

RWANDAN UPDATE

November 2020



Dear Friends,

Not sure where to start with this update, like everyone else in the World we have found 2020 to be quite a traumatic one. Still no land for Azizi Life's building project, serious flooding in Rwanda, a cancelled family trip to the UK, Azizi Life's income slashed due to no tourists in Rwanda with staff choosing to take voluntary pay cuts for a couple of months and the threat of a potentially life threatening virus hanging over our heads. To name just a few of the issues that this year threw up. However weirdly at the same time it has been one of the most productive and fruitful times for our work and our family.

Toddle Care



Started 2020 not sure how they were going to make ends meet, sales were not covering costs and they had to let go the two main carpenters due to theft and poor work. Ritah and her team needed a miracle to turn things around – and that is exactly what they got, repeatedly. First came a donation that was invested in machinery and fixing up the workshop, this sped up production. Then came a flood of new orders. They needed two new carpenters but they ended up with four, all apprentices from the local technical college already trained in using the new machinery. Then came more big orders. Then came a volunteer who loved the work and wanted to help (for free) with new designs and expertise on social media. Then came a new shop location with very low rent and another amazing month of sales. It has not all been easy and the team has had to work amazingly hard. There have been a few setbacks (sadly the new

shop location had to close because the landlord failed to get the proper permits) and tears along the way but overall 2020 is proving to be a year of great break through and growth for Toddle Care and the team.

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

Although no one is visiting Rwanda; for some reason when COVID struck sales of craft Exports went through the roof, we have already exported over 4 tons of crafts which is more than double the amount for the previous year. As well as the increase in sales in the US we have signed an agreement with an exclusive Distributor in Canada and also one in Israel. Stay tuned as we may also be coming to the UK very soon – but that agreement is still not finalised. We managed to do a lot of annoying and yet necessary admin stuff, like integrating new sales tax software, moving our website onto a new bigger server and improving warehouse efficiency with a new mailing label and Barcode system. We even ran a pioneering remote/virtual volunteering program through the summer in conjunction with 16 students from Manchester University.



Impact Projects



Although we had to stop the adult literacy program (as group meetings were banned) the impact team have never been busier. Not only were they running an emergency food program for the artisans and their families, supporting the out of work teachers they were also, (thanks to a kind donation) able to help all the artisans pay their annual National Medical Insurance to ensure no break in cover. They also helped rebuild a local lady's house that had been destroyed by the floods, fundraised for an artisan's prosthetic leg and took a badly malnourished baby to the hospital (ensuring the mum has a supply of formula for the future). The team has been amazed by the global generosity at this really difficult time – praise God!

Family

Just after we got married we decided to take the little savings I had and invest in some rural land outside Kigali. We bought a big plot for a good price and then pretty much forgot about it. At the end of 2019 we realised we needed to invest more into Toddle Care and also to do up our crumbling house. So we put the land up for sale. Turns out that land had dramatically increased in value. After we had invested in Toddle Care there was enough left over to put in a septic tank and split our house in two creating a family home with a little two bedroom guesthouse attached. The



construction is still going on but we are almost there and hope to start renting out the little house early next year (if anyone is interested???). We also increased our family by one with the introduction of Buster the Dachshund puppy. He is a bundle of love that wants to be involved in everything – from Home School to Construction!



In Rwanda they have done a very good job of keeping the virus under control, but that has come at a price with strict travel restrictions, curfews and schools being closed since March. Since about May things have been opening up slowly with more localised lockdowns but now (November) the girl's school has finally re-opened and they have headed back. We are Thankful

Prayer Requests

1. Please pray for the Toddle Care team. The Landlord of the Manufacturing unit has told them he will increase the rent by more than 25%. Also they need to get a replacement place for their lost shop location.
2. Please pray that the Muhanga District will release the final Land Master Plans so we can find a plot and finally build.
3. Join us in thanking God for the wonderful new global connections and the amazing donations. We have seen such growth and generosity this year at a really difficult time and none of that would have been possible without God's guiding hand.

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 and www.facebook.com/toddlecare) to see more photographs and details about what we are doing.

Much Love,
Tom, Ritah, Keza & Tona