

Bios on Participants

RWANDA - Pastor Kelly Bean

Kelly Bean is a writer and pastor from the United States who has established a small mission program in Rwanda, East Africa. An informal connection between her community of US women leaders with a cooperative in a Rwanda led to the development of a 501c-3 organization called African Road www.africanroad.org to partner with African leaders who are working for transformation in their own communities. "We recognize empowering women is the best way forward." In Rwanda, African Road is partnering with a women's cooperative in the rural area called Kabuga and with a collective community of 80 orphans in child-headed households. Kelly received a grant enabling the orphans to buy land, built a relationship with a Rwandan Rotary club which is now funding a business start up venture with the youth, and forged a partnership with a Rwandan doctor providing health education to the communities.

Kelly is mentoring two young women from the United States who will attend UNCSW this year with her: Avery Loveridge and Sam Elie, both 16 years old.

Sam Elie has already been to Rwanda and worked alongside Kelly with the communities of women and children in the African Road program. She has seen firsthand the limited options for women who are "running a community but still have no rights or respect by people outside their situation." Sam comes to UNCSW in order to increase her connection to the global family she perceives and to increase her understanding of the issues and challenges women face. In her own words, "Knowledge is the only way that things are going to change in the world, I figure the more people informed, the better."

GHANA - Gertrude Ankrah

Gertrude Ankrah has served as on-the-ground Program Development Director for WomensTrust www.womenstrust.org in Pokuase, Ghana since 2005. Her responsibilities include maintenance of relationships for program growth and sustainability, including coordination of integrated programs and special projects. Born and raised in Pokuase, she graduated from a local private high school, the Confidence School (COINS) with top academic, sports, and speaking awards.

Unlike many women in her village, Gertrude holds several post senior secondary educational certificates. In 1993, she graduated from the Mars Business Secondary School in Accra, Ghana, in business administration. From 1993 to 1995, she worked as a customer service representative and account clerk at the Ga Rural Bank in Amasaman, the regional capital of her district. She then enrolled at the Sydalk Computer College, and in 1999 took ownership of a general store in Pokuase.

That same year Gertrude began an involvement with politics that has moved her from the local to national level. She currently holds four political offices. In June 2006 and 2007, Gertrude furthered her education relative to her role at WomensTrust by attending the Microenterprise

and Development Institute (MDI) at Southern New Hampshire University, her first trip out of her country.

MALAWI - The Rev. Kate Malin (U.S.) & Ms. Yasinta Mtambo (Malawi)

Kate Malin is an Episcopal priest who was similarly drawn into relationship with African women but in the country of Malawi. At first, she joined field trip with her work for the organization. home parish to build homes for priests in the Southern Diocese of Malawi. Then, others with connections in Malawi kept showing up in her life.

Kate followed her heart to the tiny county of Malawi where she started a program called Love's Harvest www.lovesharvest.org with 2 others to promote sustainable agriculture in rural communities. The goal of Love's Harvest is to use small amounts of money and through education about a practice called Permaculture, establish a natural, sustainable method of food production empowering the rural poor to grow their own food and possibly develop income-generating programs to care for their families. Permaculture methods reduce dependence on expensive imported fertilizer and mono-cropping, and create a more sustainable, natural and nutritious method of raising crops of perennials, fruit trees and vegetables together with animals in kitchen and community gardens. Malawi is a nation of subsistence farmers, with agricultural industries centered on corn, tea and tobacco and for them, the concept of individual kitchen gardens was a surprisingly new idea.

Yasinta Mtambo has coordinated the Love's Harvest programs there for 4 years. Additionally, she is the Community Development Coordinator of the Anglican Diocesan Headquarters of Southern Malawi. She has worked for nine years coordinating the work of the Mother's Union in numerous communities throughout the large diocese. This included establishing Permaculture kitchen gardens and animal projects as well as ongoing extensive training to sustain the work. She has also trained many women in microenterprise by setting up savings and credit groups of women and providing revolving microloans among the women in the diocese. Currently, Yasinta is studying for her Advanced Diploma in Community Development at Polytechnic under University of Malawi. This will be her first trip to the United States and she comes eager to learn all there is to absorb at this year's UNCSW.

S. SUDAN - Ms. Debra Morris Smith (U.S.) & Ms. Lillian Giniwa Clement

Debra Morris Smith is coordinator of the Diocese of Missouri's companion relationship with the Lui Diocese in the Episcopal Church of Sudan. She became interested in Africa and particularly Sudan when she began teaching English as a Second Language as a volunteer to refugee women in Des Moines, Iowa.

