

S H A R E

SHARE Newsletter

JULY 2019

Dignity that Cannot be Seized — Interview of Women in a Zimbabwean Village

“Although I’m HIV-positive, you can take photos and videos of me. I’m not scared of being seen,” said Branda, a 17-year-old girl grown up in a Zimbabwean village in Africa.

Branda lives in a district of Bulawayo Province of Zimbabwe, where the prevalence rate of HIV reached 27% in 2011, the top of the province; while the poverty rate reached 86.6%, which implied over 50,000 out of 60,000 residents in this area were living in poverty. Many young people left their homes to South Africa or Botswana for a better life. However, in view of financial restraints, Branda stayed with her mother and grandmother in the village.

Branda in red long dress stood in front of my camera and performed her poems enthusiastically. Her smiles and actions showed her extraordinary self-confidence.

“I am proud of myself”

“I’m proud of myself,” Branda concluded in her poem. Today, she embraces her identities — a Zimbabwean, a female, a villager in Bubi, a person living with HIV. However, she knows that without her consent, no single identity could completely define her.

The label, “HIV carrier” once shrouded her growth like a nightmare. For so many times, she was boycotted and discriminated by schoolmates, which was detrimental to her self-esteem. She hated her mother for transmitting HIV to her, that made her suffer from pain and discriminations. She drugged herself to commit suicide a few years ago because she could no longer stand the pressures from others and herself. Till she met Benenia and joined her girls club, she gradually picked up herself.

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you can take photos and
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being seen.”* -Branda

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Branda rapping her poem

Benenia was a volunteer of “Sexual Reproductive Health Project for Risky and Vulnerable Youth” [1] under Trinity Project (“Trinity” below), a Zimbabwean partner supported by CEDAR. There are around 40 people in Benenia’s girls club. In the group, Branda relearned about HIV/AIDS and understood that her daily life would not be affected much by taking the medicine as prescribed. More importantly, by talking to Benenia, she perceived that her mother, who had infected HIV at her sex work, was unintentional about the transmission of virus, because her mother did not know herself as a carrier during her pregnancy and in labour. With Benenia’s counselling and group members’ encouragement, Branda gained self-confidence gradually. She always chatted with group members, exercised together, acted in dramas and even made handcrafts with them for making an income. There are members infected by HIV, like herself, and also members who are uninfected. Their love and embrace for each other made Branda feel respected and accepted. She said, “I was a person with very low self-esteem, but, thankfully, God’s love and their love have made me strong.”

“HIV does not represent me”

During the interview, Branda’s mother took out more than 10 gold, silver, and bronze medals won by her daughter in various sports tournaments, including boxing and sprints within 400 metres. Branda wore them one by one proudly, and lifted them up for me to take photos. I would never forget the moment I pressed the shutter — Branda’s face filled with excitement and satisfaction.

She said, “I am me. Sportsman’s blood is in me. My favourite sport is boxing. It can represent me, but not HIV status!”

Branda, a young master of both pen and sword, sometimes expresses herself by writing poems. In the club, she raps her poems [2], which not only heal her heart but also voice her desire for love and peace. When she was asked about her dreams, she named two: becoming a champion in boxing, and no more prejudice and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS in the society.

Branda’s change was resulted from Benenia’s companionship. Benenia told me that, “I must support their growth... Whenever I see Branda and other members of the girls club, I seem to see myself and my sisters. It is too dangerous to live in such place. I have to protect them.”

Yearning to be a testimony to others

Benenia’s words reflected her personal experience. 7 years ago, Benenia’s mother passed away suddenly and left Benenia and her 6 sisters. They lived in hardship and were cared by their uncle. Where they lived was not safe neighbourhood, 6 of

them, including Benenia, were sexually assaulted. And the one assaulted Benenia was her uncle’s son.

The assault was too painful to recall. Benenia had been attacked by panic and anxiety every day for several years. Later, Benenia got to know Christ and accepted Him as saviour. She realized that she was God’s beloved daughter regardless of her past. She yearned to be a testimony to others — people could stand up again despite unbearable experiences.

With this yearning, she got acquaintance with Trinity and found the alignment of their vision that encouraged them to start the youth girls club together. With the training provided by Trinity, she taught the girls in the club how to protect themselves, and taught them about issues like sexual exploitation, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and early marriage. 35 -year-old Benenia dedicated herself to pass God’s love and values to the girls like their mother.

[1]: CEDAR has supported Trinity’s programme in Bubi and neighbouring districts since early last year. The programme



Benenia leading girls club

organises groups for children, youths and females, teaches correct knowledge of sexual health and attitude, as well as nurtures and enhances women’s livelihood and self-confidence. The number of beneficiaries has reached 973 people, of which nearly 70% are females. Please support our work: <http://bit.ly/echild-donation>

[2]: A video clip of Branda rapping her poem: <http://bit.ly/branda-poem>

The Trap of Discrimination in Poverty Alleviation

Written by: Wance Kwan, Assistant Professor (Practical Studies), China Graduate School of Theology

"If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:3-4)

If you are one of the few in your church who are involved in poverty alleviation work, you may be angry with the snobs in the scripture above. You might probably think that you would never be like them. However, have you ever thought that always putting the poor at the receiving end can also be a form of discrimination? Such an attitude of judging people by their outward appearances, is being challenged in James 2:1 as favouritism.

