

RWANDAN UPDATE

Tom MacGregor May 2014



Dear Friends,

That is right, some doubted it would ever happen, but as you can see from the photo, I am pleased to announce Ritah (my beautiful wife) is about 26 weeks pregnant with our first child. Both mum and baby are doing well and the realization that I will shortly become a father has well and truly sunk in. Although this does fill me with a great deal of joy and happiness, this fact of fatherhood has also created a significant amount of fear and worry. On or around 25th August 2014 my daughter will emerge from her mother and instantly become reliant on us for everything. And if the child is anything like me, she will be reliant on her parents until well into her thirties. That is an awfully long time with no breaks or holidays, at no point (not even for a minute) will I stop being 'dad' to her. However, although I will have instantly gained that title, it will take me more than my life time to really earn it. No matter how hard I try or how much I want to, I will not be the perfect father (it's simply not possible), I will inevitably make mistakes. It is ridiculous how much I already love our unborn child, each day I watch the ever expanding waist of my wife with a sense of awe, wonder and excitement, longing to finally see my little girl, but even with that base of love, I know full well, that I am capable of being a monumental idiot and at some point I will end up saying or doing something that has the potential to hurt my precious child. I certainly do not want to fail her and I will never give up trying to do the right thing, I am just praying that our child quickly learns to understand, sometimes her dad will make mistakes but, at least his heart is in the right place.



Sadly at the end of 2013 my colleague Christi's mum had a very serious operation that has left her with limited mobility and the doctors estimated it would take over nine months before she could walk unaided again. Therefore Christi has decided to spend the whole of this year in the US to help out with her mum's recovery, whilst still working part time with Azizi Life. During her time in America Christi will be primarily focusing on improving the structure and operations of the Azizi Life non-profit (the head office is in the US) and also looking at increasing our sales of crafts. With this in mind we have decided to sign up for NY Now, a massive Tradeshow held in New York, which will be happening in August 2014. This is the first time we have attempted something this big and we are excited to see what happens – hopefully lots of orders for our lovely artisan's products.

It has now been almost two years since we were last back in the UK and so on 1st July we will be flying back for a visit and both myself and Ritah are super excited to catch up with everyone. The plan is to stay in the UK until the end of September before coming back to Rwanda. This will be the first time I have been away from Rwanda and Azizi Life for so long since I came out here, seven years ago. I will be working in the UK but in my absence everything will be run in Rwanda by the Azizi Life staff. This is the first time they will have been left completely in charge without either me or Christi to help out. At the beginning of this year we appointed Jeannine the Director of Operations (pictured here signing her life away) and I have complete confidence that she and the rest of the team will handle things perfectly.



Both the social enterprises (crafts & tourism) saw massive growth during the last year in Rwanda. This has not only meant the economic impact that we have been having in the rural communities has increased but we are now in a position to step up the community development we do as well. So far with the extra money available we have been able to purchase (in bulk) solar lights and fuel efficient stoves. We then help the artisans with interest

free financing, so they can buy the lights and stoves at cost, paying us back a little each week from their craft sales (which will enable us to buy more stoves and lights for other artisans). Also we are trying to get the Azizi Life staff on to a training with CHE (Christian Health Evangelism), who teach a system of community development that has been very successful around the World. There have been some delays but once our staff are fully trained we will be introducing this to communities where we are working. Alongside this I have been researching Foundational Farming (also called Conservation Farming or Farming Gods way), and I am hoping we are able to set up demonstration farming by the end of the year. There are so many opportunities, it really is exciting.

Following the popularity of our 'day in the life of an Artisan' experience day, this year we introduced a number of new experience, so now you can learn how to do, traditional agriculture, weaving, construction, banana juice making, drumming and dancing. The hope is that we will encourage more guests to visit the rural communities and to stay for longer. As part of this expansion we are also creating a network of pathways around the communities so that we can produce a hiking map for the area. Eventually we will be able to offer hiking and biking tours. I went out on a bike a little while ago and plotted all the routes – this is the first exercise I have done in many, many years and so it took me the best part of a month to recover. We then recently met with the Mayor of the area to show her our plans and she loves them. We will be working closely with the local community to try and make this map a reality over the next few months.



Outside of work and baby stuff, life in Rwanda plods on much the same. We are still living in the little apartment above the telephone shop, my neighbor still has a ridiculous number of noisy dogs, the power still goes off in the evenings and occasional we have our water cut off. However, I really have got used to all these minor inconveniences and Rwanda is developing at such a pace that it really is an exciting place to be. I obviously still stick out like a sore thumb and cause children to stop and stare opened mouth as I pass by. My language skills still let me down (I have enough ability to survive if dropped in the middle of Rwanda, but I still cannot chat about the events of the day) and that can be a bit frustrating. But all in all I really do feel at home in Rwanda and find it no more difficult living here than I did navigating life in the UK. As always, I

am deeply thankful to everyone for their support, love and prayers. I am only really able to do what I do because of you. Thank you so much.

Prayer Requests

1. Please pray for the rapid recovery for Christi's mum and also that during this year Christi will have a great time in the US, strengthening and growing the work we do there.
2. Please pray for the Azizi Life team as they take over all Rwandan operations during July, August and September (while myself and Christi are both out of the Country). This is a really busy time of the year and I am sure they will face a few challenges.
3. Please pray for Ritah and I as we travel to the UK and also for the birth of our daughter.

If you do want any more specific information, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email, which is tmacgregor@fh.org, or by regular mail to my postal address **PO Box 146, Gitarama, Muhanga Rwanda**. Also remember to visit mine or Azizi Life's page on Facebook or our website (www.azizilife.com) if you would like to see more photographs and details about the work.

Many thanks,
Tom & Ritah