

DEVON-THIKA UMOJA UPDATE JUNE 2018

A SUMMER UPDATE FROM OUR FRIENDS IN THIKA

GREETINGS

Greetings from beautiful Kenya, from our team here at Thika!

Our hearts are filled with joy and gratitude for the love and support you continue to give us. You have relentlessly journeyed with us as we have trodden this path for almost four years. Because of that, new hopes and dreams have been born, and new life-transforming initiatives begun. Your hard and selfless sacrifice has built so much here. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts and want to share with you some of the progress made and challenges faced by our team.

SUPPORTING FACILITATORS AND TRAINERS

Some of the churches here in Kenya, for one reason or another, have seen a high turnover of CCMP (Umoja) facilitators, so we are continuing to provide support from the diocesan staff team for this work, and to support the new team of facilitators coming into these communities.

Two lay facilitators from the pilot team have been showing much promise and the potential to become resourceful trainers. We are planning to mentor them to train and support future generations. To do this, we have been giving them opportunities to oversee the current teams of facilitators during their CCMP sessions. We are so hopeful that through these promising people, we will see that the diocese has a resourceful and talented team of leaders in the future.

MOBILISING THE POOREST OF THE POOR

We have been working with the pilot team of ten churches which are beginning the process of identifying the poorest of the poor in the community, who will be later mobilised to start a Self Help Group for themselves. This is such a key part of the process because the churches have to be facilitated in such a way that they are able to capture the vision and really make the concept their own. We are so pleased to be seeing the churches involved confident about their plans for these groups!

TAKING CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Two teams of facilitators have been concentrating on environmental conservation in the local area, by planting more than 600 trees in April. The trees were planted in the diocese-owned Namrata Shah Children's Home. Every rainy season, the teams will plant more trees in Thika, in the hopes to making the area one of the greenest places in the region!

REACHING A CRITICAL MASS IN THE NEW CCMP CENTRES

One of the main challenges of this past season has been that some of the churches have found it difficult getting enough people involved in weekday CCMP sessions. We are working with these churches to see how CCMP can be restructured to allow more Christians to be involved.

We have also had difficulties with reviving the stalled ACK (Anglican Church of Kenya) Mithii-ini church after the incumbent clergy facilitator was transferred to another parish. The new vicar was not trained on the CCMP which has made it difficult for him to continue facilitating the process.

Facilitating CCMP at ACK Thimuru, Kiunyu church has been an uphill task owing to lack of support from the leadership. We are liaising with the Bishop's office to see how this hurdle can be overcome.

PLEASE PRAY FOR US

- That CCMP at ACK Mithii-ini will be revitalized with new leadership
- For ACK Kiunyu church to support CCMP work

SIX NEW CHURCHES HAVE STARTED THE UMOJA JOURNEY

Benson, the CCMP Consultant in Thika, reports:

The new Umoja Up-scale generation is composed of 6 Parishes. Up-scale in 3 parishes resulted from clergy who were facilitators in pilot churches being moved to new parishes between October and December 2017. Up-scale in the other three Parishes was as a result of demand by their respective vicars.

WAKING THE SLEEPING GIANT IN KENYA

Before Tearfund partner Thika Diocese ever approached our church, you could say we were pretty content. Our small congregation at ACK Giatutu Church, Gatanga Parish in Thika did what we thought we were supposed to do. We came to church, we listened to the preacher, we went home. And the cycle continued, without much thought. Everything changed when we learned about the Church and Community Mobilisation Process (CCMP). A team met with our leaders and talked about how CCMP could transform lives in ways we couldn't even picture at the time.

Taking a Good Look in the Mirror

It began with a time of introspection - holding a mirror up to ourselves as a church and truly seeing what we were, and what we weren't.

We saw an undesirable church. Poor time management, long-term debts, home groups that were long-dead without any concern or attempt at revival. We realised that we had been living as a sleeping giant - God had given us strength and power to transform the community, calling us to serve, but we were asleep, ignoring the call.

After this insightful process, we knew we had to do something. We were determined to see a new church and community develop, using our God-given resources and His word. We were fired up and excited to start a new chapter of ACK Giatutu.

Owning the Work of Ministry

Knowing that our long-running debts were a barrier to our transformation, we knew this was our first port of call for change.

One of our members, Samuel, approached the vicar and suggested we plan a big fundraiser for the church. The vicar was delighted with the idea, so pleased that we were taking the initiative. Together they mobilised the whole church for this project. The fundraising drive was planned for 18th March 2018 and the day raised 277,000 Kshs (almost £2,100) to pay off debts and contribute to new community projects.

Free to Express Ourselves

Before CCMP, we always believed all we had to do when we came to church was listen. Not question or give an opinion, no discussion of any kind about what we thought the Bible had to tell us. Just that the preacher would interpret the passages and give us direction.

But now, we understand a new way of doing things. We were shocked at first, when the vicar (who was also our CCMP facilitator) started to ask us questions. Not just about the Bible reading on a Sunday, but about what we wanted our church and community to look like. What did we think? What did we want to see?

Ministering to the Sick and Elderly

We soon discovered that God has placed us here to holistically minister to all, without discrimination, to be with our community members in times of need. The husband of a member of our congregation had suffered terrible injuries after a car accident. We planned for several of our group to pay her family a visit and bring food and money. They were so grateful for this act that it encouraged us to do more. The Mother's Union members decided to focus on the sick and elderly women in the church. They sought out women who were not able to attend church regularly because of their age or condition, and brought each one food and money, and spent time with them reading the Bible.



Giatutu Church's Vicar and Mothers Union reaching out to the elderly and the sick

Involving the Youth



Members of Giatutu church tree planting in the community

Through special youth-focused CCMP groups during the school holidays, we've seen the young people in our church become enthusiastic and determined to be involved which is so exciting to see. After discussion amongst them and reflection on the needs of the community, their focus became environmental conservation. They planted 25 new trees in the church gardens, in the hopes of seeing our community become greener.

Please Pray

- Join with us in thanking God for the breakthrough in CCMP for our church, for us to sustain the enthusiasm we have found for this process.
- Pray for the team of three facilitators and our vicar, for continued passion and good leadership as we continue down this road.

A FOOTNOTE FROM TEARFUND

Churches United Against Poverty

Tearfund has been working in Kenya for more than thirty years, and we've seen the church start to step into the gap between Kenya's great natural wealth and the everyday reality of its people.

Central to our work is the use of Bible studies to encourage and equip churches to release the potential within their communities – an approach that was pioneered in Kenya in the 1980s and is now a key part of our work worldwide.

Working through local churches is incredibly effective as they are already rooted in the community; they normally have a physical space and people-power to put into use; and they are committed to long-term support, both practically and spiritually.

For more information about Thika and the Umoja project do please get in touch with us at bjinwood@btinternet.com. If you wish to unsubscribe from the mailing list please reply to this email and say so.

Brian and Jane Inwood