The ultimate reason for poverty alleviation is the realisation that, poor or rich, you and the other person have the same Creator. Besides provision of material assistance to people in need, "restoration of their dignity" should also include acknowledging "the wealth of the poor" and accepting their help and service in return with humility.

"Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him?" (James 2:5)

I lived in a poverty-stricken war zone for several years and I have personally experienced the unreserved hospitality the deprived locals showed to their guests. I also benefited from their care and protection on a regular basis. These encounters have helped me realise my own cultural blind-spot and constraints, having been raised in a city that values efficiency and planning highly. Transformation is brought through the experience of an ▶

The Love between a Grandmother and a Granddaughter

Written by: Jady Sit (Communications Officer)

"Snap!" A colourful image emerged slowly from the blur in an instant photo. A grandmother from an impoverished village in Zimbabwe saw herself and her granddaughter, Kimberly, in the picture and broke into a smile, which was rarely seen on her face. Suffering from HIV, Kimberly was physically disabled. She was unable to speak or sit up, and had been abandoned by her mother when she was 3 years old. Since then, she had been cared for by her grandmother, who sold vegetables in front of their hut. Owing to her disability, Kimberly was sick very often. Since she did not have a birth certificate, every time her grandmother took her to the hospital, they were either refused treatment or had to pay very expensive medical fees. Nevertheless, this grandmother bore it. The smile on her face when she was holding the photo clearly showed the power of love.

The person who asked Kimberly and her grandmother to take this photo was Angela from Hong Kong. Angela had gone to Zimbabwe to visit the beneficiaries of CEDAR with staff from CEDAR and other brothers and sisters in Christ. She was deeply moved by the story of grandmother and Kimberly after meeting with them. Every day, Kimberly laid on the bed in that dark little hut and fought for her life. Her grandmother prayed twice daily for her because she believed that Kimberly was the good and perfect will of God. She hoped that one day her granddaughter could study and play like other healthy children. The pair's perseverance and hope won Angela's respect – she decided to respond to their practical needs by sponsoring their living expenses on a regular basis.

Through the effort of our partner in Zimbabwe, Trinity Project, we finally located Kimberly's mother. We helped Kimberly obtain her birth certificate and apply for social welfare benefits from government departments. Grandmother and Kimberly's story even caught the media's attention in Zimbabwe, and some of them called for society to advocate the rights of underprivileged children. Eventually, the hospital voided the pair's debts, so Kimberly's grandmother no longer had to worry about paying for large medical bills. And with birth certificate, Kimberly could even enjoy free medical treatment.

This one photograph records the deep love between Kimberly and her grandmother. Unfortunately, it was probably the pair's last photo. Kimberly had gone to heaven on 8th May this year. With the grace of God and the unconditional love of her grandmother, Kimberly bravely lived until the last moment.



Angela (second from the left), Kimberly (centre) and her grandmother

alternative mode of living to becoming more embracing towards the “disorders and disasters” of life.

Last year, during Super Typhoon Mangkhut, the 7th Micah Global Triennial Consultation [1] was held in the Philippines. The theme of the consultation was “Integral Mission and Resilient Communities”. One of the brothers from the organising committee reminded us in his opening speech that although the Filipinos are very poor compared to some super rich Asians, they are a group of super happy individuals. They experience over 20 typhoons and countless flooding events a year. Inevitably, there are many needs to fulfill and obstacles to overcome, but the host of the consultation believes that God has given them a valuable gift – an exceptional power of resilience. No matter how bad the situation is, they can always find reasons to be happy and grateful, and the capacity to be hospitable to others. They are always willing to share with others what little they have.

My Filipino friends reminded us that people who live in adversity often demonstrate an extraordinary power in their lives. They hope that apart from providing assistance, poverty alleviators can also appreciate the richness in the poor people’s lives and be inspired and blessed by them.

Is our loving service of poverty alleviation a one-way ministry of giving? Are our minds open to accepting their service and inspiration in return? If not, we might have fallen into the trap of judging people by their outward appearances (how much resources they have) and separating them into givers and receivers. Such an attitude is also a form of discrimination.

[1] The global Micah Network holds a triennial global consultation to explore integral mission and issues of injustice. CEDAR is one of its member.

祂從灰塵裏抬舉貧寒人，從糞堆中提拔窮乏人，
使他們與王子同坐，得着榮耀的座位。

撒上一二八上



還貧窮人一份尊嚴

施達赤腳行2019

活動日期 > 2019年11月2日 (六)

集合時間 > 下午2時

集合及結束地點 > 觀潮浸信會

活動地點 > 觀塘市中心

活動形式 > 「赤腳體驗」、「赤腳挑戰」

截止登記 > 2019年9月30日 (名額為300人，額滿即止)



cedarfund.org/walk

「赤腳體驗」

在城市中赤腳步行，沿途設有教育活動，體會貧困人的遭遇。

活動對象 > 家庭及任何年齡信徒

活動時間 > 約1小時

參加形式 > 團體 (4-12人) 或個人

最低籌款額 > 團體每人400元，個人600元

「赤腳挑戰」

在城市中赤腳進行城市定向。體會扶貧工作者在貧窮國家中幫助村民時遇到的難處，並尋求方法解決。

挑戰範圍 > 觀塘屋邨及社區

活動對象 > 12歲以上少年及青年信徒

活動時間 > 約2小時

參加形式 > 團隊 (名額8隊，每隊3-5人)

最低籌款額 > 團隊每人800元



Monthly Donation:
<http://bit.ly/aht-eng>

Contact: Tony Chan

