

## Obama Seeks to Increase African Electricity, Trade

Hi again. Welcome back to As It Is. I'm Kelly Jean Kelly.

President Barack Obama returned to the United States this week after visiting Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania with his wife and two daughters. One issue that the president spoke about was power.

"Access to electricity is fundamental to opportunity in this age. It's the light that children study by. The energy that allows an idea to be transformed into a real business. It's the lifeline for families to meet their most basic needs. And it's the connection that's needed to plug Africa into the grid of the global economy. You got to have power."

During his visit, President Obama promised to give \$7 billion to increase electricity production in sub-Saharan Africa. The program is being called Power Africa.

Obama said it will double the number of people in Africa who have electricity in the next five years. The program will be started in Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Uganda, Mozambique and Tanzania.

The president also spoke about increasing trade between sub-Saharan Africa and the United States. He told African and American business leaders in Tanzania that he believes Africa is the world's next major success story. And, he said, America wants a relationship with Africa based more on trade than aid.

Many people saw President Obama's trip as a response to China's heavy investment in Africa. Observers say America needs to have a bigger economic role in the continent.

During the weeklong visit, the Obama family also visited Robben Island in South Africa. That is the prison where former South African president Nelson Mandela spent 18 years. He was imprisoned for fighting to end the country's apartheid regime.

Mr. Obama also joined former president George W. Bush in Dar es Bombings of the American embassy there.

Reporter Michael Shear wrote in the *New York Times* that the president's critics say he missed a chance to visit countries that are creating problems.

For instance, critics say he could have visited Kenya, whose president has been charged with crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. Or, he could have gone to the Republic of Congo and talked about ending the country's long history of violence.

Aides traveling with the president reportedly said the trip was designed to show positive opportunities in Africa.

One positive opportunity in Africa is the chance for young people to come together and make music. Mario Ritter brings you the story of some South African singers and dancers who share their knowledge with American students.

Bokamosa Youth is the name of a South African organization. For over 10 years, about 20 Bokamosa members have spent a month at a high school and college in the United States.

The program offers more than just an exchange between two cultures. It gives young people the opportunity to talk about what is important to them, and to imagine a different kind of life for themselves.

While the Bokamosa Youth perform, many of the American students join in.

“Bokamosa has been doing that here for years, so many of us are familiar with this.”

Drew Looney is in his third year of high school at Saint Andrew’s Episcopal School in the eastern state of Maryland. Singing together helps the American and South African students get to know each other.

Teachers at Saint Andrew’s say meeting the South Africans makes some American students think about living or working in another country one day. And attending an American school, even for only a few weeks, often makes members of the South African group decide to get more education.

“I wanted to go a mile from where I was.”

That was Themba. He is 19. Like other members of Bokamosa, he grew up in a town outside of Pretoria called Winterveldt.

“I can say it’s a place under construction.”

As part of Bokamosa, students also write poems and perform plays for schools and churches in Winterveldt. A lot of their creative work discusses issues in the community. For instance: teenage pregnancy, finding a job, or women entering the corporate world.

“Normally a woman doesn’t work, a man must provide. These plays, they address the issues because sometimes conflicts arise when men can say: ‘No, you want to take away my pride?’”

Thapelo is 27. Bokamosa helped him with his education. Now he volunteers for the group as a drama director.

Thapelo works with young people like Lovely, who said she used to be very shy.

“Here I am now. I can be able to stand in front of many, many people and present myself.”

Roy Barber goes to Winterveldt in the summer to help Lovely and other participants create plays and develop songs. The rest of the year he teaches music and other classes at St. Andrew’s, back in Maryland.

He says making music and telling stories helps young people look at their lives and make choices -- or, put another way, to find their voices.

I’m Mario Ritter.



And I'm Kelly Jean Kelly. See you next time on As It Is. If you would like to reach us, send an email to [learningenglish@voanews.com](mailto:learningenglish@voanews.com). Or go to our website at [learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com) and click on "Contact Us."