

## **EXETER THIKA LINK REPORT OCTOBER 2020**

### **News from Nancy, the Link Secretary in Thika, on 1<sup>st</sup> October**

We are all well and the Lord has been so faithful. Thika is hot, we have not yet received rains, so it's a bit dry but we are expecting rains in mid October. Farmers have started to prepare shambas ready for planting when the rains come.

We have now resumed work full time now that the Government has removed many restrictions. Many places have been opened up. We have only few covid 19 cases being reported daily, and the curve has remained down. We really thank God for this. Everything is now taking its shape. The only area the Government seems to take time in reopening is schools and institutions. The challenge we have in the learning area is population. Our schools have enrolled many learners, space is limited and many are boarding schools thus social distancing becomes a challenge. Also public transport is widely used by students thus putting them at risk. Some schools are in places where water is a challenge and resources are few. The Government has to come up with a well defined way of reopening schools.

Namrata Shah Children are doing well and in good health. (The home had to close and send children to their extended families in March as the government ordered all schools and institutions to close). They are still with their guardians. The Home Matron checks on the kids at least twice a week. At a time like now, they depend on well wishers who buy food and it's taken to their guardians. The Diocese also assists. There is a challenge in feeding them considering that they are not at the Home and are now living with their guardians who also have other dependants and are still needy.

We are happy to hear that you had ordination of priests. It must have been a memorable moment having to do it in a different way, the many services. I remember before restrictions in March, we had planned to have ordination of priests and licensing of lay readers in April this year but it never happened. We are hoping that it will be done next year.

Pass our love to all our friends in Exeter and assure them of our continued prayers.

### **Worship in Thika**

Churches in Thika, as here, adjusted rapidly to lockdown. Video services from clergy homes were soon replaced by live streaming from churches with just a few people present. Lobbying by all the churches had the government agree to opening places of worship much earlier than here, first to younger adults and then gradually allowing different age groups - still in reduced numbers and with services still being streamed. Brian and I have been making frequent 'visits' via facebook to St Andrew's Cathedral to the English service. The broadband signal is variable but mostly the technology works well. Signs on the pews say, 'Praise God! Please sit here'. A praise and worship group leads the singing and the congregation, wearing masks, join in.

There is, of course, a great deal of fear caused by the virus and the hardship due to loss of livelihood caused by the restrictions. However the faith of the Christians is amazing and every day encouraging scriptures and thoughts are shared on facebook.

### **Thungururu 'Farming God's Way' Project**

The seasons have been very challenging. Last year's October 'short' rains continued through the 'dry' season and kept going into February, making it a real challenge for farmers to harvest and safely store their crops, and giving little time to prepare the soil for the next planting season. When the March 'long' rains arrived they did not last very long and the Thungururu farmers using traditional methods had no harvest at all. The conservation methods gave the participating farmers a successful harvest. From mid-March to May no group training was possible so the field officer visited the farmers individually to offer technical assistance. With movement from one county to the other restricted and also a dusk to dawn curfew, most businesses and jobs stopped and families had to depend on what they were getting from their farms for their daily food. This showed how much help the community needs to mitigate drought and hunger. In June training resumed although in smaller groups of not more than fifteen people.



Dam retained water in the hot, dry season

The county government, in collaboration with the field officer, has resumed sinking shallow dams for farmers in the project area. By the end of July most of the shallow dams had retained substantial amounts of water, depending on the type of soil in a particular farm. A lot is also being done by the field officer to ensure proper use of the water from the dams to establish intensive kitchen gardens, and also utilization of waste water from the kitchen for those who do not have dams.

To succeed in getting the community to be self-dependent, by empowering the Project Management Committee (PMC) through empowerment and leadership training, is a gradual process. The project has come a long way, but it may be that it could be given support for a little longer to get the PMC to the stage when it can report to the local authority and solicit for the community's needs, in terms of food security, from the relevant government bodies and other agencies. Given the challenges that have been faced, can we, in Exeter, continue to support the project for a little longer to give the farmers of Thungururu the tools they need to become sustainable after the field officer moves on? Thanks to Devon parishes and their generous harvest offerings, the project is funded to the end of this year, but another £3,500 would enable the field officer to be employed for a further six months.



Vegetables planted using water from a shallow dam

### **Umoja Project (Church and Community Mobilisation)**

Since January 2020 Benson, the Umoja coordinator, reports the focus has been on building poultry farming champions, providing technical support on proper poultry management and outreach to victims of alcohol, drugs and substance abuse.

#### ***Benson says:***

To improve livelihoods we started to facilitate farmers to rear fast maturing indigenous chickens in Common Interest Groups spread across the Umoja Practice churches and their respective communities. Covid 19 lockdown made it difficult for us to continue reaching out to these groups but we could still visit the group leaders and pass on 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. 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. 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.

#### ***Lucy Muthira's story:***

My name is Lucy Muthira. I am 45 years old and blessed with 2 boys and 1 girl. 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. Being the first person in my neighbourhood to hear about the poultry project, I mobilized 8 more interested people. 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.



Lucy, Champion farmer, displays her 80 chickens

As at August 2020, my group has a flock of at least 300 birds in total. 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.

In trying to understand the needs of their semi-urban community, one church realized that the most needy people were not the economically deprived but those who were addicted to drugs or alcohol and their families. Facilitators started a small self-help group and subsequently 2 women have fully recovered from alcoholism.

*Margaret's story:*

'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.

*Virginia's story:*

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. 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 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. To take my love closer to them, I determined to make it a one-on-one based outreach. 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. Many thanks to God for rewarding my efforts and love.

**What about visits?**

With the Lambeth Conference postponed to 2022 we are just wondering whether it might be possible to invite some folk from our linked parishes next year - maybe in September. Of course we have to wait for now to see how things go, but those linked parishes which indicated that they would like to be involved might be able to continue to make preparations and we will get in touch when things become clearer.

**An encouragement from the Anglican Church in Kenya to the Church in the UK**

*A message from Rev Njogu who is the Archbishop's lead on Umoja:*

'God is still on his throne. He is the Lord of every season and nothing happens on Earth without his knowledge. He is in control and desires us to fully trust and depend on him. Do not be afraid, the Lord is with us. He will not leave nor forsake us and he is God.'

For more information see the Overseas Links page on [www.exeter.anglican.org](http://www.exeter.anglican.org) or contact Jane Inwood, Thika Link Secretary [thika.link@exeter.anglican.org](mailto:thika.link@exeter.anglican.org)