

## Study Tour Participants Enjoy Zimbabwe



Heifer Zimbabwe hosted a Study Tour in May 2011. John "JP" Perkins, a Heifer volunteer and a person who has participated in several Heifer Study Tours himself, led this diverse and interesting team of seven women and six men from the United States.

The Heifer Zimbabwe team designed an itinerary that would give the participants an in-depth look at the projects in operation, while exposing them to the natural beauty of Zimbabwe's geography and culture. During their 10-day visit, the team visited three project sites that provided a detailed cross-section of activities being implemented by the program, with three days spent in nature. The field visits included a nice mix of Heifer's pass on the gift concept, impact of interventions, and strong partnerships between Heifer and development partners.

The first day profiled Passing on the Gift® (POG), during which the team had the opportunity to participate in a ceremony conducted by an enthusiastic Bhudda village community group. Bhudda village is located in Gweru district in the Midlands province and it is about 35 km, or 22 miles, from the country office in the city of Gweru. The group's enthusiasm stems from the fact that an initial 15 families in the community received 15 sheep in 2009 under the Indigenous Livestock Breeding and Preservation Project in 2009, and some of the 30 pass on the gift beneficiaries have already started receiving sheep.

The group is hopeful that the spirit of POG will continue in their community and that more families will continue to benefit from the POG concept that they highly applaud. Sheep recipients now have manure to apply to their gardens and milk that they use in tea and relish. At Bhudda, the study tour team participated in a POG ceremony, experiencing firsthand the chain of giving to other deserving resource-limited families. Government departments that partner with Heifer Zimbabwe, political leaders, traditional leaders and 300 project and non-project members, attended the ceremony where 65 sheep were passed on to 23 families comprised of 13 women and 10 men. During and after the POG ceremony, the study tour team chatted with group community members and partners, illustrating the free-spirited nature of all who gathered at the event. Drama, song and a speech in appreciation of Heifer's support to the community contributed to the festivities.

Prior to the POG ceremony, the study tour team visited a homestead where they saw examples of special animal housing introduced by Heifer and listened as project members shared their experiences in managing livestock. The team visited the families' sheep as they grazed in the pastures, which enhanced the team's understanding of the community's life in rural Zimbabwe.

The second field trip was to Sanali village in Insiza district of Matabeleland South province. The Sanali group, which welcomed the visitors with a traditional dance, empowered 39 families through the provision of 78 heifers from Heifer Zimbabwe. Heifer Zimbabwe moved into the community after being invited by its partner, Africa 2000 Network, which began supporting the group as part of a biogas initiative. The

heifers were meant to help generate dung for use in the bio-digesters and to fertilize the poor soil in support of the small grains initiative initiated by Africa 2000 Network.

Heifer Zimbabwe works with this self-motivated group who has successfully begun its own project on conservation of the natural resources using wood-efficient stoves. The original group has completed its pass-on ceremony to the first generation, with the latter having commenced a second-generation pass-on. About 350 community members and supporters attended the ceremony that included observation of the heifers, a visit to some families that are using biogas for cooking, and attending a ceremony where the group's history was presented. The event featured singing, dancing and storytelling in appreciation of Heifer Zimbabwe's assistance. The community has seen benefits of the support that has grown to provide manure to poor soils, milk to orphans and the elderly, and draft power that has enabled project and non-project members to increase the area under tillage. Among the people who attended the event were political and traditional leaders and representatives of other government departments that work with Heifer.



A visit to the Atileleni group, which received heifers and sheep from Heifer Zimbabwe, was the last of the study tour. The group resides in Hwange district of Matabeleland North province. Lawrence Sibanda, chairperson of the original group, narrated captivating success stories and challenges of the original and pass-on groups. According to the report, the original group of 40 members, formed in 2002, each received two heifers in 2003. The original group has since passed on 77 heifers to the first group, while the first group has also passed on 45 heifers to a second-generation group. In his report, Lawrence proudly mentioned that the group is happy because families are now getting manure for gardens and the field and milk and draft power from the heifers that they received. The Heifers have also tilled land for non-project members. Enny Shoko gave an account of Atileleni Sheep group that has 15 members in the original group. The group received six sheep each, for a total of 90 sheep, in June 2010. The original group has completed their pass-on to the first generation group. The first pass-on group will pass-on the gift to a second-generation group in the near future.



After the final field visit, the study tour group was so inspired and energized by their experience that the team leader, JP Perkins, remarked "I think there could be more project visits. While I think the number was just right for this group, I could see others wanting more." The team finished the day with a debriefing of their observations and experiences during their field visits.

Several group members expressed appreciation for the work of Heifer Zimbabwe, and Charles Miller said, "The Heifer Model is working!" Team members were given some time to tell how they would share the achievements that they witnessed in

Zimbabwe. The team emphasized different ways they could share with a diverse cross-section of their communities. Some proposed to make presentations at schools, churches and in their communities. There was a general pledge to share the details of Heifer Zimbabwe's work when they returned home.

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