



# The Swazi Sojournal

Issue 4, Volume 2

April 2005



## New PCMO Daynese Santos brings in world of experience

By Jill Granberg

*Swazi Sojournal*

**W**hat strikes you – thus far – as the biggest difference between your Burkina Faso and Swaziland posts?

Burkina Faso is located at the southern tip of the Sahara Desert, 15 degrees north of the equator. The climate there is harsh, hot, dry and dusty. That for me is a striking contrast to the lush, green rolling hills of Swaziland. Travel from volunteer sites to the Peace Corps office in Ouagadougou, the capital, may take two to three days depending upon road and transport conditions, (both can be pretty hairy at times). I've been told that most PCV's here in Swaziland are able to travel from their sites to Mbabane in less than four hours. I won't bother to tell the folks in Burkina though, it may be upsetting!

**Where are you from in the States, and what interests, experiences, and training brought you to Peace Corps?**

I'm a native of Philadelphia, Pa. however I escaped the snow storms and freezing temperatures in the mid-eighties and moved to Atlanta, Ga. Before landing in Atlanta though, I had lived and worked for various NGO's as a volunteer in Brazil. During that period, I traveled throughout South America and became

sensitized to the critical need for basic health care and facilities in developing countries. Upon returning to the U.S. I made the decision to enter the Physician Assistant Program at Emory University in Atlanta. My entire career as a PA has been devoted to the Public Health sector focusing on maternal child health, urgent care, geriatrics and eventually HIV/AIDS.

**What are your personal goals for your time in Swaziland?**

My role as PCMO in Burkina Faso was very insular, me and my volunteers safe and sound under the Peace Corps umbrella. That simply won't do here. The stakes are too high, the motivation too compelling. I look forward to networking with local health care providers and participating with community groups that are confronting the HIV/AIDS crisis in Swaziland. I will also be available as a resource to volunteers and staff in regards to HIV/AIDS related issues.

**What do you enjoy doing in your free time?**

Photography is my passion and I look forward to snapping lots of photos and sharing them with you while I'm here.

**As a seasoned PCMO, what do you enjoy most about your role?**

Direct, hands on medical care is still without a doubt the most enjoyable and rewarding aspect of my job. There's a tremendous sense of satisfaction and fulfillment that comes after a



New PCMO Daynese Santos welcomes happy patient Kevin Okun back into Swaziland with a clean bill of health. "But no swimming in the rivers!"

volunteer recovers from a serious medical or emotional problem.

**What is your least favorite aspect of the job?**

No one wants to be the bearer of bad news. For me that is the most difficult part of this job. Whether it's bad news from home, an abnormal lab result, or a condition leading to medical separation all may have a devastating impact on a volunteer's life and sense of well being. There's no easy way to do it which is why I always have a packet of tissues handy for the volunteers and for myself.

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photo by Annie Mohr

## **Buh-bye, Silena!**

Silena Layne blows bubbles to her friends outside her house at Nkwene after a going away party held March 12. Activities of the day included a water balloon toss, volleyball, soccer, a three-legged race, and braai. She is now back in Oakland, CA, but left this message:

"Writing is good 4 ur health!!  
Love y'all"



Write her at:  
Silena Layne  
6460 Leona St.  
Oakland, CA 94605  
USA

[elatrice@hotmail.com](mailto:elatrice@hotmail.com)



# News from the Training desk

By Simanga Ntando



**Sanibonani bo Nkhosi!** Things in training are getting intense (identifying a new training center, preparing for in-service trainings and preparing for PST).

• **New training center:** I am pleased to inform you all that Ngwane Teachers' College has agreed to accommodate us. We will use communities around Ngwane, Nyamane and Makhosini for home-stays.

• **In-Service Training:** As it has been said in previous correspondences, this year's IST will take place April 4 – 9. Participation in the IST is **mandatory** for Group 2 volunteers and Group 1 volunteers are **invited to participate** in the IST beginning **April 6, 7 and 8 (IST schedule will posted in the Peace Corps office)**. Logistics for travel to the conference venue (**at Emafini Center**) are as follows:

a) **Coming from the Manzini direction:** board an "all station" kombie or bus to Mbabane and ask to be dropped at Emafini. The center is within walking distance from the road. A staff member for the training unit will be there to meet you and show you your accommodations.

b) **Coming from the Mbabane direction:** board an "all station" kombie or bus to Manzini and ask to be dropped at Bahai. You would then have to walk back to the center. This would possibly be a 10 -minute walk.

c) If 15 of you travel as a group, you could ask a kombie driver to take you directly to Emafini. This would be the easiest option.

• **PST:** Trainees arrive June 10 and their PST runs from June 13 – August 2, 2005. We count on involvement to make training of our Group 3 Trainees a success.

