



## Letter from the Executive Director Elizabeth Bara

With the official onset of winter here in the US, we are inundated with constant reminders of all the material items available that promise to enrich our lives. Through gifts, we strive to bring joy and happiness to those we cherish. Gifts are an expression of our love.

It is truly a gift to us at ASAP to be able to participate in working to restructure a world where poverty exists only in history books. With the help of technology, the impact of working together to bring sustainable improvements in the lives of those less fortunate, improves each day.

Because of the internet and cell phones, rural areas in Africa that were previously inaccessible are now linked to the world. More and more, that global village is becoming a reality. Ignorance of abject poverty and the impact of our consumption is no longer acceptable. Humanity, as a whole, must demand more. We can do better!

ASAP, now working in partnership with CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and Concern World Wide, has had the privilege of improving the lives of well over 25,000 families in Zimbabwe during 2007.

It is truly an honor to know that a family previously on food aid is now able to feed itself; that a widow is no longer begging and is now proud and self reliant; that an orphaned child is able to attend school. The fact that you are reading this newsletter is also an honor because your support and interest provides the positive energy that motivates and inspires our work. Thank you!

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## Inflation Tops the Charts

Inflation is now so bad in Zimbabwe that the government statistical office can no longer calculate it!

Inflation is calculated by comparing the average cost of a set basket of goods - the cost of margarine, flour, sugar, milk, maize meal, salt, tomatoes, transportation etc. In Oct 07 inflation was recorded at 14,800% - so the government cut all prices in shops by 50%. The goods in the shops quickly sold out at a loss to the owners. Of course there were no replacement goods purchased. You can guess how



*How much is that?*

this ends up; yes the shops are all empty.

Now let's get back to the cost of that basket of goods... what goods? That's right; there are

no goods to put in the basket! There's no way to calculate inflation on an empty basket but at least everything is reasonably priced, in theory!

# ASAP's Bridge the Gap Project Receives Books from Rotary

School children in the 111 schools involved in ASAP's Bridge the Gap (BTG) Math project will receive sets of Math & Science textbooks and library books in 2008. Two containers of gently used books arrived in Zimbabwe in November. Half are used Math and Science Textbooks, donated by Mr. Kemper Wynn at Textbook Recyclers in Grantville, GA. The other educational and children's reading books were donated during a community book drive in Fayette County GA. ASAP's Literacy project was funded by the Rotary Clubs of Peachtree City, Fayetteville, and Fayette Daybreak in partnership with the Borrowdale Brooke Rotary Club in Harare, Zimbabwe, and Rotary International.



**Mr. Muchuwaire, Head of Ndunduma Primary School, is please is receive books on behalf of his school.**

The BTG project completed it's 3rd year, working with grade 5 students during 2007. The five year project started in 2005 working with grade 3 students and teachers from 84 primary schools, funding math club activities for both teachers and pupils, academic competitions and teacher training workshops. ASAP tracks test scores and each year the BTG schools perform well above the national average.



**Kufusa Mari children in savings clubs understand applied math concepts**

In Dec. 2007 ASAP received funding from The Flora Family Foundation for a new 2 year BTG project. During 2008 & 09 ASAP will implement the project for grade 6 and 7s in 31 schools in the neighboring Mutasa District that will be new to the BTG project. This will give ASAP a unique opportunity to document the impact of a 2 year project vs. a 5 year project at the close of the 2009 school year.

## Kufusa Mari for kids

Kufusa Mari Junior is an ASAP pilot project that brings the Village Savings and Lending saving club activities into the BTG school math clubs. The ultimate goal is to increase secondary school enrolment (less than 50% of children can afford to attend secondary school in Zimbabwe) while supporting and improving pupils' micro-entrepreneurial activities and increasing Math comprehension by application of concepts.

Pupils in Grade 4 to 7 have been participating in training since May 2007 and 328 children have formed 46 savings clubs in 8 schools. A total value of Z\$35,764,306 in loans have been issued to the participating students within the clubs. Keep in mind, there were no outside funds provided by ASAP— all funds were generated from the club members during their monthly savings club sessions.

The positive outcomes of the program are not only encouraging entrepreneurial activities but also building self-confidence and self-esteem. During these difficult times in Zimbabwe, most students attend school without basic stationery. According the Collins Mutsvairo, BTG Project Manager, it is easy to differentiate Kufusa Mari Junior participants from others — they are the children with notebooks and a smile.



# Kufusa Mari Savings Club Update

Kufusa Mari (Save for the Future) was the name given to ASAP's Village Savings and Lending (VS&L) project in 2001 by the founding members. With a 2 year grant from The McKnight Foundation, ASAP helped well over 5,000 rural women to improve income and household security for their families. Today, ASAP is honored to be working as an implementing partner with CARE, Catholic Relief Services and Concern World Wide, sharing our VS&L project expertise — working together to improve the quality of life for thousands of families during these challenging times.

