

# tearfund

## GREETINGS FROM GILGAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH, RWANDA



A Self Help Group from Karama Presbyterian Church show some bags they have been making  
Photo: AESD/Tearfund

## UPDATE FOR BLOOMFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SUMMER 2019

# GREETINGS FROM GILGAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH!

To our brothers and sisters from Bloomfield Presbyterian church,

Please receive lovely greetings from Gilgal church members and my family.

The period of April to July is a difficult time to all Rwandans where we remember our beloved families and friends who died during the genocide against the Tutsi.

We thank you all for being with us in prayers.

**Rev Dr Bunini**

**Senior Pastor, Gilgal Evangelical Church.**

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

Across Nyarugenge, people are continuing to follow the *Church and Community Transformation (CCT)* process. Through it, they are coming together to identify the issues they are facing, and considering ways of tackling these challenges.

### A CHURCH LEADER WORKSHOP

This season, leaders from Gilgal took part in a one day workshop, helping them refresh their knowledge of the process. It was attended by people from a variety of departments and ministries all hoping to strengthen their capacity.

Their workshop focused on *transformative leadership, transformative church* and *transformative small groups*.

They took part in number of presentations and discussions, then put together an action plan of what they want their work to include moving forward. Through it they decided to:

- map the needs and resources in Gatare community, where Gilgal are based.
- continue their support of widows, people living with HIV and vulnerable children.
- identify the community's key needs and start community initiatives that prioritise and respond to these.

The group then ran an exercise known as a 'church barometer', exploring the weaknesses and strengths of Gilgal's work. It asks people to rank their feelings on a number of statements. This provides information showing how people truly feel about their situations. It considers things such as how clear the church's vision is, or how well members live in fellowship. This provides basic data against which the team can measure the impact of the program when compared in the future.

With the information they received through this exercise, the team decided they would create *Self Help Groups*. They are small teams of people who come together to support one another, save together and share loans with one another. Funding which equips people with the tools to invest in and grow their businesses, increase their incomes - or buy essentials.

## SHARING STORIES

Those taking part in the CCT work across Nyarugenge were honoured to share their work with two visitors. Tearfund's Chair of the Board, Anna, and Tearfund Country Director for Rwanda, Emmanuel (pictured right).



One of the churches visited was Karama Presbyterian Church. After the church took part in awakening and envisioning sessions, they chose to start their own *Church and Community Transformation* journey. They formed three *Self Help Groups* whose members explained to Anna and Emmanuel the breadth of transformation they have seen - and how it has been spiritual, social and economic.



Self Help Group 'Children's Smile' gather to make shoes  
Photo: AESD/Tearfund

## THE SELF HELP GROUP AND THE SHOEMAKER

In February 'Children's Smile' was born. They are a *Self Help Group* with a beautiful vision. They want to see joy spread across the faces of the children in their community.

It was their church's *Church and Community Transformation* training that first brought them together. With their congregation they'd been exploring the different challenges people around their community were having.

Through it they came to realise that most of their community identified as poor.

Poverty was having a huge effect on children. Not having enough money often meant not enough food, causing hunger. Less money meant it was hard to pay for much needed materials for school too, so children were dropping out. They were finding their children had lost their smiles.

Combining forces, the group decided this was a thing they were going to change. With only low incomes, their group's members began making small weekly contributions of 100 Rwandan Francs (around 8 pence) to a joint savings pot. Over time this figure grew. Members increased their contributions to 200 Rwandan Francs (around 16 pence) a week - which they could use to provide loans to one another and grow their businesses. Then on top of this, they gave 100 Rwandan Francs a week for use specifically in their work with children.

## ENERGISED BY CHURCH AND COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

As they continued their journeys with the *Church and Community Transformation* process, the group discussed different issues and ideas. This led them to dream up a new business venture - making shoes.

To get started, they found someone who could train them to make good quality shoes. Each Thursday they would meet with them to learn new techniques. Then, their trainer became a member of the group! He began offering his services free of charge! Asked why, he explained the solidarity he saw in 'Children's Smile' - the way they shared what they had, like the first disciples of Jesus. He saw the way they comfort, counsel, pray, visit and support one another.

ALL THE BELIEVERS WERE ONE IN HEART AND MIND. NO ONE  
CLAIMED THAT ANY OF THEIR POSSESSIONS WAS THEIR OWN, BUT  
THEY SHARED EVERYTHING THEY HAD.

ACTS 4:32

After saving 204,000 Rwandan Francs (around £178) the team invested in some low cost materials and began making their shoes. Their next goal is to buy two new machines with their savings, which each have a purchase price of around 900,000 Rwandan Francs. Machines which will improve the quality of their shoes and lift their business even further.

## PLEASE PRAY

- **For Self Help Groups**, that they grow well and are and bring real sustainability for people.
- **For those who were street vendors and are now working legally**. As they begin work in a new small market, pray they will see successes: new clients and a growth in their businesses.
- **For peace and security in the region**.



*Following Jesus where the need is greatest*