

MBAA KANO FOUNDATION

"A MOTHER'S LOVE"



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Foundation - Mbaa Kano

(A mother's love)

Introduction:

William Pardy has been involved in human development through volunteer and work activities in local government and community and economic development, both in Canada and Internationally for over forty years.

The crux of his desire and motivation for social activism and community work appeared at an early age, inspired by his mother Annie Aitken, a Scottish war bride and immigrant to Newfoundland. Her short life was one of selfless, altruistic kindheartedness and care in helping and supporting all who came into her sphere. Her life of kindness became a motivation to William and his four siblings in caring for others.

His varied initiatives and activities provided extensive experience and travel, which afforded engagement and learning from a vast network of wise and knowledgeable people. These included scholars, practitioners, and most importantly, local people from many countries, many of whom were focused on their own “people-centered development”.

This rich world exposure provided insights into the struggles and plight of local people and their depth of resilience and fortitude in overcoming seemingly insurmountable conditions.

The poorest neither lack resilience, nor will, but need a focus of support that transcends the provision of basic needs and services and which provides nurture for them to recognize their own potential and to value their inborn abilities.

Over the past ten years, two extensive volunteer assignments in Ukraine and The Gambia were transformational in his realization of the depth of support required for people to overcome the personal and spiritual impediments of a lifetime of diminishment.

“Spiritual” in this context means the emotional, attitudinal and esteem related-issues that diminish a person’s spirit. These assignments also brought the realization that an institutional base was required to ensure the continuation of a life time of effort and learning.

A volunteer assignment with the United Nations took William to The Gambia in 2011 to work with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to assist with the development of a National

Economic Plan. It was an intense learning experience that brought him into direct relationship with the people and their impoverished reality and generated some understanding of its origins.

His current efforts of support in The Gambia began with the provision of direct assistance to a number of individuals and young families: to buy food, access education and in some cases to subsidize housing. To manage this William used his own resources initially, which were subsequently augmented with the moral and financial support of his family and a small circle of friends.

A return volunteer assignment in 2013 expanded this effort, as the economic situation had deteriorated and there were clearly more people in need of assistance. This became a personal mission: to provide the basics of life for a number of young families.

The time has come to bring these efforts into public awareness through the creation of a charitable foundation.

Mbaa Kano (in the Mandinka language, “a mother’s love”) is being established as a foundation to signify the importance of the nurture, comfort, care and support required, not only by babies and children, but by displaced and disadvantaged young women and men in the world today. The foundation intends to operate in the genuine spirit of Annie Aitken and other caring mothers (and fathers) everywhere, whose unconditional love provides the basis of healthy and prosperous lives wherever they live in the world. While the initial focus will be on The Gambia, the resources of the foundation will be open to the needs of others.

Background:

Why the focus on Gambia?

The population density of The Gambia is one of the highest in Africa, with more than 176 people/km², and over a third of its population of 1.7 million surviving below the United Nations poverty line of \$1.25 a day. About 70 per cent of the population work small agricultural plots of village land to survive.

The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with poverty at staggering levels. Simply buying food and providing shelter for themselves and their children is a challenge beyond the ability of most. Accessing health care and even minimum education is a stretch, if possible at all.

The question has to be faced: What do these people really need to improve their lives? This question is even more relevant for those who are in distress and experiencing helplessness.

Dealing with the emotional and psychological stress of a life of poverty and abuse that clouds judgment and diminishes even the very spirit of hope is complex. It is not only an economic and social issue, but a basic human spiritual issue demanding more than physical and social support. It requires structural change in the individual's psychological attitude in relation to their way of perceiving the world in which they live.

There is much to be done in The Gambia, notably among young uneducated women with children and no support and young men, many of whom father children without the means to uphold their responsibility.

While the support provided through William's efforts has grown, the needs have not diminished. It is evident that providing financial support for food, housing, education and medical care is a necessity, but there is a more urgent requirement to assist these young people to move beyond basic existence into a more stable life. Otherwise, the result is more illness and greater psychological problems in the future as the children mature and become older and have greater needs.

Young women in particular need support for food and shelter. They also require personal development through counseling, emotional support and training in order to address the root causes of their lack of confidence and self-esteem to become more self-reliant and valued in society. For people to be able to take care of themselves and become employable, they must have access to formal and informal learning opportunities, and understand the necessity of working together cooperatively.

Mbaa Kano – the Goal:

The long-term goal of Mbaa Kano is to get people out of poverty and into a mode of stability, whereby they are better able to function and support themselves.

Using the wisdom of the late Jim Lotz, a Canadian author and community development activist, Mbaa Kano intends to provide the necessary “floors of stability” and “doors of opportunity” to transition people out of abject poverty.

Objectives:

Mbaa Kano intends to define and create the conditions to achieve the following objectives:

- To provide a better life for some young adults in greatest need, while recognizing that every cause has limits.
- To provide an environment that alleviates poverty and provides a mode of stability, whereby young people are better able to function, support themselves and contribute.
- To tackle specific issues such as housing, medical care and education that are essential to the well-being of young women and men and their children.
- To amplify the role of nurture and care in a world, in which for far too many, it is entirely lacking.
- To establish a model for small-scale foundations that are recognized and can be replicated in Canada.

Mbaa Kano – the foundation:

This foundation will be modeled after small Dutch foundations created by individuals, families or a few friends. They raise small amounts of money to work with local people in impoverished areas (either at home or abroad) to provide food, construct schools, access medical services, develop water and electrical systems, build farms and much more to improve their place in life.

In such foundations, there is no need for large overheads, including costly offices. It is simply local people working with the technical and financial support of foundation members to do the things they need do for themselves.

William has developed a network of Gambian expertise to draw upon. These people come from the local private sector, government and local non-governmental organizations, or are just concerned individuals. They include social workers, lawyers, bank employees, doctors, nurses, police and people with a range of other skills.

All have been keen to contribute and support William's effort these past few years. Many are contributing to the well being of the people who currently are recipients of the financial support he provides through access to medical facilities, education and personal guidance when required. The medical care, education and accommodations are paid for out of the funds provided, while most of the other personal support is provided without cost.

Structure:

There is a core group of talented, knowledgeable and dedicated Canadians who have provided technical advice, professional guidance and insights, along with moral support for the development of this foundation concept.

The Foundation will operate under a board of directors, comprised of people with interest, useful skills and a willingness to participate in all aspects of the organization. An agreed set of articles of incorporation, a constitution and bylaws will be created to address the overall structure and operating procedures for the organization.

The Board of Directors will bring critical expertise and networks to this endeavour. They will be the guides and navigators for the functioning and operation of this foundation and its evolution.

The Foundation will be registered as a charitable foundation and will operate under the guidelines set down by the Government of Canada.

The establishment of a Foundation would allow a more coordinated and broader supported effort to move this fledgling mission to a much higher level of effectiveness.

Summary:

The creation of a legalized formal foundation would ensure the continuation and expansion of work that has been ongoing for a number of years and would enable more resources both human and fiscal to be brought into the effort. A registered foundation helps legitimize the work and the efforts of all involved. A board responsible for governance will provide a support group: a team to assist, advise, balance and guide the decision-making process. The foundation would ultimately provide the security, continuity and expansion of current and ongoing efforts ensuring recipients the sustained support required to build a basis of self-reliance for their families.

We hope to create an example that will inspire a network of small-scale foundations across Canada, to provide people with a means of helping others (whether in Canada or abroad) in a personal, “hands-on”, yet manageable way.

APPENDICES

The pictures in these appendices will give you a glimpse of some of the people that William has been supporting over the past four years and how they are growing and changing with the care provided.