## PCMO Continued from Page 1

*Are there any experiences in your first few weeks here you'd like to highlight?*

Two weeks ago at the mental health workshop for the first group I shared that the volunteers in Burkina Faso are in awe of you. Many volunteers asked me to tell all of you that they admire your courage and conviction, stating that it really takes special people to do what you are doing here in Swaziland. To my surprise, many of you aren't aware of just how unique you are and how highly you are regarded by your peers worldwide. Know this, this is a tough job, definitely not for everyone. You have made the decision to tough it out. Thank you.

*What do you feel are the boundaries of your role as PCMO?*

When I was interviewed by Peace Corps, I was told that I would be working 24/7. I laughed and said, no one realistically can work 24/7. The interviewers laughed and said, you will! So how is that possible? It's fairly simple if you are willing to do your part. By that I mean utilize the resources at your disposal such as your health manual and medical kit to manage minor medical problems. Allow good common sense to prevail. If you develop an isolated fever, take Acetaminophen, drink fluids and rest. Persistent fever, diarrhea or pain of course should be evaluated. If I receive a call from a volunteer at 9 p.m. on a Sunday evening, I anticipate a crisis. No, I won't be able to tell you the time of your dental appointment, or who's driving to your homestead tomorrow or the appropriate dose of medication for your neighbor or if another volunteer had an appointment with me on Friday afternoon. I think you get my drift.

*Is there any other information you'd like to*

*share with staff and volunteers about yourself, vision as PCMO, and expectations?*

Like most of you, I had never lived in a kingdom, driven on the left hand side of the road or experienced a higher death rate than birth rate. Bottom line, I had anticipated a smooth transition, after all, they speak English here don't they? Like it or not, this is a period of adjustment for me, a sense of displacement as I move towards adopting Swaziland as my home. I'm determined to push myself, get out of the office, visit your homesteads, see you at work, get involved with the people, experiment with native foods, enjoy Swazi music and dance, in short, immerse myself in the culture. This not only increases credibility but also enables a PCMO to empathize with volunteers in various situations.

*Finally, are there any experiences from Burkina Faso and elsewhere you'd like to highlight to offer advice to Swaziland volunteers in the field?*

During my college days I submitted a topic for a term paper only to have the professor respond in red ink, 'Topic too broad, see me'. He suggested that I pinpoint one area for research and guard the rest for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation. There's much to be said about multi-tasking however volunteers could significantly lower their anxiety and stress levels by narrowing their scope, establishing personal boundaries, focusing on and completing manageable tasks. If you're determined to do more, great, think about extending for a third year of service or signing up for the Crisis Corps after close of service. Experience has shown us that there will still be plenty of work to do.

## in brief

### Update from the VAC committee

- Met March 3 with Country Director, Patricia Austin. Please see the VAC meeting minutes in the office meeting room or consult Patrick Stonehouse.

- At IST, Group 2 will select 2 people to join VAC.

- The next VAC meeting will take place in mid-April.

- Any questions, concerns, ideas, suggestions, or comments may be directed to Patrick, Yemi Oshodi, or Mikaela Kooiker either by phone or mail boxes. Thank you!

### Peace Corps gets PO Box

Mail can be sent to the post office box:

*U.S. Peace Corps*

*PO Box 2797*

*Mbabane, H100,*

*Swaziland*

**This PO box number should now be used instead of the Embassy PO box.**

Peace Corps is also planning to open two other post office boxes, one in Lubombo and another one in Shiselweni, to be used by PCVs in those regions for their mail and packages.

### Volunteer lounge ready soon

The Volunteer computers will be moved to the Volunteer lounge, the PCMO's old office by April 5. Over the next few days, chairs, bookshelves and other furniture will be placed in the lounge. Administration thanks everyone for patience during the renovation of that section of the office space which will continue with installation of more fluorescent lights, painting the walls and changing the carpets.

### Office phone policy changes

Due to an E24,000 phone bill last month, administration has been forced to change phone policy in the office. After the changes take place, Volunteers will no longer have the capability to connect to cellular lines from office phones. Approximately 80% of the bill's total was in landline to cellphone charges, which are rated higher than calls from landline to landline. The Administration hopes to meet the communication's budget targets once the changes are in effect. Monthly phonebills at the office have been rising at an alarmingly exponential rate. Administration welcomes alternative ideas from staff and Volunteers to help address this issue. The post continues to strive to meet programming needs while adhering to ethical practices.

## Director's Chat

An update from Country Director Pattie Austin



As I prepare this March Newsletter update, Easter is fast approaching so I hope all the Volunteers who are traveling will have a wonderful holiday weekend. After the holidays the office will begin an intense period of preparation and training that extends into August.

IST from April 4-9 is our first event. I am particularly excited that you will have the chance to spend the morning of April 6 with Dr. Daniel Halperin, the USAID Behavior Change Specialist. Dr. Halperin gave a presentation last week to the NERCHA HIV/AIDS partnership group that was quite informative. Lindi, Oghale and Simanga accompanied me and found it to be very interesting. We also have invited the US Ambassador to give you an update on the US government response in Swaziland. The IST will conclude with a grief/loss workshop co-chaired by a Washington-based consultant and our new PCMO Daynese Santos. I look forward to talking with you as well during a question and answer period.

