



GREETINGS FROM GILGAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH, RWANDA



Photo: Marie* and her children outside their home

AESD/Tearfund

UPDATE FOR BLOOMFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SUMMER 2018

GREETINGS FROM GILGAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH!

Warm greetings from myself and Gilgal Evangelical Church!

The period from April is always a special time to Rwandans as we remember our beloved family members and friends, who died during the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994.

We thank God for being with us in this time and thank you for your prayers.

Our dear friends from Bloomfield Church, we are always blessed by our partnership.

We are very sure that the exchange of our thoughts, prayers and visits will continue building our lasting relationship and friendship.

We hope to see our church transformed and become a light for community transformation.

Rev Dr Bunini

Senior Pastor, Gilgal Evangelical Church

WHAT WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS

The Church and Community Transformation (CCT) process, also known as Umoja (which means 'togetherness' in Swahili) is a way for the church to work with their local community to help tackle poverty, so that lives can be transformed, both materially and spiritually. It is a process which helps communities to identify the root causes of the issues that they are faced with, and discover the unique strengths and God-given resources that they have which might help bring about this change.

Through Tearfund's partner AESD, Bloomfield Presbyterian Church are helping local churches across Rwanda bring about this kind of empowering and long-term transformation. As part of this relationship, through AESD, Bloomfield Presbyterian Church have also entered into a partnership relationship with Gilgal Evangelical Church, who have already started their journey with CCT.

Bloomfield Presbyterian Church's partnership will help to provide the training that will equip facilitators and churches with the tools that will assist them during the CCT process. In addition to challenging the stigmas associated with HIV and providing training around HIV prevention, the partnership will also help to initiate and equip Self Help Groups (SHGs) - which incorporate

savings and loans initiatives - who will be an essential part of bringing socio-economic transformation.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

BUILDING UP CHILDREN AT RISK

Protecting vulnerable children is an important part of the work happening in communities across Rwanda, and churches like Gilgal. With the support of local partner AESD, during this reporting period the team were able to focus on building support for them, by building them up - socially, psychologically and spiritually.

They have been working closely with some of the most vulnerable - children living on the streets, to help identify the root causes of the issues they are faced with.

They were able to bring 34 children together - aged between 8 and 15 - to learn from them the challenges they faced, through which the children highlighted key factors which were contributing to their peers dropping out of school and becoming addicted to drugs. These included extreme poverty, family conflict, alcoholism within the family, drug addiction and the loss of a parent or guardian.

Bringing the children together brings another key element too - it provides a space for the children to open up and share their problems with people they can trust. It provides an opportunity for counselling, for learning family values and to learn how to conduct themselves well. All of which help form changes in mindset and hope for the future.

Their time together led to some huge changes. At the start, none of the group admitted to using drugs themselves, but this changed after they learnt more about the problems brought by drug addiction, and 10 of the group took the decision to stop using drugs. Then another five children committed to returning to school.

SAVING FOR HEALTH INSURANCE

'All we do day and night is about life, and we cannot do anything when we are not healthy.'

Realising health services are becoming very expensive, and often inaccessible for people living on low incomes, the Rwandan government has put in place a system to make health insurance affordable - '*Mutuelle de Santé*', or 'mutual health insurance'. It has become known as one of the most effective community-based health insurance schemes operating in Sub-Saharan Africa - covering over **90 per cent** of the population.

To help families pay for health insurance, Gilgal Evangelical Church held a parents evening with 100 people in the village of Muhoza. They were able to share how to save small amounts of money to cover the costs of annual family health assurance on time, through Self Help Groups. A way of working together which will not just benefit the 100 individuals taking part, but their families too.

Through the sharing of personal experiences of saving together, the group were able to learn more, including Michelle*.

'I am a member of this community and I'm a nurse at the health centre and I know how expensive it is to the patient without a health insurance card. So I'm really thankful to AESD for their initiative, working with community members to help them save and pay for health insurance cards on time.

After learning, each and every community member present in the meeting committed to start saving to cover the costs of family insurance on time. They were grouped into four transformative groups of saving for health insurance, for better follow up, management and accountability.'

Michelle*

TIME TO REFLECT

Since April, to assess the impacts of the first year of the Church and Community Transformation (CCT) programme, visits have been made to different groups from Gilgal Evangelical Church and it's community.

This found that different ministries in the churches have improved through the empowerment brought through the CCT approach. Church leaders testified that the Self Help Groups which have formed and trained in their churches gave a significant image of what transformation looks like.

PLEASE PRAY

- Pray that God will continue to increase the number of new believers in our church, so that our community will be transformed by God in a holistic way.
- Pray for wisdom to work and serve God's people better.
- Pray that God will continue opening the eyes of church members as people find release from physical and spiritual poverty through Self Help Groups and glorify God.

AN EXPANDING BUSINESS

Claudine* lives in Nyarugenge District and is the member of a Self Help Group which changed her life.

Before joining the group Claudine was a street vendor, with capital of about RWF 8,000. But it was a job that was risky. In Rwanda vendors must adhere to specific legal requirements to trade, and selling on the street is often prohibited. So many street vendors, like Claudine, trade illegally.

One day whilst working, some security people came across Claudine whilst she was trading, so she tried to move, by jumping into the road. The passing cars were able to stop, but Claudine fell and sustained injuries to her head and knees, and all of the the items she had been carrying in the basket were damaged. It meant a loss of RWF 15,000 for Claudine.

Claudine spent the entire night thinking about what happened to her, and decided to join a Self Help Group.

On joining, Claudine started saving and sharing her life experiences with other group members, which led to her forming new friendships. Through members of the group she began learning marketing skills and began looking for a position at a nearby market, where she could trade safely and securely. When a spot became available, she requested a loan of RWF 30,000 from her Self Help Group, and through entrepreneurship training she realised she could diversify her business using some of the other skills she had. This saw her move from selling just fruit and vegetables, to braiding hair. She can now make a profit of RWF 1,800 a day, and in a month earn RWF 40,000 from occasional hair braiding.

'Before I had a house built with mud, but now, I started slowly, slowly and put cement in my small house... and painting it with the loan received from the Self Help Group, which will be paid back. Now I thank God and I'm not afraid of tomorrow.'

Claudine

FROM MISERY TO MARKET



Marie* (pictured) was also a street vendor. She earned money selling fruit and vegetables, but finding a good position to sell the produce was tough, and competition with other street vendors was high.

As selling produce in this way is prohibited, Marie often lived in fear of being arrested and ended up in prison a number of times. The conditions were terrible, and when she left she would have no money and no food for herself or her children.

Then Marie learnt about a Self Help Group that was meeting at a local church. They were doing Bible studies,

sharing their concerns with one another, saving together and, with their savings, providing loans to one another.

Since joining the group Marie's life has changed. Adding to the RWF 10,000 (around £10) she used to buy fruit and vegetables, Marie was able to take a loan of RWF 30,000 (around £30). With this she purchased more stock and was able to cover the fees involved in selling the produce, legally, at market.



Photo: Marie shows her health insurance cards
AESD/Tearfund

Through the stall Marie has raised enough money to cover the costs of feeding her family, of paying their health insurance, and of paying back the loan. She has even been able to extend her house. But the group has meant more than material benefit. It has released her from fear and hopelessness.

*names changed to protect identity

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