



Message from the Executive Director Dr. Pakisa K. Tshimika Vision Statement for 2010

On a Personal Note

I was reminded once again this year that things don't always go as we expect them, at least as seen through our human eyes. Soon after I returned from Congo in May 2009, I received the news that my beloved cousin Mahungu, whom I had just been with in Kajiji, had died suddenly. This was the main person I depended on for all my logistical arrangement related to my handicap when I was back in Kajiji. How could he die when I was just starting to go back to Kajiji on a regular basis? Despite this loss, I still hope that you are as excited as I am in starting not only another year but another decade with a great sense of anticipation and expecting many wonderful surprises from God.

I spent 2009 reflecting on my own professional future as well as the future of Mama Makeka House of Hope. Throughout the year, I continued to hear Martin Luther King, Jr. raising life's most urgent question: What are you doing for others? His comment about how our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter, and that our nettlesome task is to discover how to organize our strength into compelling power is still ringing in my ears. Both I and Mama Makeka House of Hope were at a crossroads. I needed to decide where I wanted to spend most of my energy for the second part of my life. As an organization, we continued to dream, set priorities, become more focused, and wonder about what kind of legacy for which Mama Makeka House of Hope should be remembered.

In a conversation during one of our travels to Congo, Dalton Reimer, chair of MMH Hope board, reminded me about how life is like a can of sardines – you know, he said to me, you pick up the can and you can't find the key. We're all looking for the key to life, and then when we find it, we open the can and remove the sardines – but you know, there's always a little piece in the corner you can't get out. And so it goes. Ghandi's challenge for all of us to be the change we wish to see in the world could not have come at a better time, even when it seems we can't quite find the key and, when we do, we can't quite access all the pieces.

Our General Mandate to Guide Us

As you might already know Mama Makeka House of Hope (MMH Hope) is a Non Profit Organization that was established in memory of Mama Makeka Rebecca who died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to inadequate health care services. The goals of Mama Makeka House of Hope are promoting, advocating, and providing financial and technical supports to initiatives related to health, education, and community empowerment for the underserved communities in Africa as well as in the Central San Joaquin Valley of California.

Time of Transition

One of the ways in which I envision being a change in the world is to look at 2010 not only as the beginning of a new decade but as a year of significant transition. I decided to end my administrative responsibilities with Mennonite World Conference so I could commit 100% of my time to Mama Makeka House of Hope, although I will continue to serve the church as its Global Advocate. Dennis Becker, who was my Administrative Assistant while working for Mennonite World Conference, is joining us part time as Administrative Assistant. We also have a pool of volunteers who will continue to support us by donating their time throughout the year.

Our Priorities

In conjunction with those of you who will join us as pieces of this change, we are focusing on the following priorities in the coming year:

1. Develop a strong Financial Support for Staff – After several years of dependence on part time and volunteer staff, it is now clear that MMH Hope needs several permanent full time staff, especially for the Executive Director, Administrative Assistant positions in Fresno and MMH Hope Representative in Congo. Our website is now organized in such a way that people can make financial contribution online for this and all other projects through a PayPal account.
2. Develop the Center for Professional Resourcing in Kinshasa. We believe that a person is only a person through other persons, to draw on South African Bishop Desmond Tutu's characterizations of ubuntu, so a professional is only a professional through other professional. We want to establish an International Center for Professional Resourcing in Kinshasa where teachers, doctors, nurses, community development workers, peacebuilding agents, school administrators and professional students will have access to a best library in the region, internet, and a retreat center for weekend and summer seminars and courses.
3. Support the Kinshasa Center for Leadership, Peacebuilding, and Good Governance - As we begin to build a formal infrastructure for MMH Hope in Congo, we also want to continue supporting Pascal Kulungu's efforts and the leadership he provides to the center. Pascal devotes his time to education and peacemaking both in the churches and Congo as a whole. Through his work, many have been educated and influenced to thoughtfully consider changing the lens through which they view the often violent world in which they live.
4. The Kajiji of My Dream - As we work towards change, we don't want to forget those living in the villages. Instead, we want to focus on a more integrated way of serving and supporting the Kajiji population, my hometown, and to build the Kajiji of My Dreams. It will be developed around the Health Zone system.

