

RWANDAN UPDATE

MacGregor Family May 2017

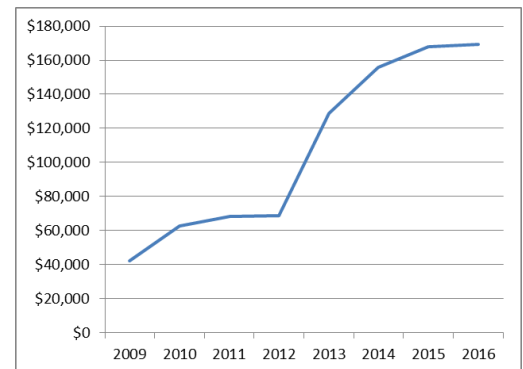


Dear Friends,

On the 16th January 2017 we had the great pleasure of welcoming our newest daughter (Tona Ivy) into this World. She brings so much joy to our family and is growing in size and character every day. Life with a baby and toddler is happy and hectic and very tiring. We had the great joy of moving into our new house at the end of 2016 but, sadly shortly afterwards Ritah was hospitalised with malaria and typhoid, which was then followed within a few weeks by the arrival of Tona via a 24 hour labour and C section. Thankfully God knows how much we can handle and so before we collapsed into an exhausted heap on the ground, Grandma and Poppa (MacGregor) came for a visit. It was wonderful to have them stay with us in our new home and they spent many hours playing and caring for both Keza and Tona. We also had loads of help from our Rwandan family and friends and that was a real reminder to me of the true value of being part of a loving community. If that is not something you have experienced I am very sorry and pray you are able to find it soon. People can be frustrating, their opinions and personalities may clash with yours but there is little that fills my heart with more joy than to stand alongside others as we face the World - not always agreeing but always together.



Work with Azizi Life continues to grow and develop and last month saw the launch of our new website (www.azizilife.com) that not only shows the products and artisans that we have been working with but also the community impact projects we support such as training, bible study & renewable resources. Please do go have a look at the website to see in much more detail what we are involved with day to day in Rwanda. At the end of 2016 Azizi Life had been operating for just over 8 full years and so I decided to look back through the financial information to see how much (money-wise) had passed through Azizi Life and into Rwanda and the rural communities. My heart burst with pride when I discovered that sometime during this year the total amount Azizi Life will have generated will pass the one million US dollar mark. Praise God!



One of the impact projects we started in 2016 was to train beekeepers and candle makers and, out of this a new business is slowly coming to life. Beautiful Creations (www.beautifulcreations.org) is helping the bee keepers and candle makers to package and sell their products. The great news is that our raw natural honey has become so popular in Rwanda that we are struggling to keep it on the shelves. We hope to train more bee keepers in improved honey extraction techniques in June (the main harvest season), but in the meantime we are working on perfecting the candles, wax polish and lip balm. Keep your eye on our facebook page for when the candles become available to buy in the US and UK (currently they are exclusive to Rwanda).

Toddle Care has continued to grow and in January we took on a new part time employee. Despite having a few leaky roof problems at the shop, the team has been developing lots of new products and sales are going well (not only covering cost but also making some profit). Tona has also been helping out with a little bit of modelling (more photos on www.facebook.com/ToddleCare).





Despite having to work our way through a few teething problems (re-wiring, water shortages, leaking roof & sewage issues) it has not dampened our love for our new home. But one question has been in the top of our minds since we arrived, "how can we best use all this space we have been so wonderfully blessed with?" One opportunity came in the form of Toddlers as we now host a weekly Tot's Praise. This group is a bit of a tradition in Kigali &

Keza has been attending since she was about 6 months old but, they were in need of a new location. So now every Friday morning around 10 to 30 toddlers descend (with parents or nannies) on our house to sing, pray and read stories. Although it can be quite a noisy affair it fills the house with the kind of joy & energy that only a group of toddlers can create.

Through the different areas of our work our lives are now intertwined with over 420 rural artisans and their families. There is not usually a week that goes past without the news of a birth, death or marriage. There are heart breaking situations, like the artisan who struggles daily because, due to an avoidable birth delay, her child has brain damage and can barely move, or the baby born with Downs syndrome and a defective heart who died before she could be operated on. There are infuriating situations; where a husband who refuses to change, continually drinks and becomes violent so his wife and children have had to flee their family home or, the leader of a cooperative that has been lying to us and the rest of their group so they can keep all the work and money for themselves. However there are also many, many joyous situations; like when an artisan is able to buy their own home or install electricity or send their child to secondary school or pay for much needed medical care. This month in particular we saw one of my favourite kinds of situation – moving from heart breaking and infuriating to joyous. Oscar, a boy born with a birth defect which caused great pain every time he urinated, is finally old enough and strong enough to be able to have the operation that will fix this problem. It has been a long and frustratingly slow road to get to this point but the end is in sight with the operation scheduled for next week.



Lastly I am pleased to say that classes for the adult literacy program (teaching adults to read and write) started well and in a much bigger way than we had ever expected. We run classes 3 times a week in 6 different village areas and have a total of 243 adults enrolled and a further 200 on a waiting list for the start of the next set of classes. Of those in class at the beginning of the year 166 could not write their own name and 205 could not identify every letter of the alphabet but

our hope is that by the end of the year each one will have the necessary skill to read, understand and complete any official document and maybe a few of them will become poets, authors or just good old bookworms.

Prayer Requests

1. Please pray that Oscar's operation is a success and he recovers well with no complications.
2. Please pray that the Azizi Life group & Toddle Care continue to provide a positive impact in the lives of all who we work with, not just financially, but in possible every way.
3. I (Tom) chose a life as an immigrant living in another country and culture with all the implications that has. However, that decision also impacts on our daughters; please pray for them, particularly Keza, as she learns to deal with being significantly different from the neighbourhood kids. Please also pray for wisdom for us as parents as we try and help.

If you do want any more specific information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or regular mail (**PO Box 146, Gitarama, Muhanga, Rwanda**). Also remember to visit our our Facebook pages to see more photographs and details about hwat we are doing.

Much Love,
Tom, Ritah, Keza & Tona