

YWAM Gives Mozambicans New Education Opportunities

For the first time, a generation of Mozambicans living in the Zambezi delta have the opportunity to learn to read and write. In this area where poverty and illiteracy are rife, education offers the possibility of radical transformation.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "One does not need a degree to serve." Marta Alige proved that to be true. YWAM launched the project with a Mozambican woman who had no formal training, just five years of primary school.

Marta was a pioneer. She was one of the first generation of girls to grow up educated in peacetime Mozambique, and one of the first generation of Mozambican missionaries. As a young adult she was trained by YWAM Marromeu, and spent the rest of her short life working as a frontier missionary in the isolated Zambezi delta.

For 10 years YWAM Marromeu has worked in this delta region. Education has always been a huge felt need for the Mozambicans there, living far from the nearest schools. Several years ago, after completing her DTS in Marromeu, Marta began the first primary school in the delta. Her husband, Pedrito, lived with her there, running a small first aid post. Slowly, with the help of a fellow YWAMer, Tiago, and a government teacher, Marta developed the school. Steady progress has now been made in teaching literacy.

Tragically, in late 2010, Marta Alige died, after complications during a Ceasarean section. Still today, two decades after Mozambique's civil war ended, one in 37 Mozambican women die in childbirth. Thankfully Marta's story does not finish here, however. The work she began has been continued through the lives of three teenage YWAM girls, and a

growing partnership of volunteers.

Local YWAM leaders Stephen and Caitlin Mbewe, and their three daughters, Nyasha, Kudzai and Tatenda, wanted to do something special to remember Marta. They translated a traditional African folk tale into Sena, doing the artwork themselves. *Why does the eagle steal the hen's chicks?* has now been published, dedicated to the memory of Marta.

The book was recently given to children that Marta had taught, living in the delta. Fifteen-year old Nyasha comments: "Everyone loved it. Even the ones who could not read could follow the story by looking at the pictures, and could recognize words in the story from the vocabulary pages. It was so exhilarating! Everyone was so disappointed when the story came to an end; it made me wish I had more books. I want to bring reading alive for them."

The day after giving the books out, Caitlin visited another village in the delta, to check on the progress of the reading scheme she had introduced earlier in 2010. She found that many of those attending the program could already read all the word cards that she had provided. Now their great need is books.

For years every outreach team into the delta required long and arduous canoe trips, but today outreach teams are helping with the literacy program, flown into remote delta villages by helicopter, generously provided by Mercy Air. With the motto, "Wings of love to people in need," South Africa's Mercy Air has accelerated the speed with which the YWAM team is able to travel, reducing three-day canoe trips to 30 minutes.

Recently some new partnerships began when Caitlin was in South Africa on an emergency trip. She met Anne Herbert, the outreach coordinator for Mercy Air, with 27 years experience teaching primary education. More people heard about the Sena literacy program and began donating their time and skills. A team from South Africa is now creating a "classroom in a box,"

containing practical literacy materials that can be easily carried into remote areas.

Today further African folk tales are being translated into Sena, as readers for the learners. Artists from supporting churches worldwide are helping with culturally appropriate artwork. Formatting and printing are being done in South Africa. Plans are afoot to publish short Bible stories and challenging books that will help build a biblical worldview.

Ten years ago there were no schools in the Zambezi delta, and almost total illiteracy. A courageous young Mozambican woman began a school under a tree. Today YWAM kids are continuing her work partnering with people internationally to offer hope of real change to the delta. Marta served the children of the delta with love and devotion; her short life will bear much fruit.