

"All things are possible to those who believe."

MARK 9:23

Expanding Our Vision

Eva Chipenda challenged and inspired me to go to Angola. Let me tell you a little about her: As Eva closes in on 80 years of age, she has pushed with all her considerable might to open the Canata Preschool Program which currently enrolls nearly 100 children between the ages of 3 and 5. When you walk in the courtyard door, the children run to greet and embrace you – but, not with the same fervor that occurs when they see Dona Eva enter. They cry out her name and last week practically knocked her off her feet in their enthusiasm to hug her!

DONNA
DUDLEY

Creating a better life, for herself, her family, and others, has been the story of Eva's life. Of twelve children, she was one of only three in her family who survived to adulthood. Frequently uprooted, Eva often felt herself to be an outsider, but never let the changes that distanced her from family and peers stop her quest for education and training. As her husband, José became internationally known as head of the All Africa Conference of Churches, Eva often lived in his shadow, not uncommon for Angolan women. But in her own way, Eva always managed to emerge from that shadow to shed her own bright light. Everywhere they went – from New York to Geneva to Nairobi to Lobito – Eva availed herself of opportunities to learn and developed her vision to start projects in Angola – including dressmaking, culinary arts, and children's programs. Now these many projects have improved the lives of hundreds of women and children.

Eva has encouraged me and stretched my own vision of what is possible for women to achieve. The challenge is for each of us to step out of any shadow that can hide our light and become our best selves.

Donna Dudley serves with the Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola. She assists with development projects and staff leadership training programs.

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