Thanks to all the Volunteers that completed the Volunteer survey. We used the surveys to identify those areas in which we need improvement to better support you. We are beginning to make some changes especially in the areas of water delivery and postal deliveries. I asked about increased computer support and learned that Oghale alerted HQ long ago about our increased PCT intake and need for a third computer. Apparently HQ allots one computer for every 25 volunteers so if we are to receive an additional computer it will be after the trainees are in country. I will keep you advised! We are also aware of some of the "mixed messages" the office gives you, such as STAY AT YOUR SITES and BRING VACATION LEAVE FORMS TO THE OFFICE FOR SIGNATURES and are trying to find ways to address the inconsistencies. Have patience since our "behavior change" takes time too!

I regret I have only gotten out once this month to visit volunteers but my one visit was great! I had the opportunity to meet with 10 PCVs from the Lubombo region who had gathered in Siteki for a meeting. We sat outside and talked for an hour which I thoroughly enjoyed. I do intend to get out more and have the chance to meet with you individually.

Lastly, we have been notified of potential civil unrest in Tanzania and particularly Zanzibar as general elections are scheduled for late October. If PCVs are traveling to these areas, you are cautioned to avoid any rallies/political meetings/voter registration centers since violence can erupt unexpectedly.

## New Motor pool Coordinator Introduced

By Muzi Gama, General Services Assistant

I am pleased to introduce to you Mr. Ndoda Manana, our Motor Pool Coordinator (MPC), who assumed duty on March 7. He is now responsible for all motor pool duties, which include, among others, drivers' co-ordination, water and mail distribution to PCVs, vehicle service & maintenance and vehicle reports.

So all transport requests should now be forwarded to him. His cell phone number is 604-3173 and his office and that of drivers is next to the storage room. Ndoda's office extension number is 213. The hiring of the MPC should give me enough time to concentrate on the other general services duties such as purchasing, checking invoices, inventory reports,

procurement reports, property maintenance and service, security, office cleaning & yard

maintenance, clearing packages through customs, etc.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all (PCVs and staff members) for working with me co-operatively while I was working as motor pool co-coordinator. I trust that you will continue to work with Ndoda co-operatively in the same manner.



# NEWS & NOTES

From the Peace Corps Web site

PCV Article Published in Vanity Fair

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 18, 2005  
Who better to explain the American people to the rest of the world than a Peace Corps Volunteer?

According to the editors of *Vanity Fair* magazine, Peace Corps volunteer Liz Richardson, serving in Togo, is the right person. From almost 4,000 entries for the magazine's essay contest, Richardson's piece was chosen as the one that best answered the challenge of explaining American society to those who may never have experienced American culture firsthand.

In her essay, appearing in the April edition of *Vanity Fair* under the title "My American Home," Richardson discusses the difficulties in explaining American society to the residents of the small African village where she lives. She also explores her personal impressions of American life — now influenced by her exposure as a Peace Corps volunteer to her current African friends and co-workers. In addition, the essay helps millions of Americans better understand Richardson's perspective on what life is like as a Peace Corps Volunteer serving others around the globe.

"I think my time in Peace Corps has been invaluable — especially as it relates to my perspective on the world and America's role in it," said Richardson, who in her essay states that she has to be the resident expert on all things American in her village, a subject that almost never loses its appeal. "Nothing about my opinions, my awareness, or my attitudes has remained untouched by my experience here."

The entirety of Richardson's essay is featured in the April edition of *Vanity Fair*. The magazine has also republished the essay on their Web site: <http://www.vanityfair.com>

Richardson, who serves as a community health volunteer in the village of Tokpli, also reflects on her experience of living in an area with no running water or electricity and the daunting task of having to explain America and American culture when one can barely grasp what American values really are.



PCV Portfolio

Shooting for Change  
by Christina "Jill" Granberg

"If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough."  
-- Robert Capa

I'm an outsider facing a health crisis of unprecedented proportions, and my primary defense is a degree in Art.

Before the Peace Corps planted me in the soil of Swaziland, my comfort zone consisted of a six-by-ten-foot darkroom. It was in this space where patience and flexibility, coined as the sole prerequisites for the Peace Corps, permeated my existence like the fumes of developer fluid. I was accustomed to confronting social issues with a camera lens, photo paper and a little creative energy. Photography is a means of communication through which carefully framed images can convey a story or message without the necessity for words, and translate emotion and circumstance that cannot be confined to or expressed by merely literary or verbal means – such as the devastation wrought by HIV and AIDS on children in Swaziland.

