

## RWANDAN UPDATE

Tom MacGregor October 2015



Dear Friends,

These last few months have been all about new starts. As I watch my daughter beginning to walk on her own, I realized how much can be learnt from a toddler as they take their first few faltering steps. For Keza her desire and commitment to walk came long before she possessed the necessary skills. She stumbled and fell often but was not deterred. No matter how heavily she fell it was never hard enough to put her off her heart's desire. She kept trying until the day she could toddle unaided from one side of the room to the other. I will not forget the smiles of excitement as she made her maiden voyage or her little yelps of joy as she successfully made it to the safety of the couch. Everything she had been working towards had led up to that moment and, so ended babyhood and we enter the era of the Toddler. Like Keza it is rare to start something new and do it perfectly, it is highly likely we will stumble and fall, but this is no reason to deprive ourselves of the joy that comes from doing what you were designed to do. I strongly believe that every person has been created by God for a reason and, if you have a desire deep in your heart that has been there for a long time, maybe it is time to start toddling.



For Ritah this new start took the form of launching her own businesses 'Toddle Care.' The desire is to create Rwandan made products designed specifically for children in Rwanda. For the last few months Ritah has been working hard with artisans (and even taught herself to sew) on designing and making a full range of products from feeding pillows to developmental toys. There is still a long way to go but the website is already up and running at [www.toddlecare.com](http://www.toddlecare.com) and we are beginning to get more recognition from Parents in Rwanda on Facebook too (<https://www.facebook.com/ToddleCare>). The photo on the right is of Keza using one of the Toddle Care products - a Montessori learning tower



The new start for Azizi Life took the form of a whole new area of work – Bee Keeping! A family from the UK (Sean, Emma, Micah and Zach) who previously lived in Rwanda are coming back. Sean, who has a background in development work, has been studying bee keeping for the last year or so and will be coming out to join the Azizi Life team as we start this new venture. The plan is to select one village to start the bee keeping project in. If we can find a model that works we will expand the program out to other communities. We will also set up a new social enterprise that will sell the products that the bee keepers produce (wax, candles and honey) bringing much needed income into more rural communities. We have a long road ahead and a lot still to learn but, I am excited to be involved in this. Up until a few months ago all I had was a healthy respect and slight fear of African Bees but very little knowledge. The more I have learned however, the more I am convinced that this is something that is going to really change the lives of people who currently struggle to simply survive.



For me personally it's not a new start exactly but it is a clean sheet, which is almost the same. After lots of meetings and form filling we have now fully resolved the tax issues that I wrote about in the last update. Praise God, the fine was much less than we expected and a very kind supporter covered all the cost and so it did not impact our family personally or Azizi Life. Although I cannot say it was an enjoyable experience a lot of useful lessons were learnt that will put us in a good position for the future.

For a few of our Artisans the new start they have embarked on this month was really life changing. Each week at the Azizi Life main office we hold a Bible study on Wednesday mornings, which is

open to anyone who wants to come along. The bible study is not specific to any denomination and is simply a chance to look at some different verses and discuss what we all think they might mean. It is always interesting and sometimes we have some pretty brilliant discussions. Occasionally we have a visiting speaker to bring a new perspective and, that is what we had a few weeks ago. The guest speaker chose to talk on the difference between going to church or being baptized as a baby, with making a personal, thought-out decision to follow Jesus. Following the talk and discussion over 10 of the artisans listening made the conscious decision to start following Jesus. It is going to be exciting to watch how this 'new start' will impact their lives in the future.



Although myself and my American colleague, Christi, are personally supported by the kind donations of friends and family, the rest of our work in Rwanda is funded directly through the sale of the products and services made by our rural artisans partners. We praise God that we have continued to see a growth in sales for both the tourism and crafts. In the summer we successfully completed our second New York Trade Fair. This is a massive event and has enabled us to connect with loads more shops, not just in the US but a few others from all over the world. We hope to continue to build on this success and are in the process of connecting with

more artisans to meet the new production demands. We are now providing regular work for around 350 artisans but hopefully we can increase this number by the end of the year.

The distribution of fuel-efficient stoves and solar lamps continues (we have so far distributed 125 stoves and 100 lamps), with more stoves being delivered last week. The financing program we offer has enabled many artisans and some of their community members to access these wonderful, money-saving and life-saving products. Over time we hope to expand this program to many more communities.



In April 2016 we hope, visas willing, to be back in the UK for a visit. The plan is to be there for at least four weeks in the hope to connect with as many people as possible. It will have been well over a year and a half since our last visit and so we will have plenty to catch up on. Please do let me know if you want to meet up so we can start getting things added into our diary – I would hate to miss anyone out.

### Prayer Requests

1. Please pray for Sean, Emma Micah and Zach as they make their final preparations to leave the UK and come out to Rwanda. Please also pray for Sean's Bee Keeping project, that God will give him wisdom in the best way to move this forward.
2. Please pray for Ritah's new business, Toddle Care. Things are always tough at the start of a new venture and there is a lot to learn. Please pray she forms good working relationships with the artisans and is able to find plenty of customers.
3. Please pray for our family. That we remain well and healthy and that we continue to hear God's voice and follow his direction not only in our work but in all areas of our lives. Please specifically pray for safety for Keza as she continues to grow, develop and explore.

If you do want any more specific information, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email, which is [tom@azizilife.com](mailto:tom@azizilife.com), or by regular mail to my postal address **PO Box 146, Gitarama, Muhanga, Rwanda**. Also remember to visit mine or Azizi Life's or Toddle Care's page on Facebook or our websites ([www.azizilife.com](http://www.azizilife.com) or [www.toddlecare.com](http://www.toddlecare.com)) if you would like to see more photographs and details about the work we are doing.

Many thanks,  
Tom, Ritah & Keza