

## VISIT TO THUNGURURU 'FARMING GOD'S WAY' PROJECT MONDAY 1 OCTOBER 2018

When we arrived at St Stephen's, Thungururu, Julius Kimondo, the ADS (Anglican Development Services) Field Officer, gave an introduction to the Thungururu Integrated Food Security and Economic Empowerment Project 'Farming God's Way' (FGW). The aim is to reduce the 'hunger months' in the community, when people rely on food aid, from 8 months every year. Principles include maintaining soil fertility, making compost, growing vegetables, seed selection, timely planting, water harvesting for crops by trenches and ponds. Also group saving for domestic rainwater tanks (5,000 litres) with a ballot to determine who gets the tanks.

Rose - vice-chair of Project Management Committee - said 'Since we started learning about FGW our farms have changed - with mulch and stopping run-off, since 2015 lots of change. No longer relying on relief food - we have enough food. We don't waste water. Have made sack gardens and have enough veg for sale. Joining hands with County Government programme on food security. MCA (Member of County Assembly) is very excited to join hands with us. MCA has given training on pumpkins and rabbits. The buyer wants plenty of pumpkins. Our big challenge is processing pumpkins so looking to have our own machine - to produce enough for export - to be rich and honoured!'

They also talked about the problems of water harvesting - constructing water pans which do not leak and reducing evaporation. Rainwater tanks are wanted and savings groups save enough to buy 3 tanks after 6 months. But they see the benefit and savings are ongoing.

The farmers had brought a thank-offering of many of their crops and vegetables and gave them to us. The bishops prayed and blessed the crops and it was agreed that we would give them to the children at Namrata Shah.

The bus then took us towards the farm of Mrs Florence Chandi, secretary of the Project Management Committee, treasurer of St Stephen's Church and CCMP facilitator. We had to get out and walk while the bus negotiated the narrow, rutted road and eventually made it to the farm. Meanwhile, we were being shown the contour ditches dug to take flood water from the steep road on to the farm. When one ditch is full, the next ditch is opened up to take more water off the road from further down. This saves the road from being washed away and stores water in the soil on the farm.



Julius Kimondo at Mrs Chandi's farm

We saw the plots mulched with what they call 'God's blanket' where maize was already planted and waiting for rain. Bananas were growing in the trenches where no-one thought bananas could grow. Mrs Chandi also showed us samples of pigeon peas, 2 types of beans, ground nuts, yellow and white maize, green and yellow grams, pumpkins, cassava and bananas. Her wells are salty. She was lucky in the ballots and got 2 tanks from the community savings group and also has bought two more tanks herself. When these overflow the water runs into a water pan lined with polythene but it gets holes in it from vermin - especially when hedgehogs fall in and try to climb out. Florence now employs 3 workers and takes on 3 casual labourers when needed.

Later - in discussion with Patrick Mucheru, Anglican Development Services (ADS) coordinator in Thika, who oversees Thungururu Project, we learned that the project is going well and making progress, but much more could be done. Slow progress is partly due to the two years of drought which caused real hardship and meant the improvement was slower. The funds which remained from Exeter Diocese's 'Sand Dam Appeal' (£12,500 approx) and subsequent donations were sufficient to run the project for approx 18 months. The Exeter Diocese 'Harvest Appeal' in 2017 brought in a further £6,000 which continued the project to date but after 2 ½ years the funds have now run out. Bishop Julius was extremely concerned to hear that Julius Kimondo's (the field officer's) contract had just been renewed when no funds were available and wanted his contract terminated immediately. However we felt that this would be detrimental to the sustainability of the project and much of the good work done might be lost at this stage. We agreed to make every effort to raise some more funding so the project could continue with Kimondo's input for another two years, with the proviso that it should aim to become sustainable by then. At the end of our visit we were able to give Bishop Julius a small donation as the 'first fruits' in faith that the harvest would come in the form of enough funds for the project to continue. The amount needed is £9,000 per year for two years. This is a big challenge!