

RWANDAN UPDATE

Tom MacGregor November 2014



Dear Friends,

As I sit here looking out of the window onto a new relatively unknown part of Rwanda I can hear the gurgling giggles of my daughter in the background and I realize just how tired I have become. In the last few months I have not had enough time to appreciate just how tired I was but today I feel it and it seems to have got right into my bones. However do not worry; this tiredness is filled with a sense of enormous wellbeing. It's the kind of tiredness that only comes when you have achieved something that you are proud of, when you have given your all to get somewhere or accomplish something, then when you finally reach your goal, like a wave this sense of glorious tiredness sweeps in as a sign of a job well done. Personally I think there are few better feelings than this sense of satisfaction but in all honesty I have had little to do with guiding or effecting recent events, I have just been there for the ride and what a ride it has been.



We had a wonderful trip to the UK spending time with friends and family and we even got to go to an awesome Christian Camp (Transform 2014). Thanks to a very kind donation we were able to stay in a nearby hotel and so we were spared sleeping in a tent, whilst still enjoying all the fun of the camp. Then on the 6th September 2014 our daughter came into this world at precisely 6am, after Ritah had been in labour approximately 22 hours, with me nervously watching various beeping machines and then finally an expertly done C-section. In my life I have never felt as helpless as the moment the Doctor told me they were going to operate. Thoughts of the worst filled my head as I tried to smile & be strong for Ritah. Then after it was all done and Keza Lilly MacGregor was in our arms I must admit I wept long and hard, not really with joy (although I was very joyful) but with sheer emotional exhaustion. There are no words that can prepare you for the birth of your first child, many people tried but it's simply not possible, it truly is an indescribable miracle of God – tiring but very good.

Due to our daughter's delayed arrival, one week after she was born we were at South Kent Community Church for a Dedication Service. A Dedication service is an opportunity thank God for the gift he has given you in your new baby, to promise to do your best to bring your child up in a godly Christian environment where they are free to search for the truth and, for the other Church members to stand with you in support and prayer for your child. Keza was given a bible, prayed over & a good friend, Fiona, even wrote & sang a prophetic song over Keza. It was such a lovely service with a real English & Rwanda mix. Afterwards many of our friends and family came back to my Parents house to celebrate the birth & the start of Keza's adventure in life – again tiring, but the good kind.



Thanks to a wonderful answer to prayer, Keza's passport arrived in record time and we were on the plane back to Rwanda the following weekend. Back to our life in Muhanga, or at least that is what we thought when we arrived, however, it turned out that life was just about to take a surprising twist. We had just got ourselves into a nice comfortable routine and then at the end of October, Ritah was offered an amazing new job (Fleet Manager for Ericson). After a lot of thinking

and praying, this seemed like just too good an opportunity to miss. Sadly her employers needed Ritah to start within two weeks and if we were going to make this all work we needed to move closer to Ritah's workplace in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Praise God everything fell into place – we found a lovely little house (within our budget – no small feat) and a trustworthy, honest, hardworking child carer called Rosine (the sister of a Jeannine, my colleague at Azizi Life). We managed to get all moved in and settled with just a few boxes left to unpack before Ritah started work - tired but very happy.



We were only able to make this move to Kigali and to spend the time in the UK because of how far my Rwanda colleagues have come in the last few years. Azizi Life now has ten fulltime and six part-time Rwandan staff but it is the three ladies here (Jeannine, Sheila and Venantie) that will be primarily responsible for everything from now on. They are more than capable of running all the Rwandan operations and they have my full confidence, which means I am free to change the way I work. This fills me with such a sense of joy as I see the last seven years of investing in the staff paying off. Their skills and ability has moved Azizi Life far beyond what I could have ever hoped or dreamed. I will still go to the office once a week and they can call or email me if they need anything, but for all intense and purposes they are now running things and so a new era starts for me and for Azizi Life. I have a small office set up in the corner of the front room in our new home and with my printer/scanner and somewhat slow internet connection, I am ready to take on the World in my new role and as an added bonus I'm privileged to be close to my daughter as she grows. Away from the day to day operation I will be more focused on planning & direction for growth for Azizi Life both in Rwanda & globally – there are exciting times ahead!



Christi continues to move things forward in the US and along with strengthening the board she has found a lady, Gwyn, who has offered to volunteer full time for Azizi Life in the US for the next year. Gwyn will work with other volunteers and interns to spread the word about the work we are doing in Rwanda and increase sales. The great news is that sales are already increasing. We made some great connections during the New York Tradeshow where we had a booth in August and many of these connections have now become our customers.

With sales increasing in the US and also in Rwanda we are in the wonderful position of not being able to keep up with production, even with our artisans pretty much working full time. So along with hiring a new member of staff we have also been looking for new artisan groups to partner with. We have met with a few & started to gauge the level of skill and ability that they have. As we value long term partnerships & we do not want to reduce the income we are currently providing for over 300 families we plan to take new groups on a more part time basis, giving them work just when we have large orders. Then over time our hope is the orders will continue and these new artisans to become long term partners.



Prayer Requests

1. Please pray for Jeanine, Sheila and Venantie as they take primary responsibility for running the craft and tourism social enterprises. Also pray for the new volunteer, Rwandan employee and artisans partners as they begin working with us.
2. Please pray for Ritah in her new job. Also please pray for Rosine as she helps us take care of Keza. This is quite a change for our little family & so please pray this transition goes well.
3. Please pray that I am able to work effectively from home and that I will have wisdom as I plan how we can increase the work and impact that Azizi Life has in the rural communities of Rwanda.

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