The goals of the relationship with between the Diocese of Missouri and the Diocese of Lui are: to get to know another part of the Body of Christ, to share faith experiences, and to help each other in whatever ways we are able. Debra has traveled to Sudan six times and has observed that "virtually everyone in the Diocese of Lui is 'rural.' Even those who live in villages are subsistence farmers. The culture is relatively progressive with respect to women; female clergy and Mothers' Union leaders do have a voice, and educating women who missed opportunities for schooling because of the long civil war or family circumstances is important to the

community. Women were key to keeping the church and the community alive throughout the displacement to the bush during the war, but now that things are normalizing, they seem to have lost some of their power. “

ZAMBIA - Danielle Tirello (U.S.) & Grace Phiri Mazala (Zambia) Danielle became involved with women’s and broader gender issues while volunteering in Romania with the Peace Corps. Now, she is a Program Officer in the International Programs Department of Episcopal Relief & Development www.er-d.org where, along with program management of programs in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, she reviews the gender equality work for the organization. Danielle’s goal is to ensure that all ERD’s programs reflect gender equality to ensure that all people’s needs are being met equally for men, women, girls and boys.

Danielle states, “Our partners do tremendous work with rural women in various types of programming. These programs include a focus on *empowering women to improve their lives from income generation projects to health education initiatives. As a Program Officer I am able to visit and speak directly with these women when I am in the field. This enables me to understand the challenges and successes our partners have and how we can best support them in partnership.” She feels the greatest issue for rural women is access to and control over resources, including the associated benefits from access to those resources of land, money, credit, training, markets, etc.

Grace Phiri Mazala is the National Program Director of the Zambia Anglican Council, the development arm of the Anglican Church in Zambia. She is responsible for integrating the mission work of the Anglican Church with the Zambian government’s social sector in areas such as gender, health, education, agriculture, literacy, water and sanitation. Grace also ensures gender is considered in all Anglican Council programs.

When Grace was District Director of Health in a rural district called Lufwanyama, she saw that national and local governmental decisions were being made with little or no involvement of women. “Land acquisition was a nightmare for women. The structural biases in traditional and cultural institutions mostly favored men. Even at the household level women failed even to make a decision to take a sick child to the clinic until the husband made a decision. Lack of information was another constraint.” So she became involved as Chair of the District Planning Committee and was able to advocate effectively for gender in projects and mobilize the women. Now, with the Zambia Anglican Council’s work in rural and peri-urban areas, Grace partners primarily with women who both implement the programs and benefit from them. “They are involved in planning, implementation and monitoring of the projects. Some are members of project committees. Ours is a close relationship.”

UNITED STATES/Appalachia - The Rev Theresa Brion

Theresa Brion is an Episcopal priest who is a native of Appalachia. She now serves as a “ministry developer” for the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland in the the two western counties of Maryland, the Appalachian mountain region. With the eight churches in the region, Theresa facilitates the development of ministry teams and leaders.

“Women are the source of much of the activity in church and community service in the mountains of Virginia (where I was raised) and Maryland (where I now reside). For some time I have been involved in various outreach endeavors either borne of women and/or impacting

them. I also have a special interest in ministries involving issues particularly impacting women, such as domestic and sexual abuse, even though my career paths have been traditionally male ones.... The women are the heart of the church in all meanings of the word – they are the source from which much of the church’s outreach, social, pastoral, and even worship energy generates. They are the energy source pumping life into the community in service to each other and in the local and global community.”

Theresa comes to UNCSW in order to serve God and be energized to further empower the people and communities she serves.

UNITED STATES/Michigan - Jeanne Martens

Jeanne Martens is a business professional who has increasingly become involved in volunteering as her children have grown, especially in the area of Healing Racism. She has served as member of the board for a charter school whose mission is to facilitate the healing of Michigan’s victimized girls and women as well as other vulnerable children and families in southeast Michigan. She seeks to improve the lives of women and girls so they may prosper and grow.

UNITED STATES/Houston - Nancy Hannon

Nancy Hannon is a retired physician whose entire career was focused on delivering primary health care in community clinics. Her present avocations include environmental and women’s empowerment issues. She understands the intrinsic connections between our physical environment and our health. Working primarily with inner-city, minority women, Nancy saw the impact of little education and opportunity on these women, many of whom suffer domestic violence at home (often culturally sanctioned.) With respect for their cultural norms and belief systems, Nancy integrated these beliefs into her treatment plans in an effort to partner with them medically and enhance the longterm benefits. Nancy has also volunteered in Latin American as a physician where she witnessed the gender discrimination particularly against the girl-child which is so rampant there.

Others will be returning to UNCSW this year. This partial list includes:

Irene Radcliff, Jennie Ashlock, Martha Frances, Clare Barry, Kathryn Horvat, Terri Pilarski, Nancy Fritch Eagan, Diane Jordan Grizzard, Jane Appleyard Roel, Beth Adamson, Maylin Biggadike, Inez Saley, Jackie Plumez, Rosemary Williams, Christina Hing, Kim Polhemus, Kitt Abad, Patti Ackerman, Diane Eynon.