20,174
Investment : GIC	16,900
Matching funds due from CLWR	<u>5,948</u>
TOTAL	\$47,684

Notes: CIDA, through Canadian Lutheran World Relief, has provided funding of up to \$25,000 per year. This partnership ends in 2003, and we will negotiate a new one soon. Until then, we will have to fund the complete project in Africa. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the good management of our coordinators (Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema), we have \$47,684 to apply to a new partnership or to the project directly. The Kapasseni Project Committee is run entirely by volunteers.



Kapasseni's hope for the future