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Appreciating Peter

by **Ida Kaastra Mutoigo**
Co-Director, World Renew

As we come to the close of Peter Timmerman's time with us, there are some memorable contributions and characteristics of Peter that we want to express appreciation for, using the letters of his first name:

P = Purpose-Driven

Peter is someone who leads with clear purpose. I have appreciated his vision for community transformation through local churches and his God-given passion for working with people to overcome poverty. His purpose-driven style of work encouraged church partners to focus on priorities, programs, and strategies that practically achieve development. These include programs in conservation agriculture and maternal newborn child health (MNCH), village savings and loans, and the establishment of effective community organizations.

E = Entrepreneurial

Peter has an entrepreneurial spirit with an avid thirst for exploring new ideas and for learning and implementing new ways of working with communities and churches. As a result, he enabled several significant changes to be made, including the recruitment of three new staff and new partners who have expanded the scope and impact of World Renew's work.

T = Teacher/Trainer

Peter is a gifted teacher/trainer who effectively nurtures the development of skills in staff, partner churches, and communities. One of my most memorable moments with Peter was in watching him engage a community in a participatory rural appraisal exercise. Through this power analysis tool, he helped community members identify who has power in making decisions that affect their food security. This exposed gender justice and economic justice issues so that the community could address these things and overcome them.

Southern Africa is a unique field, with only 3 countries. As such, we've chosen to combine the three country fields into one newsletter for your reading enjoyment.



E = Excellence

Peter's concern for programs that really help communities overcome poverty, injustice, and disaster means he is in constant pursuit of excellence. He is known as someone who often consults others and reviews decisions several times to make sure they will lead to the greatest impact in changing lives. One example of this is his tireless work with staff, partners, and the disaster response team to ensure programs and partners are in place to avert hunger for thousands of families.

R = Redemptive

Last but not least, Peter's faith in God has enabled him to effectively share biblical worldviews and encourage their integration into World Renew's programs and collaboration with church partners. His strong commitment to foster the local church's missional role in developing communities and responding to disasters has enabled many people to live out their faith in all areas of life.

We will miss Peter for his purpose-driven, entrepreneurial, teacher/trainer pursuit of excellence that leads to redemptive impacts in communities. We are grateful for the many ways he contributed his gifts, strengths, and skills. Our prayer is that God will richly bless him and his family to be a blessing as they pursue God's mercy and justice in our world.

Taking the Good with the Bad



Ruairidh Waddell
Program Consultant
Zambia Team

It is with a great deal of sadness that we are saying farewell to our regional team leader, Peter Timmerman, this summer. Peter has been all I could have asked for as a mentor in World Renew and a guide and champion to the unique and special way we work with our partners and communities across the region. Peter came into the region four years ago, and I know that while he feels he leaves work unfinished, it is quite remarkable to see the progress and affirmed direction that the region and our programming have taken. Without Peter we would not be in the great position we are in, one that allows us to make a big impact in the communities we work in and to “punch above our weight” as an organization. While we are so sorry to lose him, at the same time we celebrate and give thanks for him and for the amazing contribution he has made to this region—and indeed the legacy that he leaves in trust to us to continue.

As a testimony to this, I want to share and celebrate with you the progress we are making with our Church and Community strategy (CnC), which was started and championed by Peter and has been adopted by us and some of our partners as our strategy of transformational change in the region. Our CnC strategy revolves around the empowerment and engagement of the church at the local congregational level to address the needs and development priorities in their own communities by means of their own resources, as much as possible. While this can be a slow and at times frustrating process (only because we Muzungus like to do everything as fast as possible), we are now beginning to see the impact this strategy is having on the partner churches we work with and

the communities and congregations they work in.

It is so exciting to see our two main partners in Zambia (the Reformed Church in Zambia and the United Church of Zambia) embrace this concept into “the spine of the church” and to use the church structure in both the clergy and laity to implement this program. Both partners have committed to developing this concept and strategy into a module to be taught to their trainee church workers in their theological college, and both are using their social ministries at the congregational level as their point of engagement at the community level. The potential impact is enormous, and, between them, the two churches include over 2 million members across 1,700 congregations.

