

EXETER THIKA LINK REPORT JANUARY 2020

General news

The weather in Thika has been very unusual. Following several years of very low rainfall and only one reasonable rain season in the last three years, leading to drought conditions, the October/November 'short rains' lasted right into January. There was some flooding and the cool conditions lasted right through into what is normally a hot and dry period. The big threat just now is the advance of huge swarms of desert locusts which have already caused devastation across Ethiopia, Somalia and parts of northern Kenya.

Thika Diocese reorganisation

The last few months have seen a lot of changes as the nine existing Archdeaconries have been reduced to four. They are anticipating good results from this reorganization and would value prayer for a smooth transition for all the changes that have taken place.

Exchange visits

In July Bishop Julius and his wife Esther will be hosted in Exeter for the week prior to the Lambeth Conference. They will be joined by ten other bishops and their spouses, two of them from dioceses neighbouring Thika. There will be a programme of events and visits including some open events giving us all a chance to meet them.

Plans are being laid for next year, 2021, when a number of parishes will be inviting visitors from their linked parishes to come and visit. So far around seven parishes have indicated that they would like to be involved so more ideas will be shared soon to get the ball rolling.

Bishop Jackie has not visited Thika yet but we hope to get a party to go with her on a visit in 2022. Every time we meet up with our Kenyan friends the link is strengthened and real friendships are built.

We are 'Companions in Mission' and sharing our joys and struggles in prayer is what the Link is about.

Partnership in projects:

Umoja (which means 'together')

This project to mobilise churches to unlock their full potential and reach out to the community has grown tremendously. One of the first parishes to start the Umoja journey now has 14 'Good Samaritan' groups which have brought together some of the neediest people in the community. As these groups meet and study the Bible together, each person also contributes a tiny amount of money which is donated in turn to members of the group to invest in something practical to improve their livelihood. Umoja helps people to identify the resources they have and make use of them to meet their needs instead of feeling there is nothing they can do without outside help.

Making a Dignified Living in my old age - The Story of Dorcas Wanjiku Kiiru

'I am 85 years old. My children are all grown-ups and not at home with me. I am a Christian and a member in the Roman Catholic Church. My husband died in 19... Due to my age, I am not able to do hard jobs like tea picking, keeping dairy cows or goats which are the major sources of livelihood in our community. This left me to live on what my children could give me. It felt very stigmatizing to always beg to meet even the most basic of needs. Sarah, a member of the Anglican Church explained to me how we can join hands with other like-minded community members to do profitable poultry farming as a structured source of livelihood. This was the most thrilling message I received, given that I had just had poultry farming as the only alternative. The fact that this farming would be structured through a group was very encouraging.

I joined the poultry group in 2017. I started by keeping 30 chicks. They all grew to maturity. They were 20 hens and 10 roosters. The 20 hens have been giving me at least 4 trays of eggs per week. I sell each tray at Kshs 450. This translates to Kshs 1800 weekly income. I sold 8 roosters at Kshs 1,500 which translated to Kshs 12,000. This income is enough to cater for my basic needs without having to beg from my children. Moreover, I am now able to celebrate on chicken meat with my children when they visit me without having to buy from outside. My children are very excited by what I am doing.



'In the poultry group, my cumulative savings are Kshs 10,500. I am able to borrow from the group to finance big projects like expanding my poultry agribusiness. By the end of this year, I want to have bought at least 50 extra chicks (3 weeks old). If it were not for the Anglican Church through Sarah who came my way, I would not be where I am today. I would be suffering in lack and poverty.'

There are many challenges to keeping the progress going in the churches. One answer is to focus on home Bible study groups and a syllabus is being developed which will enable home groups to grow themselves without taking too much of their clergy time.

Benson (Umoja Trainer) says: 'We are happy that God is helping us to make steps towards sustainable implementation of Umoja in Thika. We are planning to establish a fund to train all the clergy in Umoja so that when clergy are transferred the process will not stall.'

Tearfund will continue to part-fund Benson's salary, from funds already donated, for the next two years (two thirds in 2020, one third in 2021). Devon-Thika Umoja Project will continue to part-fund the expenses of the project in the same proportion - direct to Thika via Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance. Thank you so much to regular donors. Some extra funding will be needed to meet this commitment in 2020.

'Farming God's Way' in Thungururu

The recently received annual report states: 'By July 2019, the field officer had trained many groups of farmers on different water harvesting techniques in their farms with an assurance that if the rains should come in the same pattern as had been experienced the past couple of planting seasons, those who will have their farms ready with the techniques on the ground will reap some harvests. When the time for short rains came in October, the field officer got busy ensuring people were well prepared and that they immediately sow their seeds with a lot of emphasis to drought tolerant crop species and multiple cropping. The rains came on time and continued with a favourable pattern up the time of this report (January). However, there is evidently a very visible difference between those farmers who implemented the training compared to the other farmers. It is hoped that other farmers will learn from this and join in over the year 2020 so that the project will achieve its goal of reaching 200 households.'

The training includes digging water retention ditches, preparing multiple seed holes (better crop spacing), mulching for moisture conservation, composting, preparing environmentally friendly pest control measures, seed selection and crop storage as well as growing multi-storey kitchen gardens. Community saving for rainwater tanks was affected by the prolonged drought but 4 tanks were bought and balloted for by the members. The field officer managed to convince the county government to assist in construction of shallow earth dams for the community so that they could harvest surface runoff when the rains came and twenty farmers had shallow dams prepared for them while others dug them by hand.



Soil conservation/water retention ditch



A farmer learns how to make FPE (fermented plant extracts) for top dressing

A big thank you to everyone who responded to the appeal for funding to keep this project running to the end of 2020. Over £15,000 has been given towards the target of £18,000 which means the goal is in sight.

Namrata Shah Children's Home

The orphanage run by the Diocese of Thika is home to a group of primary age children from very deprived backgrounds and also oversees the care of the older children who now board at secondary school. Several individuals and churches in Devon faithfully support, pray and fund-raise to help with the upkeep of the home and this support is very gratefully received.

Moving forward with the Thika Link

We would love to give you more information about the Thika Link. Book a speaker for your service or meeting - think about inviting visitors from your linked parish - partner with Thika Diocese in a project to help people help themselves and build a sustainable future. Do get in touch!

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