



Postcards from the Field - Meredith

Date: Summer, 2004

Location: Zambia, Africa

A week later and I am in Zambia. It is Dr. Kenneth Kaunda's 80th birthday this week and celebrations will include parades and musical performances. Dr. Kaunda held the position of first President of Zambia from 1964-1991 and was central to supporting the freedom efforts of many neighbouring countries including the African National Congress (ANC) when many of its members were exiled during the struggle. This is a complex time to be on this continent; a time when an important celebration is being feted and the tragic event of the Rwandan genocide remembered earlier this month.

This week is an opportunity to meet with our Zambian trainer Edith who will increasingly take a lead role in our work in this region. Edith and I co-facilitate a follow up day to the Street Business Toolkit that was launched here 8 months ago. Eight youth workers (who directly work with more than 300 youth) and three youth join us for a day of discussions on how this business training has been integrated into their youth outreach programs and lives. We also began discussions about how we could expand the reach of the business toolkit and health training throughout their networks. About 60% of the youth workers have worked hard at using the toolkit in their organization's programming; adopting it to further existing work, supporting vocational training, or beginning the training for interested youth. Over 300 youth have been trained as a result of this initial workshop, some who already have their own businesses and others who intend to start a business cooperative. The youth workers are also keen to integrate this into the existing "mothers or caregivers" programming.

One of the youth who joins us is Josef Ngumbi or Uncle Joze as he likes to be called. He began his business of selling second hand clothes after he participated in the Street Business Toolkit training last year. After receiving some financial support from our partner, Youth Skills Enterprise Initiative through the Zambian Red Cross, he saved enough money to pay tuition and put himself through mechanics school. Uncle Joze intends to raise the \$100US equivalent for the final exam fee to be written in June and has offered to be a role model for the Street Business Toolkit for other youth in Zambia.

Working with all of these dedicated people in countries which have withstood and continue to withstand such change inspires me. There is an enthusiasm to constantly push each other to do better, to be more connected with each other and the youth, to work more collaboratively, to support youth through referrals and build linkages among organizations of the youth serving sector. It truly feels that we are part of a process of working at the various levels of the youth serving sector, youth workers, and institutions.