

RWANDAN UPDATE

Tom MacGregor May 2015



Dear Friends,

For those of you who have never had to come home and tell your wife that you may have lost all of the family's money and could possibly be heading to jail, there really is no feeling like it. It is kind of like a cocktail of fear and failure that makes you feel sick to the pit of your stomach. However, on the flipside, there is nothing better than encouragement and strength you get from a supportive and faithful wife, who reminds you we serve a loving God and helps you to see the light at the end of the tunnel. A week later our roles were reversed, when Ritah was made redundant from her job, I was the one who was able to provide the encouragement and support. Although May 2015 will not go down as one of my all-time favorite months, it is one in which we have had to really live out what we believe in and trust God like few other months before and, nothing helps you grow more than that.

I am pleased to say my fears over financial ruin and jail, were unfounded. It had all come about because of an administrative error I made years ago for Azizi Life. I will not go into the full complicated story, but basically there is a specific document that you need when exporting items from Rwanda. We did not know this document existed and consequently we were in breach of the tax rules. Thankfully we are working with the Customs and Tax officials to find an amicable solution to this accidental error. Also although Ritah's redundancy means some short term belt tightening we know that God has a good plan for the future. Stay tuned for how it all turns out.



Outside of the craziness in our jobs we have had some wonderful times. We moved to a new house for less rent and it's a place that really feels like home. It's the perfect place to raise Keza with a lovely little garden and plenty of space for her to scoot around in her walker. We also have a spare room which means hosting overseas guests is easier. In fact we already have a few house guests booked in for June and we are really excited to show

them around. There is also a papaya tree in our garden and if we can just work out how to get the fruit down before the birds do, we will have a feast.

Keza is continuing to grow and develop into a proper little person. I do not remember ever being so tired or so contented at the same time. The other day she initiated a game of peekaboo by hiding behind the curtains and then popping out from behind them. She is a complete joy and often has me crying with laughter. Her first tooth looks like it is beginning to come through and although crawling still eludes her she is growing in strength and coordination every day.



Azizi Life continues to grow and develop and at the beginning of the year we hired Jane (photographed here on the left) as the newest staff member to help out with the ever increasing craft sales in Kigali. Also last month, continuing with our goal of local ownership, Sheila (photographed here on the right) was given shares and became a Director of the craft business. Sheila has been with Azizi Life since 2011 and over the years has proved herself extremely capable. It is with great joy and pleasure we moved her into a more senior leadership role.



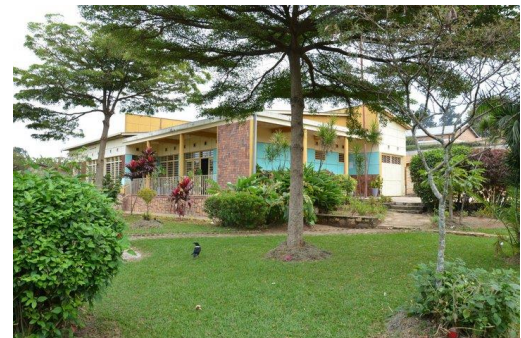
Pretty much since I first arrived in Rwanda I have been working towards the goal of a self-sustaining wholistic development model. The idea was to create multiple socially focused Rwandan businesses that would generate enough income to support themselves and also pay into a community fund. This fund would support spiritual, social and economic development activities in the rural communities of Rwanda. In February we took a massive step towards fulfilling this goal with the formation of the Rwandan Charity, Ubuzima Bwiza (translated as 'Precious Life'). We have registered at the district level and have formed the board (pictured above), who are made up of volunteers from our artisans groups and also local professionals from businesses and established charities based in Muhanga. We are in the process of getting our national registration documents and have already started operating. We currently run two programs through the charity – a financing scheme for solar lights and fuel efficient stoves and also our weekly bible study. We are working on a full action plan & hope to have started a farming and training program by the end of this year.



To fund all of the different things we want to do with Ubuzima Bwiza, we need to massively increase sales and I am pleased to say God is blessing us with some amazing growth in both the craft and tourism businesses. The numbers of guest doing our day trips has continued to increase but, we hope to add to this even more by re-doing our brochure and marketing materials and also by launching a few new multi-day packages. If anyone is interested in a truly unique holiday to Rwanda, just let us know! To help boost the craft exports, our team of US volunteers are heading back to the New York gift show in August. We got some great connections from this

event last year and we are hoping to build on that.

For the last three years we have been regularly housing and feeding mixed teams of young people from the UK and Rwanda. It has been such a pleasure to host these young people but sadly, at the end of May this program finished in Rwanda. This means a drop in regular income but also a wonderful new opportunity. So in June we will be launching the Azizi Life Youth Hostel and Camping ground. We have hosted lots of teams before but this will be our first venture into housing the general public. I am sure that we will be learning lots of lessons, over the coming months.



Prayer Requests

1. Please pray for Azizi Life. Firstly that the tax issues will get completely resolved. Secondly for wisdom to ensure we meet all future regulations and thirdly for growth in income.
2. Please pray for our family, particularly for Ritah as she searches for the direction God is leading her in, and also for our finances during the transition to this new chapter of our lives.
3. Please pray for Ubuzima Bwiza and its new board of Directors. Please also pray that we are able to get registered quickly at national level and that God will guide all our plans.

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 & Keza