

“Sometimes equality means treating people the same, despite their differences,

and sometimes it means treating them as equals by accommodating their differences.”



JUDGE ROSALIE ABELLA,
Report of the Commission on
Equality in Employment, Canada



UNDER THE SAME SUN

JANUARY 2012 NEWSLETTER

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Greetings from UTSS,

A primary focus of our most recent trip to Tanzania was to highlight how very few differences there are between a person with albinism and those without. Included in this was the call for equality; the need to be treated the same in almost all situations and the need for a few simple accommodations in others.

At the heart of this call was our **Understanding Albinism Seminars**, where persons with albinism (PWA) took their rightful place as “the experts” on albinism. Our “panel of experts” always consisted of PWA from both Tanzania and Canada.



The Seminars

In total, we held 5 seminars where the primary message went something like this:

I'M A PERSON WITH ALBINISM AND AM JUST LIKE YOU EXCEPT FOR 2 SIMPLE DIFFERENCES:

- 1 – I have Low Vision, and
- 2 – I lack pigment or colour in my skin, hair and eyes

This means that:

- I have skin that is very sensitive to the sun and I am very vulnerable to skin cancer
- I have high sensitivity to bright lights, making it difficult to see on sunny days, and
- I have to be very close to an object to see what fully sighted people can see at a distance.

PLEASE BE SENSITIVE TO THESE 2 SIMPLE DIFFERENCES AND TREAT ME WITH THE EQUALITY I DESERVE.

This simple message was presented at each seminar, along with rich conversations.

Three of the seminars took place at schools where we have students with albinism from our Education Scholarship Fund (ESF) program:



In the picture to the left is our panel of experts engaging the teachers and staff at **Jelly's Primary School in Mwanza**.



The teachers and staff at **Lake View Primary School in Mwanza** showed great openness and interest in the topic of albinism. The subject of albinism is seldom talked about in their culture. When it is talked about, it is usually full of myths and misinformation.



While at Lake View, we had a chance to visit with the kids in our ESF program as well. We also had a special celebration for George who is first in his class this year. UTSS expects that

George is the first among many PWA in our ESF program who will excel academically amongst their peers with and without albinism.



While at **Golden Valley English Medium School in Geita Region**, we were able to teach the kids with albinism that they are not alone by showing them that Canadian, Peter Ash, is also a PWA. Many still think that albinism exists only in Tanzania.



At **Mwanza's SAUT University**, our Understanding Albinism Seminar witnessed a standing room only response with over 400 people in attendance. The invited guests consisted of students and professors, as well as professionals like doctors, politicians, religious leaders & social workers from the city at large. It was hosted by Emmanuel, a professor at the university who is also a person with albinism. Our UTSS team was overwhelmed by the lively interaction and positive response from the audience.



UNICEF Team

Our final seminar was held in **Dar es Salaam** and included guests from the Justice and Magistrates Association of Tanzania (JMAT) as well as the Tanzania Albino Society (TAS), UNICEF staff, Social Workers, Police Officers, Politicians, Professors and leaders of various religious denominations. The guest of honour and keynote speaker was Honourable Judge John Utamwa, President of JMAT. Judge John and several of his colleagues have expressed their solidarity and genuine interest in the work of UTSS.



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Sunscreen Production Program

One of the great highlights of our trip was a visit to Moshi, a beautiful city located at the very foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. The internationally famous Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center (KCMC) is located there. On its vast complex is the Regional Dermatology Training Center (RDTC) which has launched a program called the Comprehensive Albino Care Program. To



our great surprise and delight, this program includes a small but professionally run sunscreen production lab. They are already in the research and production phase. A volunteer pharmacist from Spain by the name of Mafalda Soto is doing a wonderful job of ensuring the integrity of the product and the program. Her vision is that a day will come when PWA are professionally trained and able to run this program.



Just next to the sunscreen lab is a small hat tailoring project where 2 women with albinism are making wide brimmed hats for all PWA who visit the dermatology center. UTSS is hoping that these 2 projects will be a prototype for future production throughout Tanzania, and that they will be operated by PWA to serve the needs of their fellow PWA.



Survivors

No trip to Tanzania is complete without visiting some of the PWA who have been violated by assaults, attacks and killings. In Peter's Christmas fundraising letter, he told you about the recent attack of Adam Roberts, who lost the use of both hands. He also mentioned Majaliwa, the little boy we met at the side of the road who is now living far from family and friends because he was hunted by 4 young men in his village. These heart wrenching stories are the "norm" for many PWA in Tanzania. We will conclude this newsletter with 2 more stories, both of survivors who have been violated simply because they have albinism. We met both during our visit at the Golden Valley School in Geita:



One of our ESF students is Dotto's older sister, Milembe Mbiti. At the age of 12 months, Dotto was poisoned to death by his great aunt because she did not want a child with albinism in the family. Since that event, UTSS offered to relocate Milembe to a safer place. The parents agreed saying they do not want her to return home until she reaches University when she is old enough to take care of herself. The murder has not been reported to the police because Dotto's grandfather warned the parents that if they do, they will never survive the Sukuma tribe's traditional revenge. Sukumas cannot tolerate relatives who reveal family secrets to the authorities.

We also met 4-year-old Meriki and his parents. They told us that he had been abducted for a few hours during which time the boy's hair was cut for witchcraft purposes. Meriki's grandmother noticed that part of his head had no hair and asked who cut it. He said it was their neighbour Robert Matage (40yrs). The matter was reported to the police. Robert Matage was questioned, and later released. On October 17, 2011 Tanzanian police told the media that the matter was dealt with between the neighbours and that the police could not interfere. Now imagine if your 4 year old son went missing for 4 hours and was then found with most of his hair missing. What would you expect the police to do?



Meet Some of our Staff

DON SAWATZKY is Director of Operations for Under The Same Sun (UTSS) Canada and longstanding friend of Peter Ash. Some 20 years ago he was Peter's graduate professor and now serves as his colleague, employee and "sober chamber of second thought" as they share a vision and co-build UTSS. Don has been a key player in the early development of UTSS and attends all trips to Tanzania. He provides support and guidance to many of our team in our Tanzanian office.



GAMARIEL MBOYA is serving as the Operations Manager for UTSS in our Tanzanian office with a primary focus on our ESF program. Education holds a special place in Gamariel's heart as he holds three certificates in education as well as a BSc in Environmental Sciences and Management. We admire his passion and drive and are thrilled that he is on our team. Gamariel is a 27 year old man with albinism. He is married to Gladness and is the father of Jamima, his little girl. He has 5 siblings, including a younger sister who also has albinism.



PWA in Tanzania are still being violated in unimaginable ways, but are also finding pockets of sanctuary, understanding and opportunity. They must continue to stand up and take their rightful place in every aspect of Tanzanian society and show all of their fellow citizens that they are equal to them in every way. Society must also recognize the very significant but minor considerations that need to be made to accommodate the 2 WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM DIFFER from their fellow citizens without albinism. Clearly this day is still a long time in coming. Until this day comes, please continue to stand alongside persons with albinism in Tanzania and with Under The Same Sun.



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