Why the health zone system you might ask. When I think of all the structural systems that are supposed to transcend political and religious barriers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I believe that one of the most stable infrastructures through which community transformation may be initiated, promoted, and nurtured are Health Zones.

Years of war and turbulence have had a catastrophic effect on health care in Congo, but health zones have survived. In 2001, a WHO/UNICEF mission reported that "The health zone system... is possibly the only system in the country still recognizable as a nation-wide quasi-state structure. And even with critically little or no support, it commands allegiance and support from health workers."

I believe that by developing solid programs in partnership with other Non Profit Organizations in education, health care, agriculture, road infrastructures, communication, and savings and loans we can engender economic stability and independence, thus transforming the community and its citizens. Furthermore, by using the health zone system as a structural model for community development and radical transformation, MMH Hope will be testing a model that most likely could be duplicated throughout the whole country.

5. Facilitate Income Generation Opportunities for Congo - Yet, another dream for 2010 focuses on income generation. Dialogue has begun between myself and a group of chicken farmers from Manitoba in the hopes of establishing a chicken farm in Congo. This could translate into a variety of business opportunities which would promote economic stability and well-being for those involved.
6. Families At One - Although Congo is our main focus, we do not want to forget our ministries in Fresno as we continue to develop implementation strategies for Families At One. Currently, we are working with Jeffery Scott Agency at developing marketing and communication strategies with the goal of organizing a conference for potential partners and providers working in Fresno's west side. During this one day conference in spring, an implementation plan will be discussed and we will work on ways in which we can move forward.
7. People to People Life Giving Small Projects – As we work on larger projects in Congo and Fresno, we are still committed to the small ones that I consider live giving. These are projects that provide opportunities for individuals including children, small groups or Sunday school classes to participate. Following is a list of these projects and more information can be found on our website: www.mmhhope.org.
 - Ø Sports equipment – basketballs, volleyballs, soccer balls, handballs, volleyball and basketball nets for primary and secondary schools and community teams in rural Congo.
 - Ø BoGo Solar Flashlights – Our dream is to distribute 1,000 of these solar flashlights to rural doctors, teachers, pastors, evangelists, and nurses. The cost is between \$25 and \$35 per flashlight.
 - Ø Sewing Kits – Many women groups in Congo are assisting young women gain skills in sewing and how to turn it into income generation for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, these young women lack the tools to use for applying the training received. Our dream is to partner with the training centers and provide sewing kits to those who excel during the training. The kit would consist of a sewing machine and assorted materials needed to get started.

So Come and Join Me

Throughout her life my mother Makeka Rebecca believed that “there is always room for one more,” therefore, I envision Mama Makeka House of Hope as bringing the same sense of hospitality, nurture, deep faith and empowerment, and hope to individuals suffering from the consequences of all forms of violence and conflict and those without access to the most basic education and health services.

Although my cousin, Mahungu, is no longer here, I cannot let that be my sunset. I recall a conversation we once had on my parents' veranda in 1980. He told me a story of a young African who had left his village to study in Europe. Soon after his studies this young man decided to go back to his home village despite many lucrative job offers in Europe. Mahungu asked me if I could ever be as committed as that young man was for the sake of our people in the Kajiji region.

I had gone back to Kajiji before but for some reasons, my next return feels different. For sure my cousin Mahungu will no longer be there when I return to Kajiji nor will we have the chance to visit on any veranda anymore, but many of you will be standing beside me in this time of transitions through your prayers, thoughts, volunteer work, financial contributions, and kind words. Through our concerted efforts, we can traverse the crossroads and view the sunrise side by side, each new morning a gift of golden light and a breath of new hope which inspires our journey together.

Please Take Time to Write Us

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You can also visit our website www.mmhhope.org, read our blog, see some of our ministries on You Tube and follow us on Twitter.

Best yet, join me in the different ministries I feel God calling me in the DR Congo and Central Joaquin Valley.

Blessings and Peace!