It is also exciting to see some of these congregational development plans coming back to us with both the needs and the list of changes in their communities clearly identified and the resourcing of these matters planned out. This is especially so when we see the church at large seeking to have great influence on social issues in their communities, especially with regard to challenging problems like substance abuse, youth crime, gender, transactional sex, poverty, and injustice at this base community level. It is so rewarding to see these congregations realize the strength of their collective resources and, more important, their ability to bring about transformational change in these areas by relatively simple acts of compassion and care for the vulnerable and less fortunate. There are some exciting deed ministries in prisons, youth centers, slums, and home-based care emerging in these plans as well, along with infrastructural programs such as wells, latrines, and school classrooms. There is a famous Bemba Proverb that says, “Imiti Ikula Empanga,” meaning, “Today’s bush is tomorrow’s forest.” I think Peter has certainly planted that bush!

It is indeed sad that Peter won’t be with us to walk the last and perhaps most rewarding part of this journey, but without this vision that he brought to World Renew and to our region, we would not be seeing the transformational change that is clearly under way. Peter’s legacy is wide and varied, but perhaps this is the one that will bring about the greatest change in the impoverished and vulnerable communities we work in.

We wish Peter and the Timmermans every blessing. The gap he leaves in our team will be hard to fill, and I thank him for all he has done for me and my family over the past three years. We would like to ask that you all pray for the Timmermans as they move into a new phase of their lives, and for a new job and challenge (he loves challenges) for Peter. Please also pray for our team and for the organization as we search for someone to take over in Peter’s place.

To finish off, I will simply say to Peter, “Zikomo Kwambiri” (“Thank you”; Chewa/Nyanja), and, “Uzamyae Hande” (“Blessings on your journey”; Silozi).

➤ *Our fearless leader waiting to evict a bat.*

⤵ *Testing out a new bicycle ambulance provided by World Renew*



Jumping into the chaos with a humble guide



Faye Yu
Program Consultant
Malawi Team

Malawi is a small country—about 45,745 square miles—roughly the size of Ohio. It has about 17 million people, most of them dependent on agriculture for their survival. I have lived here for two years, and in this short time I have encountered flooding, drought, and tornadoes. In addition, there was a bit of political unrest during elections, along with the former and current governments being plagued with cash scandals, theft, and other corrupt practices. This has angered many donors, and many have stopped budgetary support for the government. These troubles only add to the “normal” challenges that other low-income countries face, such as poor infrastructure, lack of access to quality education, poor medical services, food insecurity, and so on. It is amazing how many things can go wrong in this little country that most people can’t even identify on a map.

On top of these challenges, Malawi has thousands of civil society organizations, local and international development organizations, missionaries, and international institutions trying to “help” the country and its people. Much of the effort is not well coordinated; at times it is like a kitchen in which 10 children are running around trying to cook and bake. Sometimes a delicious plate of cookies emerges; other times it is just a beautiful mess. I don’t think I realized how complex it was to work here when I signed the contract with World Renew. Still, I have always known that “development” is complex. Development workers are social workers, and we as broken people are working with broken people. We are chefs, with our recipe of how to achieve a desired result, and as we implement a project, we keep a close eye on what is happening and add a little bit of this and a bit of that to try to produce the desired outcome. We are scientists, with our hypotheses of what we think will happen, and we track our progress and our results. We are teachers, thinking we have the information that may benefit someone, but we need to think of how to present the information so that it will be accepted by the listener.



