

## Anamed seminar Ndola, Zambia January 2011

### Report by Lucie Bradley

Zambia in January is a time of daily heavy rains making the land look fresh and green. The trees and plants are flourishing, growing strong for the dry months and the rivers and lakes begin to fill with water.

In a population of 13.2 million people there are over 70 different ethnic groups and languages, though predominantly bantu. Although Zambia is rich in natural resources most notably copper, the collapse of the global copper market in 1975 devastated the economy. Along with the AIDS and malaria epidemic the country is like many others in Africa struggling to keep on its feet. Poverty, high unemployment, urbanisation of rural people and problems within the political system has all contributed towards keeping this country from flourishing. The Chinese are now showing a strong face in Zambia, exploiting the mines and having huge money-making contracts for construction when many people are still living below the so-called poverty line and without appropriate health care. Whilst the people suffer an enormous football stadium is under construction in Ndola.

Held at the developing Kafakumba Training Centre (The United Methodist Church), hosted by John and Kendra Enright we welcomed 39 participants from all over Zambia with a wide range of backgrounds and experience. We were an international team of facilitators coming from Malawi, Scotland, Switzerland and Germany.

The official opening of the seminar was given by Dr Ray Handema, the Deputy Head of the Tropical Disease Research Centre at the Central Hospital, Ndola. He encouraged us to look to a bright future in Zambia where Natural Medicine would be welcomed and implemented for the benefit of all citizens. He emphasised the importance of people using locally available resources for the treatment of malaria and HIV/AIDS and the importance of medicinal plants in the development of a self-sufficient health care system at all levels. Dr. Handema contributed towards the seminar teaching sharing his expert knowledge on HIV/AIDS and brought to the forum a lot of interesting questions and discussions.

The organisation of the seminar was facilitated by Roland Baumann in Switzerland, anamed International in Germany and Sister Hedwig Mueller in Zambia. Sister Mueller contributed significantly to the seminar, being experienced in the use of medicinal plants and growing them in a community focused agricultural project. Alongside the agricultural project, which is based on Foundations for Farming in Zimbabwe, Sister Mueller oversees the Dawn Trust Community Care Centre. The main clinic is based in a township outside of Ndola; here they give spiritual counselling for HIV, nutritional and herbal advice and dispense herbs. The agricultural project is in the process of growing macadamia nuts as an income generating project, and has an extensive herb nursery as well as growing many other crops. Their herb garden was only small but had plans to develop it further and had a drying room in a storage container whose temperature was controlled using a very inventive, energy efficient sawdust stove.

Sister Mueller commented that often many people visiting the clinic cannot even afford the cost of the herbs. In many cases nutritional advice is the only help. Sister Mueller is very committed to natural medicine and has a lot of information available for people to use at home with no cost. At the clinic they use cream made from *Kigelia Africana* (African sausage tree), which is said to treat chronic skin conditions and showing positive results in the treatment of melanoma. Sr. Mueller recommends using millet as porridge instead of the standard maize. She reports that in areas where people are using millet and cassava there was very little occurrence of sickle-cell anaemia and that cassava could be used to reduce the incidence of goitre. Two others from Dawn Trust Community Care enthusiastically attended the seminar, Alex a Zambian national and key worker at the agricultural project and Matthijs a Dutchman living in Zambia and working for DTCC. During the seminar Sr. Mueller provided seminar participants with Artemisia seedlings and the possibility to buy more established Artemisia plants, moringa saplings and sunhemp – this was a valuable contribution to the seminar, enabling some to be able to return and establish immediate herb gardens with plants that were well on their way to maturity. It also helped strengthen the Anamed Zambia network as Sr. Mueller provided an anchor point of information and guidance for seminar participants new to growing herbs.

Of the participants, 10 came from Chibombo Child Development Agency – people working deep in the communities either as community development facilitators or support group members. Their feedback from the seminar revealed that the knowledge they had gained could be used to directly affect and improve their communities. One participant in particular, who is HIV positive, expressed how learning about the medicinal plants dramatically affected him and how he would share this knowledge with the support group he facilitates. Ten people from one organisation was a huge contingent. I am inspired that Anamed seminars provide people with an environment in which people feel free to share openly, overcoming the power of stigmas and dogmas. Indeed this participant, in front of his peers told of his status and how he would use what he had learnt to improve the health of his fellow support group members. He will become a living testament to the efficacy of herbs.