Here is a summary of the goals of each of ASAP's Kufusa Mari projects:

The Kufusa Mari Two Project, funded by the McKnight Foundation in April 2006 aims to enhance the quality of life for 6,500 rural women over two years. Thus far the project has already surpassed this goal, with over 6,700 participants actively involved in savings and lending clubs.

The 5 year Rural Micro-Finance Project started in April 2007 in partnership with CARE. ASAP's goal is to improve the standard of living of over 17,800 economically active poor rural women - 11,000 will initiate new savings club activities and ASAP will help over 6,800 existing project clients to diversify their income sources through additional business training.

The Joint Initiative Project aims to decrease urban vulnerability throughout Zimbabwe. The first 18 month phase was successfully completed in November 2007. Mercy Corps is the lead partner of this collaboration between Africare, CARE, CRS, Oxfam, Practical Action and SAVE UK. ASAP has surpassed the project goal—to uplift the standard of living for 613 poor individuals and their families in Sakubva, a high density suburb of Mutare. Over 700 individuals are now actively engaged in savings club activities and the demand for the project and training remains unmet. Currently the project has been granted a no-cost extension through Feb. 2008 when a 3-year project is anticipated.

ASAP's three year project partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) strives to address the unique and urgent needs of Out of School Adolescents (OSA). The project commenced in October 2007 with an objective to provide training in life skills, vocational skills and small business skills for 2100 children between the ages of 12 and 17 years of age.

Concern World Wide and ASAP initiated a new partnership called Community Empowerment and Services Project in September 2007. The goal is to prevent HIV transmission and mitigate the impact of HIV & AIDS in the Katerere area through strengthening families support systems.

## "Isness in Business"

On November 29 2007 Andrew Cowell, the Provincial Director of Social Services in Zimbabwe shared these words of wisdom as he addressed the stakeholders meeting in Mutare for the National Joint Initiative project to assist the urban poor with poverty alleviation. This is a countrywide project in which ASAP is participating as a partner. Mr. Cowell thanked ASAP for extending the rural village savings and lending project "Kufusa Mari" to help address the needs in the urban areas of Mutare.

Mr. Cowell substantiated ASAP's approach to strengthening communities by stating *"It is a fact, that if you want to help the family, the best way to do so is by empowering women"*. He went on to state, *"...For ASAP's clients, it is wonderful to see you becoming business people, but it is important that there is honesty in your business. The Buddhists believe in something called "Isness", which means honesty, integrity, uprightness. The challenge that I have for you is -"is there Isness in your business? Always strive for that."*



**Honesty, Integrity and Uprightness**

# ASAP Practices What They Preach

ASAP's mission is to cultivate self reliance. Through *On Safari Coffee Initiative*, ASAP is working to fund our own operating costs. That is, according to Tom Arsenault, ASAP's President "to practice what we preach. We do this by roasting and packaging coffee and offering it to help others raise funds. We generate unrestricted income—and great fresh roasted coffee too!"



Groups earn \$5 for every pound of coffee sold and there is no upfront costs to the organization. Labels are customized and the coffee is fresh roasted when it is ordered. Fund raising doesn't get any easier than this.

When a group sells 200 lbs, they achieve Hall of Fame status and are listed on the *On Safari* website. Anyone purchasing *On Safari* coffee from the website can designate \$1 per pound purchased to be donated to the selected Hall of Fame group. This is totally passive income for the group for a full year!

As the fundraising coffee volume increases, volunteers are needed! Please help ASAP package coffee by signing up for a four hour shift once a month. There are various times during the week and on Saturday that volunteers may

participate. Anyone interested in a volunteer position please apply to ASAP directly at 770-632-7451 and speak to Mary in January. You'll be helping ASAP help other non-profits.

The needs assessment report on the Shire Valley region of Southern Malawi was completed by Jeanette Batiste of Edgewood Holdings in November 2007. ASAP has launched a drive to raise \$270,000 to fund the replication of ASAP's program to this region by July 2008. Please contact ASAP for more information. [info@asapafrika.org](mailto:info@asapafrika.org)

## HANDEI

HANDEI means 'Let's Go!' in the Shona language. At ASAP it refers to our Health and Nutrition Development Initiative which has enhanced the nutritional status of over 6,000 people living in the rural areas of eastern Zimbabwe. ASAP field officers provide training in management of nutrition gardens, permaculture techniques, propagation and use of medicinal herbs plus psychosocial support and counseling for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

The goal of the HANDEI project is to strengthen rural communities' ability to care for the increasing number of orphans due to the AIDS pandemic. 125 families caring for orphans have received an additional boost from ASAP's Rural Family Health Initiative Project posted on the Global Giving website, [www.globalgiving.com/ac/cry00zimbab1.html](http://www.globalgiving.com/ac/cry00zimbab1.html)

Through provision of home drip irrigation systems, these needy families are now able to grow more crop variety all year-round. The cost for one complete drip irrigation kit is only \$100.

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