



RWANDAN UPDATE

Tom MacGregor March 2009



Dear Friends,

Just over three months ago I was enjoying some of the greatest food on the planet (my mum's home cooking) and some of the coldest weather in England's history (what was that all about?). It was great to be able to catch up with so many of you over the Christmas break but I was sad that I could not see more people. There never seems to be enough time and so I apologise to anyone I have offended by not stopping by – I promise I will do better next time I am back or alternatively, if you cannot wait, you are always welcome to visit me here in Rwanda.



My work life in Rwanda has become fairly hectic, not only with the rapid expansion of Azizi Life but also because I have now taken on an additional role as Manager of Logistics. Although the additional job has created some difficulties and challenges it has also kept me learning, growing and excited to see what each new day brings. There are a team of us who work in the logistics department and our role is to support all of the FH projects here in Rwanda in such a way as to ensure that they achieve their goals. Basically we help sort out all the practicalities that make a charity run, like transport, repairs and purchases. Since being in this role I have had the pleasure to be involved in the donation and

distribution of twenty cows; the building of five class rooms, two water tanks, twelve latrines and one house. I have also helped host, house and feed a group of ten visitors from the USA (one of whom was a famous Christian singer) as well as the weekly tasks of fixing broken vehicles, leaking taps and ensuring everyone gets to the right place at the right time. At times it can make your head spin but if you enjoy trying to find solutions to problems, as I do, then it is an amazingly rewarding role.

I am pleased to say Azizi Life continues to grow and has now become a multinational company which is registered in Rwanda, the UK and the USA. It seemed the best way to get around the banking and money problems associated with global marketing. Having bank accounts in the UK and the USA has made it much easier for our customers to buy items and it will enable us to sell online. As most of you know I have been struggling to create a website for the last few months however, right at the end of last year a professional website designer agreed to create and host the Azizi Life website for free. We also received offers from a graphic designer and a copy writer who want to help us with this project to. I can assure you it was not a difficult decision



to scrap what I had done and take up this group of professionals on their kind offer. It does mean that the website will not be ready till the summer time at the earliest but when it is finished it will look a thousand times better than the site I had cobbled together. So I am now happily retired from all website duties – which is an amazing blessing for me and one I thank God for everyday.



Azizi Life has not just grown internationally (with volunteers) but we have recently taken on our first paid employee here in Rwanda. We are already working with around 30 different craft cooperatives creating employment for large numbers of people in the rural areas however all of those groups remain independent businesses. Therefore Jeannine is our first direct employee. She currently studies 'Communications' in the evenings at a local University but is free during the days to work with us on the sales and export side of the business. She has excellent language skills (being fluent in French, English and Rwandan) and is a very competent worker. Although she is only currently working part time she has already proved herself to be invaluable and so I am sure the position will become full time during the course of this year.

Even with so much going on with work I still have a bit of time left for a social life, so far this year I have been out to various celebrations including two birthdays, one house warming and a wedding (okay so it's not exactly wild but I enjoy the slower pace of life). I have also started going to a new Church although it is not your typical type of Church as it is held at a home for orphaned children. Each week the children lead the service, they are in charge of the singing and then one of them will bring some thoughts from a bible passage they have been reading. There is normally then a short message from an adult and some more singing. As many of you know I have found it hard to fit in at the other Churches I have been to but they have made me feel so welcomed here that I have made it my new home.



Prayer Requests

1. April is the Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda. Please pray for the individuals as they remember the tragedies from that time and for the country as a whole as it continues to rebuild.
2. A small number of the cooperatives that we are working with have recently being facing some internal struggles within their groups. Usually it is because one member has lied to the others or there has been some serious miscommunication. Please pray that the members of our cooperatives will remain honest with us and each other and that we will have wisdom in all our dealings with them.
3. Please pray that I will be able to learn how to do my new job quickly and where I am not up to the task please pray for people to come along side me that can help.

I have just read back through my last few updates and it's amazing to see how many of my prayer requests have been answered – please be encouraged that prayer makes a difference and join me in thanking a God who listens.

I thank you once again for your interest, support & prayers. It is all really appreciated. If you do want any more specific information please do not hesitate to contact me via my email which is tmacgregor@fhi.net or by regular mail to my postal address **PO Box 146, Gitarama, Muhanga Rwanda**. Also remember to visit my page at www.facebook.com if you would like to see more photographs.

Many thanks,
Tom