Overwhelmed by the statistics, I scrambled to find a foothold in a nation whose transmission rates have not yet reached a plateau. Thankfully, the broad scope of the Peace Corps work assignment in Swaziland reflects our capacity as individuals to uncork our own strengths and respond to the crisis through a variety of means and media, through drama productions, sports leagues, classroom dialogue, and mural projects.

My own work is a visual response to HIV and AIDS, using photography not only as a means of cultural reflection, but also as a device for community mobilization. Images create social awareness and empathy, and consequently influence people to act. The body of photographs that follows, documented throughout my service, illustrates a burgeoning proactive movement: a community response to the national crisis of HIV and AIDS in Swaziland. Amid the paralyzed government assistance to the country's estimated 42% prevalence rates, groups of women from several rural communities have begun to mobilize themselves on behalf of an endless spring of AIDS orphans surfacing throughout the country. These women – both young and old – arrive each day at designated "Neighborhood Care Points" to prepare the capacious cast-iron pots bubbling with mealie-meal porridge. The hot lunch is often accompanied by structured playtime and lessons in writing and elementary English held inside makeshift classrooms. Thousands of Swazi orphans left vulnerable to poverty and abuse are currently seeking refuge in the care points, nourished not only by the meals prepared, but also by social interaction with other children and the close watch of their female caregivers.

These efforts are a landmark shift in the proactive rural response to HIV/AIDS, and rarely highlighted amidst the overwhelmingly sobering statistics and frightening forecasts from the global community. Pieced together into public service announcements, these photographs aim to recognize the efforts of active orphan feeding centers throughout the most devastated regions of Swaziland, serving as a dynamic tool in building the capacity of similarly burdened communities. Collaboration with the national television station, Swazi TV, allows for their message to reach a significant cross-section of the country, extending into areas of South Africa and Mozambique, displaying a crucial attempt to counter Swaziland's national crisis — at the community level.



**Daily Sustenance:** Bhanganoma – The mealie-meal at the feeding center is prepared in a giant cast-iron pot, stirred intermittently by the bomake (mothers), and thickened into a sweet porridge.



**ABCs for OVCs:** Kubuta – Morning lessons in basic reading and writing are taught by volunteer instructors. The students practice the letters of the alphabet and learn to construct sentences in English.



**A roof is all that's needed:** Buseleni – A tent serves as a makeshift classroom for orphaned children unable to pay school fees at local public schools. The daily classes not only provide basic education but safe shelter for orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs).



**Lining up for lunch:** Buseleni – Following classes, children grab plastic dishes and line up for a hot lunch prepared and served by their teachers. For many orphans the mealie porridge is the most abundant meal of the day.

**One bowl for many:** Bhanganoma – The necessity for NCP feeding schemes is urgent, and the rising parent deaths due to AIDS-related illness causes the number of its beneficiaries to swell. Resources are scarce, though the dedication of community women helps to mitigate the impact on the orphaned generation.



## Cooking up a community committed to fighting AIDS

Morgan Smith, dubbed "the ideal man" by some, has used skills learned in the kitchen to implement a year-long life skills curriculum at his high school, with four teachers and 240 students actively involved

By Annie Mohr

Swazi Sojournal

Ten years of restaurant experience has given PCV Morgan Smith vast knowledge of ingredients, dishes, and the elements that make food good, bad, or better. For him, a good meal is "a basic, fundamental human pleasure." It not only tastes good, but can be "nourishing to the mind, body, and soul," he notes. Sometimes, however, creating a good meal can take a lot of work. Life as a Peace Corps Volunteer requires a similar mixture of vision, trial and error, and stamina.

Since arriving in Swaziland in September 2003, Morgan has been known to create many a mouth-watering and eye-pleasing dish, particularly during *faux* Iron Chef competitions. Modeled after a television show that challenges chefs to create the tastiest meal using one main ingredient for the appetizer, main course, and dessert, an Iron Chef competition is a challenge that few can truly conquer.

Most recently, when given mushrooms as the main ingredient, Morgan whipped up a mushroom terrene, with layers of grilled portobellos, onions, and peppers, wrapped in spinach and covered with a mushroom and sundried tomato sauce.

Though he's not working in a restaurant as a PCV, he has managed to find a way to apply his skills from the kitchens of New Hampshire and Massachusetts to his community of Gege, Swaziland as an HIV and AIDS educator.

Cooking, especially in Iron Chef com-

petitions, requires making the most out of the ingredients you have. Life as a PCV is much the same. It took him a year to pinpoint the main ingredient in Gege: the high school. Now that he has, he is learning to master the recipe of life as a PCV and doing as much as he can to complement and enhance the knowledge and activities of students and teachers alike.

When he first arrived at site, he said he "went everywhere, trying to do something, [but] in the end, [was] doing nothing. He'd fill medicine bottles at the clinic one day, work with a youth group the next, then do trainings with primary school teachers and endure failed attempts to get a life skills curriculum for the high school. Without one main area to focus on, he wasn't able to make the most of his time and talents.