☞ Church in Community workshop with staff from partner organizations

☞ Evaluating the after effects of a recent tornado



One of the unique ways in which World Renew works is that it implements quality programs through local organizations, thereby building local capacity in the process. Building capacity can include training and mentoring field staff all the way up to organizational development such as strategic planning and staff structure development. Many of the local organizations we work with are the development arms of churches. Churches in Malawi are often plagued with scandals and financial mismanagement, however. One of our oldest and biggest partners, Nkhoma Synod Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), was caught up in a financial scandal that resulted in donors stopping their funding and requiring the church to pay back misappropriated money. When I started working here, the scandal had just come to light. Peter Timmerman had been the regional team leader for close to two years at that point, and he was meeting with the leadership of Nkhoma Synod, trying to help them understand what was happening and the possible courses of action they could take. He walked with CCAP through a process of taking ownership of the mistakes, exploring options, and rebuilding after the scandal. As Peter finishes his contract at the end of August, I will continue with this rebuilding process. While I approach this task with a bit of trepidation, I am also so thankful for the way Peter has modeled this process of helping organizations develop their strategic plan. He has helped me to understand the unique way that churches can make the greatest impact in communities. He has demonstrated the way we should conduct meetings and planning sessions with adults that encourages creativity and participation. He has even modeled humility as we approach people with whom we may disagree. It has been a huge pleasure to have Peter Timmerman as our team leader, mentor, and friend, especially in a country with so many challenges. I wish him God’s blessings in his next journey in life. Since I don’t know any Dutch blessings, I will leave you with an Irish one:

*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind always be at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of his hand.*

Strengthening Partner Capacities in Mozambique



Juvêncio Mataria
Program Advisor
Mozambique Team

For more than 10 years now World Renew has been supporting various sustainable develop-

ment programs in northern Mozambique, focusing on HIV/AIDS, hygiene, and livelihood through supporting food security and economic growth initiatives. For the past four years, Peter Timmerman has been the regional team leader (SAMT), and under his guidance we managed to strengthen partner capacities in the country, especially on issues related to planning and program implementation. There has been close and continuous follow-up at the organizational level, ensuring that new skills, tools, and resources are successfully adapted and become standard operating procedures.

The communities in which we work are vulnerable to shocks and disasters. We also support these communities to be prepared and resilient; however, some of the communities were severely affected by floods and droughts in the same year in which our programs



Meeting with communities during field visits.

began (January and March 2015). Crops were swept away, and over 1,000 homes were destroyed. Immediately after the floods, World Renew supported with recovery by helping local partners with relief items for their homes and with seeds to help people get back on their feet. With Peter's guidance, World Renew staff and partners (Anglican – Diocese of Niassa in Niassa Province, and Espanor in Zambezia Province) are now easily meeting the targets and achieving greater impact in their programs.

Through our intervention in agriculture and in food security sectors, farmers in the targeted communities are changing their production methods. They are realizing that their previous way of planting maize seeds, for instance (many seeds in one hole), produced poor results. Lead farmers and others who were influenced experimented planting with fewer seeds during the 2015-16 planting season, and they saw that this method produced better results.

A story from Mr. Elias, in Lifutichi, Lago:

"I am 35 years old and have five children. I had a farm that was very close to my house, but after many years of cultivation, the soil became degraded from farming, and I moved to another farm quite far from the house. I normally spend three or four hours walking to get there, and when I received training about a new farm technique (mulching cover) in 2014, I thought about returning to my old plot, but it was hard because the blanket technique is complicated, and it's hard to find enough grass to cover the whole farm. This year I managed to return to my old farm after learning about the living blanket technique (green manure cover crop). I received mucuna seeds, and, since it's the first year, I managed to plant half my "machamba" (field). Since December 2015 to March 2016, I am now sure that mucuna is increasing fertility and preserving the moisture; the entire planted area is completely covered, and it is a drought-resistant crop. This is concrete proof, and I am explaining it to other people who want to return to their old farms close to their homes.



Cover crop in Mr. Elias' field.

As the nutrition program is about to start, we emphasize that health and nutrition are intricately linked with farming, food production, income generation, culture, and community life. Therefore the ongoing agricultural program is laying a foundation in the sense that farmers are becoming more aware of how to increase their production in a sustainable manner; the upcoming program will also, in the medium and long terms, contribute to healthy families and communities, which are needed to continue the cycle of people living sustainably on the land.

Similarly, awareness of the value of the village-based savings and loans program is picking up, and we are conducting training and refreshment trainings to the partners who are engaged in supporting emerging groups. Due to the lack of financial institutions in rural areas, these groups are helping the local people to save money for times of need.



Some of the participants in the savings groups have begun small businesses; others have bought household goods; some are saving money for seed purchases; and most have bought school supplies for their children.

