

**ACK DIOCESE OF THIKA
CHURCH & COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION PROCESS (UMOJA)
AUGUST 2020 REPORT FROM BENSON KANGANGI, PROJECT COORDINATOR**

Greetings

Receive our dear love and greetings from a cold and dusty Thika. We are deeply burdened to commit you our dear brothers and sisters, beloved of God, during this difficult time of a hard hit Exeter by the Covid 19 pandemic. We thank God who has continued to keep you and us safe. Even amidst this, we desire to share the good things that God has continued to amplify through your generous hearts in the lives of communities in Thika. We thank you.

What we have done since January 2020

1. Building poultry farming champions
2. Providing technical support on proper poultry management
3. Outreach to victims of alcohol, drugs and substance abuse

Key Highlights

Built at least 10 poultry farming champions

In our endeavor to improve the livelihoods of our beneficiaries, we embarked on building a value chain for poultry farming. This is where we facilitate farmers to rear fast maturing indigenous chickens in Common Interest Groups spread across the Umoja Practice churches and their respective communities. At maturity, we envisaged a situation where we could then link the farmers to access favorable markets for the eggs and mature chickens for meat.

Common Interest groups for farmers would serve the purpose of creating the economies of scale, peer support and easier outreach for purposes of proper poultry management advice, either from our office or our recommended veterinary services providers. Before the insurgence of Covid 19, we had labored to form and mentor at least 7 such groups. However, all these groups were at the formative stage where none had made much progress in terms of starting up the poultry projects at each member's homesteads. Covid 19 lockdown made it difficult for us to continue reaching out to these groups for more mentorship to a point where they could access the intended breed for rearing. Moreover, all forms of gatherings were immediately ceased, jeopardizing all the labor we had put to realize the dream. This pushed us to look for new survival strategies for the groups.



A champion farmer displays her 200 chickens

The new strategy

With ceased movements, we could still visit the group leaders and pass the information needed to keep the initiative going, even when gatherings were not allowed. The group leaders could make calls or pass the information in person to every member's household. This made it possible to prepare all farmers to get ready to start the poultry projects at their respective homes. The information entailed: preparing the structure, the best quality feeds, the best equipment (like feeders and drinkers) to buy. Some groups were able to maintain the monthly savings and table banking, at least for 2 to 3 months.



Some of the mature roosters sold at Kshs 1,500 each

As a result, at least 40 farmers from the common interest groups across the practice churches and communities were able to start their own poultry projects, each keeping between 10 and 200 chicks each ranging from 2 to 3 weeks old. Given that the breed takes 4½ months to mature, at least 30 of the farmers have sellable roosters as at the month of August 2020. Each rooster is currently selling at between Kshs 900 and Kshs 1500 depending on size and location. In total, the farmers have been able to access and rear at least 2,000 birds during the lockdown which lasted from March to July 2020.

Moreover, we have been able to identify at least 10 champion farmers who can act as examples for best practice and mentorship of new farmers. This initiative has effectively given the farmers an easy recovery from the effects of Covid 19 on their other sources of livelihoods.

This is what one of the champion farmers has to say:

Lucy Muthira's story

My name is Lucy Muthira. I am 45 years old and blessed with 2 boys and 1 girl. I live in Gatuikira Village in the lower Gatanga Constituency of Murang'a County. My husband passed on 10 years ago, leaving me completely helpless because I had not gained any mastery of any livelihood engagement. I was just a house wife where my husband used to provide for all my needs. I struggled through life to raise my children. Today I run a small shop and also do subsistence farming on my plot.

To subsidize my meager incomes, I embraced the poultry farming initiative because it was premised on helping the member to earn a dignified extra income. I found this viable because doing it in a group (with each member keeping their own in their respective homesteads) would make it easy for peer support and marketing.

Being the first person to hear about this in my neighbourhood, I mobilized 8 more interested people. We agreed to contribute Kshs 200 monthly towards a table banking fund. We set to encourage each other on this initiative and see it to its success. Through the help of Umoja in our diocese, we managed to start up the project with all the necessary advice from the coordinator as far as poultry management is concerned. As at August 2020, my group has a flock of at least 300 birds in total.

Though some of the birds have been sold at different stages (some members find profitable markets for their birds even before maturity), most of them are sellable from the beginning of October 2020. Though we were not able to continue with our monthly table banking since March 2020, as a result of Covid-19, our revolving fund is approximately Kshs 18,000. We intend to revitalize this in September 2020. During the Covid-19 lockdown we were very busy taking care of our chickens, even forgetting all about the pandemic. As such we were rarely traumatized by the depressing fear that the disease brought across the nation. As a result of this success, my friends from our church got wind of what we were doing.

Without hesitation, we linked them to the project through the diocesan Umoja coordinator. They have now formed their own group of 10 members and are rearing a flock of at least 350 birds in total. Thanks to Umoja project.



Lucy – Champion farmer displays her 80 chickens



Outreach to victims of alcoholism, drug and substance abuse

ACK Kiganjo East is located in the semi-urban part of the diocese within the outskirts of Thika town. The church has had a difficult period of trying to rethink their ministry to the most wounded in their community, given the many changing dynamics of urban ministry. Courtesy of Umoja, the church had gone through a process of identifying the most wounded (spiritually, socially, economically and physically).