What he started at the high school last year, however, has now blossomed into a major achievement for him and his community. He started out teaching life skills classes to whichever classes the school could offer, sharing his Peace Corps life skills manual with four other teachers.

This year, however, he was lucky enough to attend the timetable meeting, where the school decided that life skills was a priority and needed allotted time periods. Teachers bargained periods, giving up time from their precious allotments until everyone was satisfied. Now, a total of 240 out

of 300 students are enrolled in a year-long life skills curriculum. Four teachers are actively involved, getting on-the-job training from "Mr. Morgan," as they call him. Each Monday they meet to discuss lesson



plans and teaching tactics, then Morgan attends seven of the nine classes throughout the week to offer back-up support. After a year of working with Morgan, the teachers are now comfortable leading sessions on their own. Though he still attends the classes, he says "at this point, I really am just there for support, if they get a question they don't feel comfortable answering...but they do fine."

Once the majority of the students are introduced to life skills this year, it will continue to be part of the curriculum for Form 1 and as a refresher for Form 4.

Although he had a sometimes discouraging first year at site, Morgan is now satisfied that his efforts will continue long after he leaves. Likewise, the students and teachers are teaching him lessons that will help him in his post-Peace Corps path. One thing he's gained is "the ability to admit you don't have all the answers and [being able to] laugh at yourself. I was so serious when I went in there at first, wanting to seem like the expert, but [I] had my own uncertainties." Through observing the teachers and spending time with the students, he's become more comfortable with himself.

Being at site for over a year hasn't been easy, but for Morgan, "sticking it out has made a big difference. It seems like things are starting to move in a good direction. All these little failures are a progression towards something positive - it's the way people learn."

So what ingredient would Morgan aspire to be, if he were an edible item? Salt. It's "absolutely essential, but not always noticed," he says. In a dish there can be "all these ingredients that aren't quite meshing, then you take salt and it brings it all together into one harmonized cacophony of delightful flavors." A whole school learning life skills, with teacher involvement and commitment to continue for years to come? Delightful indeed, Mr. Morgan.





Culture Corner.....



### Ngibute Ngikuphendvule

(You ask me, I reply you)

Sanibonani bonkhosi! Ninjani namuhla. Mine ngiyaphila!

This is a new column dedicated to the local language, siSwati and culture. It seeks to address queries about the language and about the culture that you guys have. Every effort will be made to address the query. You will be expected to submit your queries to Musa. Just drop the query in his box.

In addition, we will endeavor to include a proverb and a widely used Traditional Belief

in siSwati and some colloquial phrases commonly used. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

This column does not in any way substitute your individual efforts to study and explore the local culture and language.

#### Query

*Kudlala emadlwane*

Literal meaning 'to play hide and seek'

Kids play this game innocently and enjoy every bit of it. Teenagers and older youth abuse this activity. Instead of playing hide and seek, they hide with a partner of the opposite sex and most likely have sexual intercourse. Adults to express dislike for the activity that young people, especially teenagers and older youth, perform, use this phrase. When the girl gets pregnant the adults will say that "Ya, kufanele phela, angitsi benidlala emadlwane!"

#### Tisho [Sayings]

*Akadzakwa uyafa.*

A person who drinks heavily – always drinks.

*Akasekho*

S/he is already dead

#### Traditional Beliefs

Never eat your food while standing because you are causing famine.

#### Commonly used phrases

*Kuhamba njani?*

How is it going?

You would use this phrase to check on the status of a project or activity someone is engaged in. It is assumed that the speaker of the phrase knows about that activity or project.

## If you had a kombi, what color would it be?



We've all been in kombis- some scary, some fast, some red, some blue. The Sojo polled Volunteers on what their kombis would look like if they owned one. It's a question many of us had pondered even before the Sojournal ventured into such a delicate issue.

Some took an African appeal like Alexandra Geary-Stock and her zebra-stripped transport. Morgan couldn't be seen in his invisible one.

But the most creative comes from a cooperative of Holly Bullock and Chequet Ching with their blaze orange bus with sweet rims and the inscription "Musa kubuta igcwele" on the side. It will be an express from Gege to Mbabane, hopfully starting at the beginning of second term, with approval of their venture capitalist.

A close second came from Patrick Stonehouse. He had to SMS his answer to the staff because he wasn't sure during his polling phone call. His answer: a flat black one with longhorns on the front and windows, tinted blood red. It would have black fur seats with smoke mirrors on the ceiling and the walls. It's name - "the pimp of darkness."

Blue won with five votes.



