

Dear Friends and Family,

Newsletter – January/February 2006

Hello, it's me again! Douglas, (or Kupikita as I am known here). I have returned from a long silence. It's not that I hadn't started these newsletters on various occasions, but the challenges (or growing pains) of ADEA in 2005 prevented me from writing a compelling and cohesive newsletter. This letter will be a bit longer than most (and perhaps less structured) as I try to bring you up to date, and get my work life organized in the heat and humidity of the equatorial Indian Ocean coast.

Where to begin? Going back to July of 2005 – I began a three-month stay in Tanzania. ADEA Tanzania received a grant from the Tanzanian Cultural Fund to conduct our third bi-annual artisan skill training workshops. We conduct four weeks of workshops for carvers, painter, basket weavers, welders and tailors. The seminars went well and broke new ground. The basket-weaving workshop brought the greatest fruit as I challenged the weavers to weave with “trash”. It was an awkward beginning, especially the new couple that has woven exclusively with palm fronds, but by the end they had produced wonderful new designs from cornhusks, banana bark and leaves, guinea fowl feathers, coconut, and even plastic bags. These new materials produced baskets with tourist, and also Tanzanian appeal. A local security guard, who had called the weaving couple lunatics for collecting trash, three weeks later made an order for a newly design backpack.

ADEA continues to grow and strengthen in artisan involvement, recognition and product sales. This development has occurred more slowly than we had anticipated, but this gradual and natural growth has produced a very solid result that is making enduring changes for the producers here. What this means in the long run is that now more established producers are serving as models and teachers to newer members of ADEA. This development allows us to focus on design and new skill training. This past year over 15 new artisans joined us.

In January we received a small grant through the Ford Foundation to serve as honorary volunteers at the Sauti za Busara music festival on Zanzibar in preparation for the proposed launching of a traditional music and arts festival in Mtwara. Here are some words from that week:

Tonight is Friday night, February 10th. I am on the island of Zanzibar, perched on a dirt slope in the corner of a 17th century Arab fort – built from the stones of a Portuguese church - overlooking the stage of the Busarsa za sauti (the sound of wisdom) music festival. My duties are to run the picture and power point projections to fill in-between the acts. I sit behind a large screen made of long sheets of muslin sewn together and supported by stripped trunks of trees. Stalls with palm roofs line the walls of the fort's interior; over the wall one can see the House of Wonders (the late 19c building which boasted electricity, flush toilets, indoor plumbing and various other wonders before almost anywhere in East Africa – and thus, so named). On stage now is a traditional Arab/Swahili orchestra: Men with violins, cellos, basses and other western and Arab instruments. The men wear white robes, black blazers and embroidered hats. It

is amazing see how an introduced culture can be incorporated into ones own. Though many of the Arabs left this island soon after the 1961 revolution, their influence, music and culture remain very present. Their manner of singing has the nasal quality common in the near east.

OK, Now it's Saturday. On the stage are Mandojo and Domokaya – hip-hop artists from Tanzania. They have the expected attitude hands and one artist's jeans are so low, that without his tucked in extra long T-shirts there would be a second full moon tonight. The bass pumps so that you can feel it in your ribs and the audience is standing and waving their arms. The two striking differences from the West are the Swahili language and their bright friendly smiles.

Now on stage are four Kenyan rappers – much harsher – no smiles, dreadlocks and their attitudes are less endearing. Their lyrics are more intense and charged. This really marks the difference between these two neighbour countries. Kenya is much more developed and the corruption and urban poverty and violence experienced is felt to a much greater extent than Tanzania. Though the music is in Swahili, one can see that the Zanzibaries are much less taken with this Kenyan intensity.