The facilitators had to struggle to enable the church to understand her role in the community. This is because the church generally felt that it was not her



Kiganjo semi-urban area

role to, for example, reach out to alcoholics and drug addicts. The bible study on the parable of the Good Samaritan came in handy, making it easy for the church to identify herself as the expected Good Samaritan by the wounded community.

Outreach to victims of alcoholism

Afterwards, the church agreed to prioritize the drug and alcohol addicts as the most in danger. For a start, the church identified 3 women where 2 had deeply sunk in alcoholism and one whose husband and children were wallowing in the addiction. For peer support, the facilitators joined the three wounded ones in a Self Help Group where the facilitators would graciously help them out of the pit. Three group facilitators joined the wounded women in the self-help group. This was intended to help the victims to feel more at home with the group facilitators from the church.

Consequently, the 2 women have fully recovered from alcoholism and are now very proud of the love they have received from the church.

'I feel deeply overwhelmed by the love I have received from these wonderful people from a church I had never thought I would enter in my life. Seeing this people come into my pathetic house and bearing my state is something that I will never forget. They are very friendly and loving to me. I am now very clean unlike before, I now feel beautiful. I am a very happy woman. Thanks to the Anglican Church', says Margaret with a great sigh of relief.

Outreach to Drug and Substance Addicts - Virginia's story

I am Virginia Wangui from ACK Kiganjo East, St Paul's church. I am one of the Umoja Facilitators in our church and parish. I joined the CCMP facilitators' team in 2016. This was after my former vicar (Rev William) identified the gift in me and requested me to join the team, to which I agreed. Since then I have enjoyed discovering many things along the journey of Umoja. In 2018 our trainer took us through the journey of facilitating the church to play a practical role of being the salt and light in her community. This was however biased on targeting and ministering to the economically wounded people (poorest of the poor). Much to our surprise, we realized that the most wounded in our semi-urban community are the socially wounded by alcoholism. Together with the rest of the church, we trained group facilitators and allowed them to walk with the identified victims of alcoholism.

Much later, and after seeking God about how to better reach out to the socially wounded, I felt a deep burden to care about the drug and substance addicts, who were mostly the young people. This was something I had never done or imagined that I would ever do. This burden was further stirred when my eyes were opened to a shop that indicated on the face 'hair salon' but in reality this is where young people gathered every day to take their daily doses and supplies of hard drugs like bang and cocaine. I determined that this was going to be my first target for outreach. I had to shed all my fears and obey God.

On my first attempt to talk to the few I found at the disguised shop, they were very amazed at my gracious heart that was not after condemning but loving them. They were very impressed with me. With this, I knew they had accepted me. As a matter of fact they requested me to visit them frequently and have a talk with them. I agreed with them that I will be visiting them every Sunday at 7.30am.

On my second visit, at the agreed time and place, at least 7 of them turned up. They were very attentive to listen to me giving them hope, even quoting scriptures. I had feared carrying a bible while going to visit them. However, after realizing how hungry they were for the word, I had no reason to fear bringing a bible



Virginia at her homestead in Kiganjo

with me, and even requesting some of them to read my scripture for the day, which they would gladly do. I have been faithfully doing this ever since, even during the time when churches were closed. Happy with my ministry to them, 2 of them have been giving me Kshs 50 each to take to the church on their behalf as offertory.

To take my love closer to them, I determined to make it a one-on-one based outreach. This is where I would closely sit and walk with each of them, one at a time, trying to understand their cases and why and how they got themselves in the pit of this addiction. To my surprise, my first target - who happened to be one of my tenants - recovered from this addiction after realizing how much harm it had done and was going to continue causing in his life. To reach this point, I had to go an extra mile of bearing with him even when he was not able to raise the full rent - I had to beg my husband to bear with him and treat him as special due to the ministry I was doing to him. Many thanks to God for rewarding my efforts and love.

I am currently focusing on one young man who happens to be a long-time Sunday school pupil later fallen and lost into drugs. Pray with me for success and breakthrough.

Going forward

Following the ease of the strict government regulations, we are slowly rolling things into normal operations. By end of March 2021, we envisage a case where we will have

1. Integrated Umoja sessions in the Home Bible Churches/Prayer Cells. This will ensure faster spread of the process in communities because prayer cells are closer to communities than the whole church
2. Brought at least 5 more congregations on board to practice Umoja
3. Trained at least 3 Umoja trainers who will help to continue mobilizing the rest of the diocese to implement Umoja
4. Formed at least 7 more Common Interest Groups on poultry farming

Prayer points

1. Resumption of normalcy in church operations
2. More success and expansion for our farmers' poultry projects

The Devon-Thika Umoja Project

Covid and lockdown have, of course, caused huge disruption to all our lives - both here and in Thika. Thank you so much to those who have faithfully continued to support the financing of the expenses of the programme, while Tearfund has continued to pay a proportion of Benson's salary. To meet our pledge for 2020, £2,000 is still needed by the end of the year. Thika Diocese will struggle to find the funding to take over ownership of the programme right now, so if we can keep up our promised support for this year and next (£4,500 for 2021) that will be a big encouragement to them. Please do get in touch if you have any questions or would like more information.

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