**Blue - 5**



**Green - 3**



**Pink - 3**




**Red - 3**



**Baby blue - 2**



**Blaze orange - 2**



**One each**

- Invisible
- Dark blue with light blue and yellow polka dots
- Fuschia with teal high lights
- Psychedelic
- Purple
- Blue and gold with charging buffaloes surrounded by sabres
- Maroon
- Zebra
- Turquiose
- Melon
- Flat black

Happy Hoopin': Hula Hoop-making in eight easy steps!

by Rebecca Friedberg



- 1) Go to your favorite hardware/supply store
- 2) Buy (or find on your family's homestead) about 2.5 meters of 20mm black plastic irrigation piping. It should be the sturdy kind - floppy hoops don't hula. Many places only sell it in 100m. But some stores in Lavumisa and Nhlango sell it for E3- per meter.
- 3) Buy the same size orange plastic pipe connector piece (about E2-) It fits inside the piping to join the ends.
- 4) Buy fun colors of electrical tape. (About E3. They call it insulation tape here.)
- 5) Join your hoop into a circle and connect the ends.
- 6) Try it out: check the size. If it's too big, cut it to whatever size you like.
  - \*Remember: the bigger the hoop, the slower it revolves.
  - \*If you want the hoop to be heavier, you could put sand, dirt or even water inside.
- 7) Decorate with tape (paint? stickers?) to your heart's content.
- 8) Go crazy - hoop till you drop!

**ARV access may soon be threatened**

JOHANNESBURG, March 22 (PLUSNEWS) - Legislation currently under consideration in India's parliament has unleashed a flurry of protest across Africa.

For the past month a storm has been brewing among AIDS activists, who expressed outrage at amendments in India's patent laws that will prohibit the production of cheaper, generic versions of patented drugs, including ARVs.

As one of the largest producers of generic medicines, two-thirds of which are exported to developing countries, India has played a crucial part in supplying affordable ARVs to African countries rolling out national treatment programmes.

The country's generic drug industry is also the only supplier of three-in-one fixed-dose combination drugs, which are easier to use and adhere to.

Dr Nafis Sadik, the UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, and Stephen Lewis, the UN Special Envoy for Africa sent a joint letter calling for continued access to generic drugs to the Indian government.

"People Living With AIDS stand poised between life and death. The Parliament of India can make it possible for millions of people to embrace life," part of the letter read.

In Kenya, "about 80 percent of all ARVs that we have available come from India ... our lives are at risk" James Kamau, steering committee member of the Pan African Treatment Access Movement (PATAM), told PlusNews.

A recent statement by Medecins Sans Frontieres pointed out that that half the 700,000 people receiving ARV medication in developing countries relied on drugs from the Indian generic industry.

Consequently, the proposed amendments "will drastically restrict, perhaps even prevent, the production and supply of vital therapies by Indian pharmaceutical companies to other developing countries," it said.

As a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India "has to amend its patent laws to bring it in line with the TRIPS [Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights] agreement," Jonathan Berger of South Africa's AIDS Law Project pointed out to PlusNews.

Nevertheless, India had proposed unnecessary measures, with "greater patent protection than what it is required to do under the WTO agreement."

"We are not opposed to [India] complying with its WTO obligations, but we have to question their motives, and whose interests they are advancing ... the bottom line is that India does not need to do all that it is currently doing," he commented.

According to Berger, India had failed to take "full advantage" of key opportunities in the WTO rules, which allowed poorer countries to access cheaper medication.

However, the impact of the new patent laws might not be immediate, as older generic combinations, developed before 1995 and often used as the 'first line' of ARV therapy, would not be affected.

In South Africa, for example, Indian drug firm Cipla would still be able to provide Stavudine, a generic drug, to the national treatment programme.

But Berger warned this meant that "as people need access to newer drugs, the competition will have dwindled - we may never see the drugs being made more [affordable]".

"The first line will remain cheap, but when I start taking the second line, it will cost me about US \$2,000. Where am I going to get that kind of money? How can I continue with treatment?" Kamau said.

He noted that the impact of India's move "wouldn't be as strong" if countries with the potential to produce and export [generic ARVs], like Brazil, Thailand, South Africa and China, were able to play a much stronger role".

Travel warning

**Tanzania to hold elections**

Tanzania will hold elections on Oct. 30. Voter registration is underway, both on Zanzibar and on the mainland with political tensions high. Parties hold frequent rallies and public meetings, and the pace of public partisan events is expected to quicken as election day nears. While most of these events are peaceful, some have turned violent. Historically, sporadic political violence has been a problem on Zanzibar. From March 26 - April 15, the residents of the popular tourist area of Stonetown, Zanzibar will be registering. Americans should avoid registration centers, generally located in schools; and all political rallies and public gatherings.

# Transients

short fiction by Morgan C. Smith

Lisa drove us south down washboard roads from the visitor center and deeper into the parklands of Big Bend. At what I guessed for a woman in her mid-thirties, Lisa was only a few years older than I. Tall, thin, with auburn hair and a delicately crooked nose, she was not unattractive. After two weeks of solitude during my solo cross-country drive, I welcomed her company and our minutes-old friendship.

