

Communities We Support

SINGIDA:

The poorest region in Tanzania, Singida is located below the equator in the center of the country and has a population in excess of 1.09 million people. Singida district is one of four districts in the region with the town of Singida being located in the Singida Urban district. There are 346 villages in the region and 10 indigenous tribes. Experiencing significant drought in one out of four years, the rainfall the Singida region does receive is little and falls over a period of less than four months. The dry season lasts from May through November. The majority of the land in the region is either used for farming or grazing. The majority of the farming is considered self-sustaining farming. At the beginning of the 21st century there was considerable concern over the deteriorating social and economic services. Through organizations like African SMILE some of these concerns are being met, one village at a time.

NKUNGI:

The village of Nkungi with a population of approximately 6,000 people is one of the poorest communities in Tanzania. Located in the distant shadows of Mt. Kilimanjaro the primary industry is agriculture.



CHAREDELCO:

Nkungi Village in the Singida Region of Tanzania is home to one of the world's largest leper colonies. Assisting over 150 individuals still afflicted with this terrible disease, Charity Relief For Destitutes From Leprosy in the Community ("Charedelco") is a local non-government organization (NGO) organized in 2003 and directed by Mr. Yesaya Nalaila, with the mission to help the "least of these" cope with their affliction and to provide some much needed living assistance.

AfricanSMILE has teamed up with Charedelco to help those afflicted by Leprosy and their families live a life of dignity. We are focused on lifting up the children and families of Lepers, breaking a vicious cycle of poverty and stigma in the area. To date, AfricanSMILE has focused on providing housing for lepers and educational resources for the children of those afflicted with Leprosy.



IAMBBI HOSPITAL:

As part of its outreach and evangelistic efforts in East Africa, the Augustana Lutheran Mission focused on the treatment of leprosy. A leprosarium established at Mkalama by the British government was desolate and remote. Through the efforts of Dr. Stanley Morris together with the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association (BELRA), American Leprosy Mission (ALM) and Augustana Lutheran Mission the Mkalama facility was replaced in 1956 with a new facility at Nkungi on 5,000 acres of land provided by the Colonial Government.

Located 15 miles from the small Iambi Hospital, the new leprosarium could treat up to 500 patients (50 in-patient status and 450 out-patient status) and was designed to be self-sufficient. Crops were planted and harvested, a dam was installed on a nearby lake to ensure the availability of water year-round as well as provide resources for a tilapia fish farm, and cash crops of flower seeds were produced. With the development of new drugs and the ability to treat the disease completely on an out-patient basis, this leprosarium became obsolete, closed in 1981 and the majority of the leper patients were told to return to their home communities. The leprosarium was converted into a general hospital and also given the name Iambi.

With the change in status the hospital no longer qualified for funding from BELRA or ALM. Bishop Gideon Maghina of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania Central Synod enlisted the help of Dr. Denny and Paula Lofstrom and Mr. Floyd Hammer of Outreach Inc. to help give Iambi Hospital a new life. In 2004 the Lofstroms invited Pastor Bob Ward, a retired missionary, to bring a group of volunteers from the Pacific Northwest to spend a month working on meeting the needs of the hospital. In 2004 members of this group from St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Beaverton, Oregon and Community of Hope Lutheran Church in Wilsonville, Oregon created African S.M.I.L.E. to continue the efforts at Iambi and Nkungi after the Lofstroms moved on to establish a hospital in the Lake Region of Tanzania.

Since 2007, a number of groups have traveled to Iambi as African S.M.I.L.E. volunteers for the purpose of renovating and expanding the hospital facilities. In addition to providing support for the hospital, African S.M.I.L.E. has taken up the cause to provide for the 300 lepers that chose to remain in the Nkungi area. Faced with abject poverty and shunned by the community, the lepers are being provided with housing and equipment to become self-sustaining. Char De Leco (Charity Relief Center for Destitute from Leprosy in the Community) is a group of community buildings located in Nkungi on three acres provided by the village. These buildings provide refuge and classroom space for those stricken with leprosy and their descendants.

Endorsed by Bishop Alex Seif Mkumbo, the present Bishop of the Central Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, African S.M.I.L.E. will continue its work at Iambi and Nkungi until these communities are self-sufficient and economically sound.