The participants were all enthused by the seminar, opening their minds to the possibilities of working with medicinal plants within their own development organisations. It seemed to provide some people with a missing link for the growth of their work within their own communities

The rest of participants were a real mix of experienced herbal/medical practitioners and organic farmers familiar with medicinal plants, academics and lay people working within the church and various development agencies. The level of education and the mix of 'scientists' and those from a more holistic perspective provided many interesting discussions about the integration of primary health care, spiritual well being, political corruption and the negative impacts in the well being of the person living at the simplest level. It was truly inspiring to see people engaging in such dynamic discussions in the setting of an anamed seminar – what a privilege to cover such a wide spectrum of topics!

The seminar programme was very full – with so many experienced people in one room, we could have easily run for another week. We were fortunate to have John Enright who shared valuable information on bee-keeping and honey production. He is currently operating a community based income-generating project amongst villagers by providing them with hives then buying the honey back from the keepers to sell commercially. The topic of bee-keeping generated much interest amongst the participants, there were quite a few experienced bee-keepers amongst our ranks. As well as being an expert on bee-keeping, John and his counterparts at Kafakumba are very knowledgeable in Aloe vera. At Kafakumba they have an extensive Aloe farm, at which the aloe is subsequently processed into juice that is sold far and wide across Zambia. This juice was very popular amongst participants – they were even swigging it freely from the bottle, whilst others were reluctant to taste even a tea-spoon! We heard some wonderful testimonies about the value of aloe, for example: a young boy had been burnt by a fire causing extensive damage to the foot and leg, and his father being the manager of the aloe farm at Kafakumba was inspired by God to 'use what he had at hand'. In a moment of inspiration he began applying the raw aloe gel to his son's leg, which recovered quicker than any of the medics expected, with very little scarring or tissue damage.

Solar energy played a significant role in the seminar taught by Roland Baumann, who is from the Association for the Promotion of Solar Cookers in Switzerland. The possibilities for drying herbs, cooking, bread-making and medicine-making to name a few provide people with a really effective, sustainable and alternative way forward. Roland even showed people how to make a thermometer that operated by thermal conduction and a piece of metal – in places such a Zambia where digital or electronic equipment is hard to come by this provides a simple and cheap alternative.

One very moving and inspirational part of the seminar, which I think deserves special mention, is the time given to share testimonies of personal experiences of using medicinal plants. There were more than 2 testimonies about Artemisia being used for the treatment of cancer, very moving personal accounts. People talked with open hearts about their experiences treating people with fibroids, cancer, hypertension, diabetes, serious and chronic skin disorders, people waiting on their death-beds revived with loving care, good nutrition and herbs. For those with no experience, this was a turning point for their belief in the potential of working with medicinal plants; many had tears in their eyes and smiles on their faces.

In conclusion, this was a very dynamic seminar that inspired all involved – even the women working in the kitchen were enjoying daily herbal teas of hibiscus, lemongrass and even Artemisia. At the close of the seminar an interim

committee of 3 people were chosen to represent the group and to take steps for the future development of anamed Zambia. Dr Chisebe, a practising medical herbalist trained in South Africa has now been suggested as the chairperson of the group, and I'm sure he will enjoy the support of the nominated interim colleagues. I wait in anticipation of visiting next year the healthy gardens of medicinal plants born as a result of the seminar and hearing the testimonies of the herbs used. There have already been talks of next year's seminar, which we hope to expand to other locations around Zambia and the Kafakumba centre has even already been booked.

I would personally like to thank Nelson, Roland, Sylvia, John, Kendra, Patricia, Pastor Kilembo, Bill and all the participants for giving heart and soul to the seminar, making it as wonderful as it was and to plant the seeds of hope for the future all the people of Zambia.

### **Recommendations for ongoing work with anamed Zambia:**

- Follow-on one week seminar in Ndola in 2012
- Additional seminars in Lusaka and possibly Livingstone using existing contacts: Evelyn Roe in Livingstone, Lyson Mwanza (Kenneth Kaunda Centre for Practical Agriculture), Munshibwe chitalu (OPPAZ), Dr. Chisebe
- Support the development of a demonstration herb garden at the Kafakumba Centre
- Visit individual herb growing projects: Dr Chisebe, one group from Chibombo
- Find locally available resources in Zambia; including a printing press for books to be printed in country
- Encourage some seminar participants to attend two more "international anamed seminars" in order to be able to appoint local accredited anamed trainers in Zambia.