An hour ago I had been speaking to a ranger at the visitor center, trying to stake claim on a remote campsite for three days. A few minutes into the discussion, a woman with energetic steps bounded up and joined me in learning what was available.

"Hey - I like the 'primitive' sites, away from the trailer park and the crowd," she said, swinging a water bottle from a finger. "Want to share a site?" she asked me. "I'm Lisa."

"Sure. Yeah - I'm Nathan," I smiled. The friendships of wanderers - predicated on needs, cemented by the travelers' kinship. After endless miles of the rocky roan earth of west Texas, I was game for some company - no matter how temporary. Ten minutes later, formal introductions concluded and a decision to carpool made, Lisa and I bumped down a gravel road in her small truck, the sky an hour away from dusk and deepening in hue.

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"This is my dad's truck. He let me borrow it for a month to see some of the country and sort stuff out. Got divorced awhile ago and decided to leave my job, too. A new start, kind of. You don't mind if I smoke, do you?"

"No, go ahead," I answered. "It's your truck. Or your dad's anyway. Sorry about the divorce," I added, immediately doubting if that was appropriate.

"Yeah, me too. I guess we're doing the right thing but knowing that doesn't make any of it easier." She rolled down her window, blowing a line of smoke into the cool evening air. A trail of dust hung behind us, drifting, then dissipating over a flat expanse of rock, yucca, and brush. Farther south the landscape broke with short, rugged peaks and ridges, giving way to exceptional ravines and springs that bled into the Rio Grande. There was nothing, save for this beautifully alien earth, for a hundred miles in any direction. I couldn't help but smile at it.

Lisa drove. I used a free park map to negotiate us to our site - an open patch of ground with the mountains to our backs and the rocky

plain stretching west. Parked in the middle of our site sat an ancient Ford truck, piggy-backed by a camper shell.

"Ah, this is the right site, yeah?" Lisa asked. "Number 7 - the sign post is right there. This guy's in our spot, I think."

She turned in, leaving a space for the Ford to exit. A Mexican, wrinkled and dark, sat motionless on the back bumper of the Ford. A tall white cowboy hat shaded his eyes, but his head turned towards us as we stopped and Lisa cut the engine.

"I'll go talk with him and stake our claim," she said, gabbing our permit and walking towards him. I stepped out, stretched towards the sky turning red from the setting sun. Breathing in the dry, cool desert air, I grabbed my pack and began unrolling my tent, watching as Lisa pointed to the permit and at the site. The Mexican moved little.

"I think he's leaving," she breathed, returning. "Strange guy - though I don't know if he speaks much English, and *mi espanol es muy mal*."

"Mine too," I laughed. The Mexican was up, moving around the back of the Ford. A few minutes later, my tent nearly pitched, the man walked towards me, a small ceramic statue of a horse painted white in his weathered hands. Gravel crunched under his boots. The horse donned a baby-blue saddle and reins, and stared out from brightly painted red eyes.

He held the horse out to me as if in offering, and spoke soft, scratchy words. "...pero no estara aqui para siempre," he finished, letting go of the statue. The porcelain equine shattered into a dozen pieces at my feet. When I looked up, shocked, the Mexican had reached the door of the Ford. Lisa gaped at me from her own tent with a look of confusion mirroring my own. We watched as the truck snaked away, raising a trail of dust disappearing into the hills, its tail lights fading.

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While the arcing sun set the horizon afire, we ate black beans and rice I cooked, using fresh tortillas to spoon the meal off our tin plates. Later, Lisa drove us a short distance to a natural hot springs built rudely into the shores of the Rio Grande. I waded into the warm waters. The nearly full moon brightly illuminated the springs, flowing river, and rough expanse of Mexico that began from the far shore and stretched into the black. Sitting in the springs, I was able to reach over the rock wall and leave a hand in the gentle

pull of the river. Lisa, stripping off her clothes to a modest nakedness, settled into the springs with a sigh of contentment.

"Wow, this is fantastic." The river's constant murmur and minutes of desert silence peppered our easy conversation of jobs we'd had, places we wished to go.

At one point - "The weird guy. Think it's safe out here with him around? What'd he say to you, anyway?"

"I'm not sure," I answered. "Something about not always being here? It was lost on my Spanish... But yeah, I think 'weird' is accurate."

I leaned my head back on the rocks, gazing up at a million distinct points of light. With little effort, I located first the belt, then the form of Orion in the night sky. The Great Hunter - patient, vigilant. I thought of nothing, then remembered the blood-red eyes of the broken porcelain horse.

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You know you're  
**HARD CORPS**  
when...

- ...you find cockroaches in your pez dispenser, and rapid fire them out to continue eating your oh-so-sweet candy.
- ...you reach REM sleep on public transport (instead of white-knucklin' the bomake next to you while praying to Jesus, Buddha, and Allah for deliverance to the promised land).



