Introducing Dona Lidia

Kathleen Britton is a nurse midwife who spent two months in Vila Manica last fall.

Long before I arrived in Vila Manica I had heard about Dona Lidia. Returning cooperantes described her as wonderful, warm, supportive, funny, intelligent, and committed. As the supervisor of the midwives and maternal-health nurses, she was to be my professional counterpart and thus doubly important to me in my work in Mozambique.

When we met, she slapped my hand, hooted over the photographs of her that I brought from Kathy Hubenet, and generally made me feel very welcome. Throughout my stay she was helpful and very patient with all my notions of nursing care.

Dona Lidia was born in Espungabera, one of the first places attacked by the bandidos armados (RENAMO). In 1980 when the bandits first came, she was 13. She and her family fled and spent two weeks in the mato (bush) without food.

When she was 14 the bandidos returned and surrounded her neighborhood in the middle of the night. Her family escaped through the one tiny corridor left open. When they returned the next day, everything in their house was gone. She had only the clothes she had thrown on before fleeing. Eventually Calamidades (the disaster relief agency) gave her some shoes and a dress, but food was very scarce. Her life was disrupted by the bandidos for the next two years. When

Lidia tells these stories, she recites the dates and times of all the attacks without a moment's hesitation.

Lidia loved midwifery school and was a good student. Her family was not able to give her any support, but the government gave her a room in the dormitory and a small allowance. In 1983, when she was 17, she met her future husband Carlos at a picnic on the beach. She was not to see him again for three years, because he worked elsewhere and she was determined to stay in school. After she finished school, she was sent to another town to work, also distant from Carlos.

In 1987 they were reunited. Lidia didn’t recognize him until he pulled out a picture and some letters she had sent him. They were married six months later. Today Carlos and Lidia live with her four year-old niece, Dena, in a house in Bairro Vinte-Cinco de Setembro, a neighborhood on the edge of Vila Manica. So far the bandidos have not visited their bairro.

People who live in Vila Manica commonly have a machamba (a large garden...
plot) outside the city. Lidia can’t use her machamba this year: it’s too far out. Even during the day it isn’t safe, because the bandidos plant mines so that when you return the next day you are killed.

Lidia worries about the war all the time. She says it’s hard for her to study or to relax. Three of her sisters have lost husbands to the bandits: one was killed by a bazooka on his way to Chimoio, one was shot while travelling, and one was killed by a mine in Tete.

When I ask her what the bandits want, she says she doesn’t know. She says they call it a war, but it isn’t a war. It’s not a war when they cut off the arms of innocent people. She doesn’t think it will do any good for President Chissano to talk to the bandits. And Mozambique doesn’t have the strength to stop them. The only solution is for other countries to help by supporting Mozambique and by forcing South Africa to stop arming Renamo. I ask her what other countries are working with South Africa. She is reluctant to answer, but says, well, the First World.

Dona Lidia smiles and laughs often in casual conversation. But when she’s working, her persona changes: she is imposing, professional, and dignified. She is proud that she, as the best maternal-child nurse in the district, was sent to Maputo for a seminar last year. She takes her work very seriously; her dream is to become an obstetrician. Education is hard to get in Vila Manica, though. Lidia has completed the sixth grade, plus three years of midwifery and nursing school. To begin medical school, she would first have to complete the ninth grade, and then go to Maputo to attend Medical school. The nearest school at which she can complete ninth grade is Jecua, a Catholic institution seven kilometers from Vila Manica. She has to walk there and back in the dark and often in the rain, after she has completed her day’s work at the hospital and prepared dinner for her family. It’s just too much, and she isn’t attending night school this year.

Dona Lidia is bright, committed, and ambitious. If peace comes to Mozambique, she will become a leader in the nation’s health service.
**New Project Administrator chosen**

Anne Evens of Chicago has been selected to be the Vila Manica project administrator for the Mozambique Health Committee. Anne has a background in international development; her latest position was with Rotary International as the coordinator of International Development Special Grants. She's been a great help in filling us in on the structure of Rotary International and their grant structure.

In 1988, Anne worked in Mozambique for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During that time she helped them computerize. She also worked on several other projects for the Ministry of Construction and Water, AIM and the Ministry of Information. While in Mozambique she worked on the Manica project in July of 1988, writing a needs assessment report focusing on technical aspects of the project related to construction and water.

A major portion of Anne's job will be to supervise and assist in constructing health facilities. She will also be coordinating the enhancement of hospital and clinic facilities.

We look forward to working with Anne in the coming year. She will be sending us updates on the work she's doing in Vila Manica, so stay tuned for more news!

**Call for continued sanctions against South Africa**

The recent release of Nelson Mandela in South Africa caused enthusiastic celebration among those of us who support the anti-apartheid movement. However, we are reminded by those who are close to the cause that the struggle is not yet over. Mandela himself said “Now is the time to intensify the struggle on all fronts. To relax our efforts now would be a mistake which generations to come will not be able to forgive.”

We are reminded on the national level that this is not the time to ease up on economic sanctions. In order for significant change to occur in South Africa, international pressure must be continued. The comprehensive mandatory economic sanctions legislation is before the Congress and we are urged to write to Speaker of the House Tom Foley, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515 and to Senator Claiborne Pell, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510, asking them to support H.R. 21/S. 507.

The African National Congress has proclaimed 1990 as the “Year of the People's Action for a Democratic South Africa.” We can all be part of that action.

**New container to be prepared**

A second container of supplies is being prepared for shipment to Vila Manica. Clothing, hospital linens, bicycles and paint are among the items to be loaded in the container, which is currently at Mt. Zion Baptist Church at 19th and Madison. Other items for the container include an examination table, delivery table for obstetrics, and HIV test kits.

