



A Missive from Mozambique

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By Jason Mosheim

When Jackie Clark, PhD, CCC-A, established a hearing screening program in Mozambique, on the southeastern coast of Africa, the first person she fitted for hearing aids was a boy named Servalito, an orphan who had been roaming the town since he was a toddler. When Dr. Clark met the street-wise boy in 1998, he was about 16 years old and using a number of self-created hand-signs to communicate.

When Servalito received his hearing aids, the medical technicians on site were amazed.

"They were quite impressed with what a person might be able to hear," Dr. Clark told *ADVANCE*. "They had never seen a hearing apparatus."

Now, each time she returns to the country, Servalito seems to know that she has arrived and visits her, said Dr. Clark, a senior clinician and faculty member in the AuD program at the University of Texas-Dallas Callier Center and a research adjunct at Witwatersrand University in South Africa.

Two-thirds of the estimated 250 million people worldwide with hearing impairment live in developing countries, according to the World Health Organization.¹ Over the next four years the organization hopes to have eliminated 50 percent of the burden of avoidable hearing loss. Through the efforts of humanitarian audiologists, who travel to developing countries or U.S. regions where hearing health care services are not available, the audiology community can help meet that goal by not only treating those with hearing impairment but collecting site-specific data regarding hearing impairment issues.

Dr. Clark was one of three audiologists featured in a recent cover story on humanitarian audiology in the print edition of *ADVANCE*.² Here, she shares some of her experiences.

By Mozambique standards Rev. Metatiki is quite unusual. At 80, he has lived well beyond the country's 40-year life expectancy. He speaks English well and enjoys engaging speakers in conversation to maintain his skills.

After being diagnosed with a moderate to severe hearing loss, he received a hearing aid and was counseled about proper hearing aid use and care. He then demonstrated successful insertion and removal of the instrument three times.

"The very next night the local people were having a thank you reception for us, and there was Rev. Metatiki proudly wearing his hearing aid with the earmold behind his pinna with the BTE in front," said Dr. Clark. "I still smile each year when I visit with Rev. Metatiki, remembering his first experience with amplification."

Last year, she met Belucha. Dr. Clark speculated that the 6-year-old had come from a harsh background because she was distrustful of adults.

"She had the eyes of a distrusting 80-year-old," the audiologist recounted. "In all of my years in pediatric audiology, I've never come across a child so terrified of what an adult might do to her when we were attempting to simply screen her with an otoacoustic emissions test."

Dr. Clark's team persevered and discovered that she had a severe hearing loss and would likely achieve good benefit with hearing aids.

"It took quite a bit of time to fit the hearing aid and get the earmold impressions completed, but her beautiful smile made the ordeal abundantly worthwhile," she said.

According to Julia Roskamp, MA, FAAA, executive director of ComCare International in Macomb, IL, and humanitarian audiologist, the Jesus Christ Church in Kherson, Ukraine, has expressed interest in setting up polyclinics that will take care of hearing, dental and simple medical checkups to help the poor.

One-third of the church's members have some degree of hearing loss.

"We think it's this high due to the environmental issues that stemmed from Chernobyl, which is about 700 miles away," said Roskamp, who also was featured in the recent cover story.

On ComCare International's first visit to Ukraine, a woman that was from the Ukraine Church in Kherson showed up for a hearing screening. The woman, who works in a sewing factory and takes the bus to work, had enough hearing to benefit from a reconditioned, donated behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aid.

"It was a tremendous help to be able to hear traffic noises and her name being called," said Roskamp. She also received assistance in lipreading those who do not sign to her. While hearing aids are available to purchase in Ukraine, this woman would never have been able to afford one on her income.

"She was blessed by having this aid and there are many, many more like her," she said.