



Greetings from Vila Ulongwe

Tim Bollinger, Mozambique

www.crwrc.org

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Tim Bollinger
timo.bollinger@gmail.com

CRWRC Canada
3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
1-800-730-3490
Fax: 905 336-8344

CRWRC US
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560
1-800-552-7972
Fax: 616-224-8060

Stepping Up

On a hot afternoon in the valley of the Zambezi River (the river that flows over Victoria Falls 500 miles farther inland), a group of forty youth touting their unmistakable yellow t-shirts distributed by our HIV prevention project welcomed me and my colleagues with song and vignettes. We regularly conduct field visits to monitor the implementation of the project at the community level. Such visits are always eye-opening to the variety of challenges and successes that occur week to week, but this day proved to hold much more than a typical field visit. We faced a group of committed volunteers who overcame a great challenge beyond the usual difficulties involved in the work they do everyday of promoting HIV prevention within their communities.

Unfortunately, one month ago their promoter—one the 16 activists our project pays—passed away, leaving these volunteers without their trained leader. Much to our encouragement, they not only continued their work, but also several proactive individuals stepped up to fill the leadership gap. They continue in this position as volunteers, worried more about the stability of the project than the stipend the position usually entails. Such commitment shows not only the amazing capacity of youth to take matters of importance—the health of their communities—into their own hands, but also the effectiveness of the project model which cascades training to reach large numbers of youth while maintaining the quality of the message; when one level is eliminated, the

flow of information continues. While we mourn the loss of our colleague, we praise the perseverance of these youth as they carry on the message of HIV prevention to their peers.

As a wrap up my time here in Mozambique, this story along with many other cases of courage and initiative among the rising generation have reassured me that any hurdle in the work ahead can be overcome. It has indeed been a blessing to participate in the work being done here in Mozambique. Though the fight against HIV and AIDS is an uphill battle, I finish my year confident that the staff and volunteers who I have come to know will continue to work through the many challenges ahead.

Appreciating People

As I reflect on my time as a volunteer in Mozambique, the most poignant memories are those of the faces of the people I've met in all walks of life. At work, in the field, on road trips, in my neighborhood... each place saturated with personalities—friends and strangers alike—who never permitted me a dull moment for a full year. Development in its purest form is about relationships,

and though this involves all the risks and turmoil we experience in any human interaction, it also involves the joy and fulfillment that only a relationship can bring. When I leave, my colleagues and friends may not remember work-related tasks I accomplished, but they will remember a *person* and the days we spent together, and I will remember them in the same light. As this is my final newsletter from

written from Mozambique, I would like to express my appreciation for the various forms of support I received throughout the year. Your support involved you personally in this web of relationships, and I look forward to sharing more stories upon my return that personalize the programs underway in this corner of Mozambique.