An artist associated with the Pratt Fine Arts Center has agreed to design and paint the container. Children from Mt. Zion, Zion Christian School, Pratt Fine Arts Center and the Overlake School will also help paint.

A great deal of work has gone into this shipment already. A linen marking party was held to mark and pack the hospital linens. Repair work continues on the second hand bicycles and plans have been made for a clothing sorting and packing party on February 24th (check the calendar on page 6 for more details).

The container project has given folks a great opportunity to make a contribution to the Manica project. People from the MHC and the greater Seattle community have dedicated a lot of themselves to this project.

The final loading party and celebration is scheduled for March 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Please plan to join us as we send off another container of supplies for our friends in Mozambique.
Anne Evens is the MHC coordinator in Manica.

People from Manica Province, Mozambique, Leeds, England and Seattle, Washington, USA are all working towards a common goal — the support of Mozambique and the defeat of apartheid. While the Mozambicans play the most important role, both the Mozambique Health Committee (MHC) and the Leeds Mozambique Support Group (LMSG) provide necessary financial and technical assistance. The ties between the people of these three communities is what makes the projects work.

The LMSG and the Seattle MHC have similar histories. The first meeting of the LMSG was held in a pub in 1979. It was attended by Dr. Pat Ray and by Joss Browning. Pat worked in Chimoio, the capital of Manica Province from 1980 to 1983. She may be returning to work with our own project in the near future. Joss is an old friend of Ray McArdle, who first worked in the province in 1986. Ray currently works for UNICEF in Manica and provides strong support for the Seattle MHC. The original objectives of the group were to support rural development projects, to provide medical equipment to the Chimoio hospital, and to educate people in Leeds about Mozambique.

The members of the LMSG have mastered the difficult process of sending material aid to Manica and have already taught the MHC much about shipping, customs and the intricacies of making sure what's sent actually arrives. To date, the LMSG has sent two containers and is working on its third.

One of the containers included material, clothing and sewing machines which have been used to help start sewing cooperatives with the Organization of Mozambican Women (OMM). The project began when Ray approached a women’s group in Messica about starting a cooperative. Once the group decided to go ahead with the project, they produced bricks for a sewing center. Clothes from the container were sold to buy other building materials and to hire a worker to help. Once the center was built, more clothes were sold to help the women make their first payment on the sewing machines and buy some material. Finally, the group was able to begin producing clothing for sale. They have now paid off the sewing machines and are beginning to make a profit.

This project has expanded to three women's groups in other communities. The Messica group is functioning well. The other three are still in the process of getting started.

Steve Gloyd and I were able to visit Leeds on the way to Mozambique in January. The meeting was incredibly helpful. The LMSG people told of long meetings trying to figure out what direction their group should take and how to be most useful to the Mozambicans. This seemed to us remarkably similar to long nights in Seattle.

Both the LMSG and the MHC are excited about working together more in the future. This shouldn’t be too difficult since Ray and I are living across the hall from each other. Together with the Mozambicans, we hope to make the distances between our three countries smaller.
PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Karen Yoshitomi 326-3855/783-2073

Seattle Volunteers Respond to Need in Mozambique: Children Send a Message

Event: Painting, Loading and Dedication of shipping container of aid to Mozambique

Date: March 10, 1990
Time: 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Place: Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 19th & Madison

The Mozambique Health Committee of Seattle is preparing to ship a container of medical supplies, clothing, hospital linens, bicycles and paint to the adopted Manica District in central Mozambique. The medical supplies being shipped include an obstetrical delivery table, examination table, syringes and HIV test kits. Many of the items being sent have been donated by individuals and businesses throughout the Seattle area. For the past two years, the Mozambique Health Committee has worked in conjunction with the Mozambican Ministry of Health to provide equipment and supplies for basic medical care, materials and assistance to rebuild health posts, and physicians and nurses to teach and provide care.

With the help of children from the Pratt Fine Arts School, Zion Christian Church School, The Overlake School, and other local schools, a shipping container filled with clothing and medical supplies for Mozambique is being painted. The design for the project was conceptualized by Samaj, painting instructor at the Pratt Fine Arts Center. The art project is a collaboration between the American Friends Service Committee, Pratt Fine Arts Center and the Mozambique Health Committee in an effort to generate interest in the current social and political situation of Mozambique.

Mozambique currently suffers at the hands of insurgents whose aim is to destabilize the country through destruction of schools and health outposts. These armed bandits have been supported by an apartheid South African government. Mozambique, a positive example of a multiracial democracy, has been a target of destabilization since 1981. UNICEF has estimated that 250,000 children have died from malnutrition related to this disruption. The Manica District is further burdened by refugees from other regions of Mozambique who have sought shelter in this relatively secure area of the country.

"Since children are so often the intended targets or accidental victims of the violence in Mozambique, we are sending a message of hope from the children of Seattle," said Dianna MacLeod, project coordinator.
March 1
General Meeting
4016 Sunnyside Ave. N., 7:30 p.m.

March 5
Material Aid/Projects Committee
International Health Office - UW, 5:30 p.m.

March 10
Container Loading and Celebration
Mt. Zion Baptist Church
1634 19th (19th & Madison)
9:00 - 11:30 a.m. Loading/Painting
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Dedication
12:30 - 2:00 p.m. Celebration

March 15
Outreach Committee
620 N 63rd St., 7:30 p.m.

March 29
General Meeting
713 24th Ave. E., 7:30 p.m.