**“Pan bread: that’s what it is”...by Andi**

*From the volunteer kitchen*



- ~1 tsp baking powder
- ~2-3 tbsp oil or shortening
- ~1 cup water
- flour

Mix together water, baking powder and oil. Add in flour slowly until mixture is no longer tacky. I find using a wooden spoon works well for this arduous step. Place dough in a well-greased pan. Flatten dough into the shape of the pan and poke a hole in the center to allow for thorough baking. Bake (or use

stove top) until bottom is golden brown. Flip and bake other side until done. Using a cover helps keep bread moist and reduces baking time. To create “fancy pan bread”, add fruits, nuts, chocolate, etc to dough. Sprinkling the top of the dough with brown sugar creates a sumptuous coffee cake-like glaze. Serve hot and enjoy!

**Music Review** by Morgan C. Smith  
 U2 - *How To Dismantle an Atomic Bomb*



U2’s latest album combines a decade of musical innovations with a solid return to the groups’ roots. The result - a cohesive catalog of introspective tracks that are more personal than political, and more rock than electronica.

“It’s just such a personal record. It may just be our best,” says Bono. Licks from The Edge’s heavy guitar on “Vertigo” and “All Because of You” unmistakably brand the record as one of the Irish quartet’s own. “Sometimes You Can’t Make It On Your Own” works as an optimistic song where Bono showcases the band’s complexities and maturity.

“How To Dismantle an Atomic Bomb” - a brilliant album with depth and distance - reminds the world why U2 can span three generations and remain the world’s only musical “superpower”.

U2 begins its North American tour next month, but returns to the United States for several more shows at the year’s end - just in time for group one volunteers returning home.

**Kevin Okun’s Medevac Guidebook to PRETORIA**



**10 years of democracy:** Nelson Mandela served as president of South Africa from 1994-1999 and worked here, in the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

There’s no way around it. Getting medevaced sucks. It means something’s wrong with your body or you did something wrong to hurt your body or your body’s messed up. Or all three. Not good.

But if Peace Corps sends you to Pretoria on medical, make the most of it. Keep a positive attitude and use all those cool coping strategies we learned. After 35 days (11 in the hospital) I think I got a handle on it.

Regional medevacs stay at the Rose Guest House if they don’t need hospitalization. They get their own room with a full bathroom and air conditioner. There’s even a pool, clean, without shisto!

The Rose is minutes walk from the Hatfield Mall and the Brooklyn Mall. Each have movie theatres that cost about 30 rands.

Hatfield has a McDonald’s. I spent many an afternoon eating quarterpounders, journaling thoughts of what I’d do if the doctors ever let me back in Swaziland. Now that they let me back in, I better burn those pages because I’m trying not to violate Peace Corps policy anymore.

The University of Pretoria is on the way to Hatfield, which also serves as a college bar neighborhood. It’s hoping on a Friday night. Mickey D’s stays open late.

Brooklyn has a bunch of restaurants, some you can find in Mbabane, others you can’t. Explore outside the mall to find a delicious cuisine. There’s also miniature golf and a coffee shop to go along with about a hundred stores inside the mall.

Getting downtown is as easy as pointing your index finger at a white kombie. Six rand later, you’re be out of the burbs and into the bustling city. Check out the cultural museum to learn how the tribes migrated to southern africa. Church square has buildings built from the gold profits 150 years ago.

The Union Buildings serve as work place for the parliament and the president of South Africa. Although guards won’t let anyone inside without an appointment, it’s still fun to run through the gardens and miles of steps.

The State Theatre provides an excellent opportunity for a romantic date. It’s just like being in a theatre at home. I took someone to see the Sound of Music.

My least favorite part of Pretoria was the racial tention. Too many people are afraid of each other just because they look different. It makes Pretoria a much less friendly place than it can be.

Peace Corps moves slowly with medevacs. What one might think takes two weeks could take a month. It’s frustrating and the Volunteer can do little to speed it up. But with a 120 rand per diem, it’s possible for a sick PCV to live it up with style.

# April 2005 - *Fools loving Swaziland*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 April Fool's Day	2
3 Sleep away camp night at Grifters	4	5	6 Divas Live 2005	7	8	9
In service training at Emafini - Group 2 reports Monday, Group 1 reports Wednesday						Shirley Kenny's Birthday
10	11 Tessa Reff's Birthday	12	13 Gavin Gia's Birthday	14	15	16 UNICEF lifeskills collaboration meeting - Lilunga House 9 a.m.
17 Tegan Callahan's Birthday	18	19 King Mswati's Birthday Alyson Peel's Birthday	20	21 National High Five Day	22	23
24	25 National Flag Day (Swaziland)	26	27 Teresa Lavignino's Birthday	28	29	30



**The Swazi Sojournal**  
 c/o U.S. Peace Corps  
 P.O. Box 199  
 Mbabane H100  
 Swaziland

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