



HILTY NEWSLETTER july '06



Wow! We've got a lot to write about in this letter. It's difficult to believe that we've been living in Lusaka for over 6 months now; the time has really flown. We're so thankful that God has brought us here and is sanctifying us through our relationships and experiences. I may be forced to break my one page protocol for this newsletter but perhaps I can justify it since I didn't write last month.

Life has been very full both personally and in the ministry. In the last month, my (Andrea's) folks moved back to South Africa, my older sister got engaged and my younger sister went to Slovakia on a missions trip. Tim's only sister also got engaged in the last month. Their weddings will be coming up before we know it! Lord willing and the world doesn't run out of fuel, we'll be there. Here in Lusaka, relationships on the team are continuing to be strengthened. Trust and unity are building and we praise God for his purposes in bringing all of us together. We recognize that many of you have been praying for us and we can't express how much that means to both Tim and I.

Over the past few months we have also been impacted the mission and missionaries financially. Drastic changes in the exchange rate have hit all of our accounts, devaluing the U.S. dollar by roughly 35-40%. In other words, our money isn't going as far as it did when we set a budget and raised support. It affects our personal accounts and the ministry accounts. Just recently a team member pointed me to a website with a comparative study of cost of living. The study is called Mercer's survey,

"It is the world's most comprehensive cost of living survey and is used to help multinational companies and governments determine compensation allowances for their expatriate employees."

I was shocked with how Lusaka compares with the rest of the world and wanted to point out a couple of observations from the study. (<http://www.finfacts.com/costofliving.htm>)

1. Lusaka's cost of living ranks second highest on the continent of Africa.
2. From 2005 to 2006 Lusaka's overall ranking jumped dramatically from 123rd to 41st world-wide.
3. Lusaka's cost of living is roughly the same as Chicago and Miami.
4. Living in Houston, Boston, or Washington DC is CHEAPER than Lusaka.

You can pray for us as a team as we scrutinize the use of finances and begin to explore new avenues for fundraising. We believe that God will use this situation to refine the mission as a whole and each of us personally. We trust that God will teach us to always depend first on Him, not on finances.

On the following page, we'd like to share with you a fresh direction the ACTION Zambia HIV/AIDS ministry has taken. We are very encouraged to see God's hand at work!

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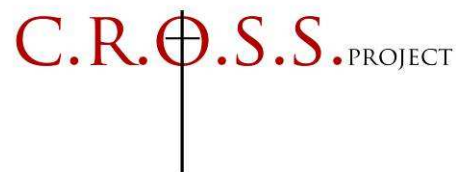
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As you may know, our HIV/AIDS program began in Dec 2005. Susan Hundshamer began the ministry, sensitizing and educating church members from over 12 area churches. After joining her in February, she passed the ministry to us in April as she was preparing to leave. We wanted to take ministry to the people, allowing for discipleship and accountability. We chose 5 churches out of the 12 to focus on. Since then, we've been meeting three times per month with each church. Along with our colleagues, John Chitambo and Eta Imasiku, we have developed lessons to help the churches grapple with various issues surrounding the HIV/AIDS pandemic, especially the responsibility of the church in addressing moral stigma. Our curriculum is fluid and is developed week by week to meet the needs of each individual church. So far, we have taught lessons on the following:

1. Valuing the Word of God as pre-eminent in the fight against HIV/AIDS (along with this lesson we raised support for and distributed Bibles in the vernacular)
2. Sharing the Word of God with PLWHA (people living with HIV and AIDS)
3. Identifying Stigma—What it is and identifying it through pictures
4. Combating Moral Stigma—What stigma looks like in the Zambian church and in Christian counseling
5. Encouraging the Stigmatized—believing their identity in Christ
6. Introducing Counseling Basics
7. Preparing for HIV Counseling, Pre & Post-Test

The HIV team has had the desire for some time to come up with a new name for our ministry. There are reasons for the name change. One, “HIV” and “AIDS” are loaded words here. Two, our ministry can be broader than HIV/AIDS. HIV is really just an entry point into the lives of individuals, not an endpoint. HIV outreach has all too often become an easy opportunity for funding, the means with which to build recognition, and even a mechanism by which individuals can reach personal aspirations. While we are committed to HIV/AIDS, we have a deeper commitment to see the glory of God reflected in the church. After a couple months and a few ridiculous names, we've settled on the C.R.O.S.S. project, which stands for Churches Ready to Overcome Silence and Stigma. The acronym and logo showcase our conviction that the cross of Christ is central to our ministry. The cross also bears resemblance to a sword. The sword of the spirit testifies to the Living Word. Our ministry has been built around the Words of God—the only true way for persons and churches to overcome the pervasive silence and stigma.



We would like to share another encouraging and exciting development in the C.R.O.S.S. project. Julie Bennett has officially joined our ranks. She is passionate about empowering women with a biblical view of gender and has helped us as a team draw strong connections between gender inequality/ domestic abuse and the spread of HIV. We have already begun to integrate this into our curriculum as the Zambian church is noticeably silent concerning the violent treatment of women. There seems to be a strong connection here between silence and darkness. Where there's appalling silence, there's often evil lurking nearby. As our scope broadens, we're praying for God to give us wisdom to know how to multiply this ministry. We're making plans to cultivate and train a team of national volunteers to increase our capacity to reach more churches. Please continue to intercede for this ministry in prayer.

In Christ,

Tim & Andrea Hilty

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