

# RWANDAN UPDATE

May 2023



Dear Friends,

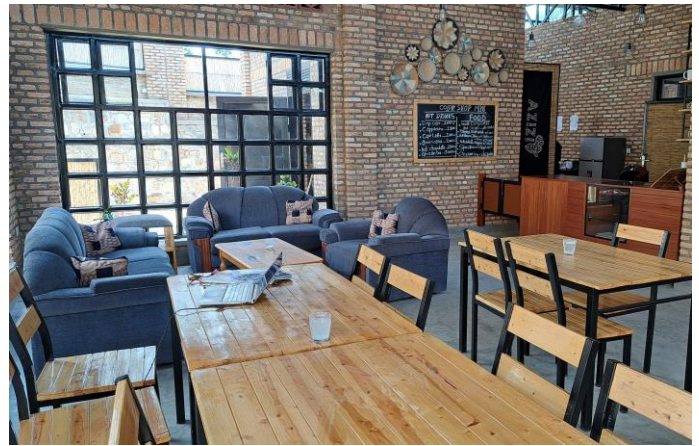
We have such fond memories of our summer in the UK last year. We would like to thank everyone we got to meet for making the trip such a wonderful one. We are sorry to those that we did not manage to connect with and, hope and pray our paths cross again soon. Life in Rwanda has continued at pace, with some challenges however, also some amazing break throughs. We have been learning a lot about patience and trust. Ultimately, in life, many things are completely out of our control but by faithfully turning up and doing what is in front of us we found God takes care of the rest. Its an exciting journey but a touch overwhelming if you do not learn to let things go.

## **Azizi Life (crafts & tourism) and Beautiful Creations (Bee Keeping and bee related products)**

The all-consuming building project started in January 2022 and we are not quite done yet. The money we initially raised and the budget we had to complete the build was \$185,000, of course then inflation hit the construction industry with prices in Rwanda more than doubling if not tripling. By an absolute miracle of God's provision, we have so far spent well over \$330,000 on Building and still have money left in the bank. We did manage to fund raise a bit more but the vast majority of this extra was covered thanks to the amazing sales over the last two years. The other wonderful and amazing thing about the building is that it was all done by hand (digging out the land, breaking the rocks to size and mixing the cement), so we employed an average of 150 people from our neighbourhood for over 14 months.



Our new location not only gives us the opportunity to grow and improve our existing projects but also to try out some new things to generate more jobs and to benefit the rural community around us in Ruhango. Our first step was to open our café. We are now selling local coffee, tea and also locally sourced food. We have started with a limited menu but hope to develop that over the next few months. I do love a good sandwich and so I have really enjoyed the process of trying to perfect them. Still some tweaking to be done on the others but our beef and salsa stuffed naan with cucumber and garlic mayo has been launched.



Another great thing about our new location is that we have space to run trainings. We have a big room that can seat more than 150 people and we also have 5 dorm style rooms that can sleep teams of up to 26 people. Thanks to our friends at Amor Europe (<https://www.amoreurope.org/>) we hosted our first Church equipping training – specifically around working with Children. We had just over 34 participants from 11 local churches (plus a Mosque) for an excellent weeklong interactive training. I was there for graduation day and got to see the participants

test out all they had learnt in running games, story telling and hosting a children's club. It was amazing to see how far they had come in just a week. We plan to follow up with this group and run many more trainings in our beautiful new space.

### **Toddle Care**

The team has been super busy since the end of last year. They won a big contract to provide educational toys to 2,900 schools. This meant they were able to employ extra people for the last 9 months taking them from the normal 14 staff to 40 staff members. They also hosted an expert carpenter from Germany for four weeks who helped them identify the equipment they need to acquire to grow to the next stage of their development. Sadly, in April we were told we had to leave the Workshop as the owners planned to knock it down. Due to massively poor communication from the owner this came as a shock, and they left us with just 10 days to find a new place and move all the machinery out. Praise God, Ritah was not only able to find a new place and get all moved in time, but the place she found was so much bigger and better than where we had been before. We now have a huge amount of space to grow into with plenty of space for the new machinery.



### **Impact Projects**

The adult literacy program continues to grow. We have taught over 3,500 people to read and write since we started (back in 2016) and we currently have 1,027 enrolled in classes. We have also been working on developing a waste management program, that is being piloted with one village.

If it's successful we hope to expand it. The idea is to work with the village to collect and then recycle any plastic or paper waste that they have.

### **Family**

In April my (Tom's) parents came to visit us in Rwanda. It has been about 5 years since they were last here and so it was wonderful to show them all the changes. They had loads of fun hanging out with their granddaughters (spoiling them) and I was also able to take some time off work to show them the site and have some fun too.

The girls are doing well at school and seem to love it. Personally, I am not enjoying the homework side of things because, it turns out, I either did not know or I have forgotten pretty much everything I ever learnt – spelling and grammar is a particular struggle when questions get asked. Outside of the school the girls have joined a swimming club. Its an outside pool but as its pretty hot here that does not seem to cause them any issues. They are little water babies.



### **Personal Support**

Since coming to Rwanda, I have not taken a salary but instead raise money to live off from the kind donations from friends and family. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have donated and continue to donate each month, your support is really appreciated, and we would not have got to where we are without you. For the last 15 years, FHUK has been the charity that administered those donations. Due to changes in the structure of FHUK we agreed that it was best for me to move my support to another organisation (one that specialises in this kind of thing) and so we amicably parted ways. I would like to honour FHUK for the faithful support they have given me for so many years. They remain very good friends and supporters of our work in Rwanda. My personal support is now arranged via my UK Church (SKCC) and an organisation called Stewardship. If you are member of SKCC and would like to support our family, then please talk with the church office about the best way to do that. Alternatively, you can donate online directly via this Stewardship link - [www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/20418419](http://www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/20418419)

### **Prayer Requests**

1. Please join us in praising God for Azizi Life's new home in Rwanda, plus all the growth the team and artisans have gone through. Pray the leadership has wisdom as they choose where to focus their energy on. Please also pray for the new members of staff and the existing ones that they will continue to work hard and keep Jesus at the very centre of all we do.
2. The Toddle Care team is so thankful to have their new workshop space. Please pray they are able to finish the last part of their big contract in time and with excellence. Please also pray for wisdom as we decide what to invest in next.
3. Please pray for our impact work in Rwanda. Please pray that the existing projects continue to function well and give the leadership wisdom as we look to expand our work with equipping Churches.

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 Facebook pages ([www.facebook.com/azizilife](http://www.facebook.com/azizilife) and [www.facebook.com/toddlecare](http://www.facebook.com/toddlecare)) to see more photographs and details about what we are doing.

Much Love,  
Tom, Ritah, Keza and Tona