A testimony from Sina Rachide, from Mefluluchi:

"As I saved, I borrowed money and then returned it to the safe with interest. This helps us all buy household goods and take our families out of poverty. After one year we divided the money. I saw that savings is very good for the community as well as the family, and it seems that everyone is able to buy what they didn't have at home. I bought a radio, curtains, and pans, and the rest of the money I used to buy food and agricultural inputs. After buying these things, I saw that savings is a very good thing because it helps individuals and the family at large to grow."

Poor hygiene practices and sanitary conditions play major roles in the increased burden of communicable diseases within developing countries. In our hygiene programs we aim at improving community well-being, particularly focusing on reducing diarrheal disease and increasing dignity as a result of increased hygiene and sanitation within every household in each targeted community.

A testimony from the Namamem family:

"This program came to change our behavior as well as increase our knowledge and practice toward hygiene. As a family, we are glad to be part of the program, and we wish the program could reach other communities, such as Mucuna and Entre Lagos in order to cover more needed people."



Peter's guidance has been invaluable for the achievement of the above results. He has accomplished an incredible work of innovating our general programming in Mozambique as well as facilitating team spirit among colleagues and promoting the organization through communications—and, above all, helping our partners meet the requirements of government donors. We wish Peter success in his future endeavors.

Pray for him as he moves back to Canada to be with his family and for the wisdom of our partner staff as they decide how best to use their teachings to help their community work through challenges.

Juvêncio Mataria
Mozambique

Farewell, friends



By Peter Timmerman
Team Leader
Southern Africa Team

"If I know a song of Africa, of the giraffe and the African new moon lying on her back, of the plows in the fields and the sweaty faces of the coffee pickers, does Africa know a song of me? Will the air over the plain quiver with a color that I have had on, or the children invent a game in which my name is, or the full moon throw a shadow over the gravel of the drive that was like me, or will the eagles of the Ngong Hills look out for me?"

—Karen Blixen in *Out of Africa*

Over the past month or so I have visited Lake Malawi three times, and each time I have swum in its cool, clear waters. I have enjoyed its myriads of colorful fish. I have visited villages beyond the reach of roads. However, also over the past few weeks I have begun to experience the symptoms of another Lake Malawi inhabitant, a parasitic flatworm that burrows into your skin and causes a disease called Schistosomiasis.

By the time you receive this, I will have left Malawi for the last time. I bring with me those flat worms that will eventually make their way to my blood vessels and lay eggs there. This will cause my body's immune system to react, causing fever and other reactions too unpleasant to mention.

Thankfully there is a fairly effective drug for Schistosomiasis called Praziquantel. Unfortunately I cannot take it until the worms get big enough and have entered my blood stream. That will take about eight weeks. I suppose this is God's way of making me carry a bit of Africa back with me. Or maybe his way of keeping me humble.

As I leave, however, I bring with me more than an egg-laying worm in my blood. I have had great experiences and horrible ones. I have learned, unlearned, and then learned again. My experiences in Tanzania, Uganda, and Malawi (and Zambia, Mozambique, Kenya, Rwanda, DRC, Chad, Burundi, South Africa, Senegal, Niger, Ghana, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Ethiopia) have opened my eyes to the wonder of a continent both fantastic and horrible.

I want to thank you, my supporters and church partners who have allowed me the privilege of both suffering and experiencing great happiness on this continent. I have learned so much; I have learned that (among other things) . . .

- Mtu ni Bantu ("a person is the people" . . . we all rely on each other).
- dignity is more important than money.
- you are happier if you hold on to "stuff" less tightly.
- poverty is rarely pretty or quaint or saintly.
- we relate better to people when we try to see them as God does.
- we cannot fully know another culture unless we let go of our own cultural absolutes.
- there is beauty everywhere if you just know where to look.
- God is great . . . all the time.

"Yet this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.'" —Lamentations 3:21-24

I do have hope, and I await the Lord's call for my next adventure in life.

Your support has made it possible for me to do something that I love for many years and I believe that, by God's grace, this has made a difference in many lives and communities.

I hope that we can stay connected. My personal email is pm.timmerman@gmail.com. Feel free to contact me anytime.



Photos from top to bottom:

Talking with churches about Church in Community.

Visiting disaster areas in southern Malawi.

Mphunzi field visit.

Strategic planning.

Checking out a home garden during the Mphunzi field visit.

