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Hello Everyone,

We continue bringing you up to date on the country. Let me begin by speaking of the plight of the children there. We mentioned last time that the census taken in 2007 listed 1.3 million orphans. That is the latest statistic I can find that has been put out by the Zambian government. It is our belief that the number has grown exponentially with the rising number of deaths due to AIDS since that time. Probably there are at least that many ‘double orphans’ by this time. You need to understand that in African culture, even if only one parent has died, the children are considered to be orphans.

Of those orphans who still have one parent alive, one out of three will have the HIV virus. Few are in a place where they have access to testing, let alone receive the medical care or nutrition they need to prolong their lives. Where such conditions exist, the older children are likely pulled out of school to help meet the food security needs for the family. In extreme cases, those same children become the parents of their younger siblings and the sole breadwinner, taking on the care of their remaining sick parent on top of everything else. A happy, carefree childhood is a very precious thing in sub-Saharan Africa (which includes Zambia).

Because of this sad situation, a couple of years ago we began BYDS (Bridge Youth Discipleship Studies) for those in the 13-18 year old category. This is a two-year program, half of which is given to Bible studies geared to let them know that God loves them and has good plans for them, and the other half geared to life skills. At the very end of the program they are given a project to work on together which is meant to lead them into caring for themselves (inducing self-confidence, promoting teamwork, encouraging them with a bit of income and, hopefully, steering them away from the street and a life of crime or self-destruction). Thus far, it has been very well received by the teens. The long-term results have yet to be determined, but we will have at least planted good seeds.

For those women who are now leading single-headed households and trying to keep a family together, we have begun helping them in several ways. At their request we began a Women’s Committee which meets once a week. Together, they decided on a project to raise pigs. We brought in a partner ministry which, after approving our program, taught them how to take care of the pigs, how to build an enclosure to keep them, etc. Then they provided starter animals to them free of charge. This not only provides food security for their families, but once they have built up their numbers they will be able to sell to local grocers to supplement their income. It promotes teamwork and provides encouragement that someone cares. Upon my return we will start an ongoing weekly Bible study for them, which will be open to all the women in the village, which is a departure to include those not fully involved in our process as of yet.

In everything we do, we promote Christ and His teaching. There is virtually no area that you could even think of that could not stand improvement there. What we have to guard against is making the mistake of telling them what they need. They have to see the need and want change before we attempt to help. We can only do what God permits and the people are willing to work for. Even though many times we can see the needs long before they can, our process prohibits going forward in any area in which they haven’t expressly requested our help. We have found over the years that this is God’s way for us to operate – everything is done in His kairos time.

Your support has and will continue to make a difference in the lives of those who are in need. Thank you for taking part in our journey to walk the path God has ordained for us in Zambia. More next time.

God bless you abundantly,
Ruth for the entire Bridge Team

We invite you to visit us at www.bridgeinternationalzambia.org for an up-to-date account of what God has accomplished through us for the Kingdom since we began Bridge in 2005.

You may send support by check to Bridge International, 78 Brookside Drive, Terre Haute, IN 47802.

-OR- You may make a bank transfer directly to our ministry account in Zambia. For simple instructions on how to do this please contact me at mcclintock_ruth@yahoo.co.uk, or write to the address above. **Either way is tax deductible.** Thank you!

“Not a hand-out, but a hand up”