



To all the friends of ASAP Africa,

ASAP is excited to announce the launch of our Malawi program, replicating our successes in Zimbabwe to improve lives elsewhere. We have a growing staff of enthusiastic individuals, eager to end the cycle of poverty. The office is now staffed and operational in Chikwawa Malawi, south of Blantyre. In less than six months our program coordinator, Jeanette Batiste, has successfully established ASAP within this rural community. Jeanette has constructed a dedicated ASAP Board of Directors with close ties to the community and gained the endorsement of local and national government leaders. These accomplishments have given ASAP's future in Malawi a promising and positive outlook for the future.

Victor Katchika-Jere, ASAP Malawi Program Manager, and Owen Chomanika, Finance Manager, are working fervently to establish ASAP procedures and practices after spending a week with their ASAP counterparts in Zimbabwe where our program is well established. Two new field officers came on board in December 2008 and the Malawi staff is eager to launch the pilot Village Savings and Lending program in Malawi. Set to start in January, this project will enhance the financial security and improve the daily lives of 1,200 women in the surrounding area.

ASAP is pleased to announce the receipt of a grant from Cordaid, the Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid in support of this new Malawi program. This organization is located in the Netherlands and has a strong history of development assistance, focusing on entrepreneurial skills.

Meanwhile, our commitment to the irrepressible Zimbabwe citizens remains unwavering during these politically and economically trying times. ASAP resumed operations in October after the government barred all non-profit organization functions for four months. We are faced with challenges of hyperinflation estimated at 400,000,000% with the worst Cholera epidemic in recent memory sweeping across the nation. These issues coupled with the already deteriorating infrastructure make project implementation very difficult but these problems are no match for the determination and dedication of rural families and ASAP staff.

Despite the hardships faced by so many, ASAP was able to help over 20,000 families increase their sustainable income during the past year. This would not be possible without our partners CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Concern World-Wide, and Plan International. We are grateful for the collaborative efforts of all of these organizations.

Operating a viable savings clubs during hyper inflation requires resilience and ingenuity - two traits that are abundant in rural Zimbabwe. With inflation well over the four hundred-million mark, the repayment of a loan after a 4 week loan period can be incredibly difficult to determine. Savings club members and leaders have adapted and devised some ingenious solutions. For example, groups revalue an agreed item, (for example, a bar of soap), on the mutually agreed repayment date. In this way, the “portfolio value” is maintained in a rural context. To many this may be insignificant, but today in rural Zimbabwe these savings clubs contribute significantly to a families’ ability to survive.

Amid these crises women leaders from 55 villages in the Mutasa and Honde Valley participated in ASAP workshops to improve their agricultural production and learn practical skills that improve the quality of life, health and nutrition each day. Participants gained knowledge on conservation farming techniques to improve the state of the land on which they are farming, as well as learning of permaculture and psychosocial support for those living with the effects of HIV/AIDS. A portion of the farming workshop was dedicated to spreading the word about the uses of medicinal herbs and proper ways of growing them. These herbs can be used to lighten the pain from common symptoms from which HIV/AIDS patients commonly suffer. These informative sessions were supported and funded by CG Charitable Fund and the Friends of the Honde Valley.

The ongoing Bridge the Gap Program math teacher training project did not see much progress by the end of the fourth year. In response to political and economic strife attendance by both teachers and students was down. Teacher strikes resulting from the decline in support by government for the education sector only exacerbated the situation. Despite the lack of formal classroom activities, BTG Cluster Coordinators continued to work with teachers that made an effort and assisted them by supporting extra-curricular math club activities.

As a non-profit organization, ASAP depends on your donations and we are always pleased with the compassion and generosity of our supporters. It is because of you that we are able to improve the lives of thousands in rural Africa today. Keep in mind that everyday millions find themselves fighting to feed their families, trekking miles for decent water, and struggling to cope with political and economic situations that leave them powerless victims. Your donation will make a difference in the life of a rural family.

It is easy to make a secure donation online by visiting www.asapafrika.org. Or please mail your donation to:

ASAP Africa
P.O. Box 2275
Peachtree City, GA 30269

If you have any questions or comments please call (770) 632-7451.
Thank you for your interest and kind support!

Sincerely,
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