It is wonderful to be in Zanzibar. It's a magical place like no other in East Africa. The first foreign settlers were the Portuguese. The sultan of Oman decided he like the cooler more humid heat over Oman, and made Zanzibar his new capital. The city grew in wealth through spice and slave trade to the Arab and Persian world. Stonetown's palaces and mansions multiplied in the confines of its fortifications. The streets are wide and narrow passages. Some wide enough for two cars other hardly wide enough for a single bicycle. Influence from the middle east, East Africa and India have left their marks on this town. Many men still wear long white robes and embroidered caps and many -women keep their heads, legs and arms covered – a few even wear the veils, but few. After the revolution, with the departure of the merchants and sultan, and the arrival of the Soviets, Chinese and East Germans – with all their money for new construction – many of the buildings quickly began to decay in the humid air of the island. Some of the homes have been restored into lovely hotels and homes while others have collapsed into great piles of limestone.

The reason I am here, along with 3 others from my town (Mtwara), is to gain experience for our effort to launch a traditional dance festival in Mtwara region of Tanzania in August of this year. Where this festival includes hip-hop and fusions artists, we will be focusing on traditional dance forms and competition in various categories (traditional dances, contemporary dances, teaching dances (HIV/AIDS, water use, etc) and costumes. There has been an enthusiastic response from people we have spoken with, and hopefully their enthusiasm will be accompanied by some funding sources.

OK, it's Sunday night, the last night of the festival. Another warm moon lit evening. So far we have heard and watched more traditional performing groups, including the Makonde tribal group who are from the region of Mtwara where I live. Their performance involved masks, bells, rattles and dancing on stilts. More acrobatic verses dancing. Now a ragge band from Swaziland is playing. They have a nice groove.

On Thursday we (three others from the ADEA team and I) will take the high-speed ship back to Dar es Salaam. There we'll meet up with some agencies before returning to Mtwara to begin getting resettled, making firmer plans for our festival, and offering our bi-annual workshop training workshops. By the grace of our grant, we will fly to Mtwara – a delightful 55 minutes avoiding the long treacherous road with disintegrating busses, and the Safari sea cruise – a 36 hour deck-top adventure.

Back in Mtwara:

Previously a young man by the name of Daudi stayed with me in my home, as I sponsored him at a local technical school. Daudi a 22-year-old orphan who, because of becoming a Christian was denied a secondary education by his Muslim extended family. As I found him exceedingly bright and realized that he would never excel in his dream to be a pastor with the poor Swahili based education available in Mtwara, I have sent him off to study in Kampala, Uganda where English is the common language.

This time, my friend Daniel Tipape will join me in my home for three months. Tipape is a Maasai. It is his community I have mentioned in the past that has suffered greatly from the instigation of the Tsavo West Game Reserve in Kenya. This land was once their grazing land. Now they are confined to a small peninsula of land between the reserve and Mt. Kilimanjaro. We have considered the idea of a school and other activities to help them out of this crisis. I have asked Tipape to come live with me so that I might better learn about his people, their needs and perspective on things, and so he can learn what it means to write a business plan, budget and grant proposals, and most importantly to determine what is the right model or plan for his community from a Maasai perspective. The idea is that he will lead and manage any developments proposed for his community, and I (ADEA USA) will advise and support.

Through patience and help with cleaning, the reverting of my home to a Tanzanian home has been reversed, and I am starting to feel a life groove set in. Tonight I am home with hints of malaria, or minor heat stroke, or just the normal chills and runs of transition. My friend Tipape is enjoying the adventures of southeaster Tanzania. He has never been so hot, he had never seen the ocean, he had never eaten prawn or calamari or tuna. The bus on which he travel to Mtwara took 60 hours to reach Mtwara from Dar – Normal estimates are 18. As I have mentioned before Mtwara is the place where busses come to die from China, Korea and Japan. As the road only partially paved between Dar es

Salaam and Mtwara, most companies won't risk good busses, plus the clientele is generally very poor. Tipape has discovered the wonders of swimming. He was so jubilant as he tested (and tasted) the consistency of the Indian Ocean, holding his breath under water, and playing with various taught and spontaneous strokes. "Nimefurai sana" (I enjoy it very much).

ADEA is growing in recognition with a visit from the Finish Ambassador's wife, the US Ambassador, a likely grant from the German Embassy, and ADEA product in two Dar es Salaam venues with another one pending. We also plan to launch into the Christmas markets of Germany this year. I will let you know how things develop here. In March we will conduct our forth bi-annual workshop training seminars.

Here are some of the day-the-day adventures I've experienced since I last wrote:

- Did I tell you I drank goat's blood with my Maasai friends? It was warm and smooth, just like the taste when you put a cut finger in your mouth (which by the way, I've learned is not a great idea considering all the germs in our mouth), but just a lot more of it. It won't be a regular part of my diet, despite its excellent nutritional value.
- In my tiny garden I observed a large spider tirelessly and masterfully spinning its 36" diameter web. Despite its 4" leg span, I tried my best to experience the awe of this creature's ability, versus imagining it crawling over me. It is a magnificent thing to watch a spider at work. Ultimately, however, as I learned that spiders in Tanzania with yellow webs are generally poisonous, I opted to have it removed before I accidentally disturbed its web and it tumbled upon me to seek revenge.
- The oddest food this time was guinea fowl. This bird's decorative spotted feathers make a fabulous decorative detail for baskets. It was nice and flavorful. I have considered raising them, as they are resistant to disease, but people say they make a lot of noise. Had I eaten Bush Pig since I last wrote?
- I have a refrigerator now and my life has changed completely!! Ice tea, frozen papaya sorbet, potato salad, pasta salad...I am in heaven!! A challenge for you: try to spend a hot summer week with only room temperature drinks – just try it!!
- Ice Cream came to town for the first time in September. Though I like it (as do many) it is the first time I truly felt wealthy and decadent. Even soda pop I can more easily justify for the need of liquid each day, but ice cream was pure frivolity! The young man living with me, Daudi, who I kept waiting to ask for one of the ice cream bars in the freezer, never did. On the day before our departure to Dar es Salaam, I asked if he would like one. He didn't know what ice cream was. He said he'd like to take some for the bus the next day. I had to explain ice cream didn't work that way. He asked what color it was when it wasn't cold. Every now and again I get a startling reminder of the background of my friends. Daudi had grown up in a mud hut – and only once left the region. There were weeks at a time in his childhood he had just one meal a day. Often they included field rats – but rats are eaten where he comes from so it's not as drastic as it sounds – or is it?
- In August we painted our dingy green and white office front to a yellow and marine blue masterpiece with white and royal blue accents. Our office became

the talk of the town! Had I only realized what a fresh coat of paint could do (of course with lovely detailing)! Strangers came to inquire who and what we were. Even taxi drivers stopped in front of the building to point it out. It was quite spectacular. My hope is that we can start a trend for beautiful buildings!

Now, on a spiritual note: “Be slow to speak, quick to listen and slow to become angry.” James 1:19. This is the great and wise challenge I face. This all comes back to an earlier lesson I was learning – how much am I missing by being so eager to share my view or idea, come to conclusions, or have power over another person, versus drawing someone else out to hear from them and uplift them. And also to consider what would be the most fruitful and advantageous outcome to a situation that stirs my anger? This clearly may require some strategizing – like when I find myself upset, writing down the situation and asking for 24 hours to consider it and pray about it. If I were in a culture that was more free to express frustration in a more overt way, the need for calm discussion would be less vital, but the Tanzanians are non-confrontational, AND they say a little and mean a lot – which is a maddening challenge. Also, my jumbled Swahili often says things I didn’t intend to say.

On that note I send off this newsletter. Another will come soon in April. Thanks to many of you for your financial and skill support. It means a lot to me to be able to share what I am doing here in Tanzania with people at home. I hope to do more speaking and sharing with others about life in this corner of Tanzania. In December, Tanzania had a peaceful election of a new President. This is very noteworthy; as the former president finished his two terms without trying to change the constitution to allow him to remain in office (which is the standard of the majority of leaders in Africa). The new leader, Kikwete, has made a strong beginning – firing a few especially ineffective and corrupt ministers. It seems he may be trying to prove himself in the light of the hugely disappointing performance of the new government in Kenya. I hope Tanzania will make some promising developments in the four years ahead.

I am off! Kwa Heri rafiki! (Good bye my friends),

Douglas

(Sorry for any editing errors – I am quite pressed for time)