

Letter from Lubumbashi

October 07

It is a while since we wrote. It is always nice to have lots of positive things to write about, which is what we were waiting for. However, they have yet to come (just around the corner... maybe...?). The last few months have been a struggle on the work front.

After their initial enthusiasm to start the well in Kalebuka and early progress it has been a struggle ever since. We have had to give them more help than we intended to. Against our better judgement we agreed to them doing it and our fears that it was too big an undertaking too soon have been borne out. There is now about a month to finish the digging before the rains start.

In the meantime we have been out listening to the community in Kalebuka and learning a bit more about them. Appearances can be very deceptive. During the dry season almost every family is engaged in turning termite hills (up to 20 feet high) into bricks, which with the doubling of the price in the last year is a pretty profitable enterprise. Except it turns out that most of Kalebuka is owned by people living in other parts of Lubumbashi and people are making the bricks on contract for the owners, earning not much more than a daily wage. Also, once the rains come brick making stops. When asked, most say they only do it because they do not have any other jobs.



Bricks & termite hills

Our listening survey showed people are mostly living from day to day and struggling to find enough for each day.

While we still hold on to our vision of building up peoples self confidence and enabling them to take control of their own development, our method of achieving it has been found wanting. It is very difficult for people to use their own resources when they have so few. Sandra understood this quite a while before Eric (who was being a doubting Thomas - says Eric. You mean pigheaded deary - says Sandra).

It is clear now that the most pressing need is for livelihoods which provide a daily income. A very effective way of achieving this is through micro-credit

We are starting with small loans of £25 each to a group of nine people for starting small enterprises. They will mostly engage in buying and selling, which produces a daily income. The loans will be repayable with interest over four months.

A major benefit of micro credit is that where people are struggling for their daily needs, a trading enterprise can meet these very quickly. However a disadvantage is that due to the short term nature and weekly repayments, loans tend to be used mainly for trading rather than productive enterprises. On a small scale this can work, but to benefit significant numbers and to bring money into a community, productive or processing enterprises are necessary.

This is something we will seek to address with groups at a later stage, when they are able to meet their daily needs. However there are much bigger challenges with productive enterprises:

What are possible enterprises?

What are the markets?

Where does the capital to start them come from?

...

As people start to have sufficient for their daily needs we will also start to look with them at issues in their community and what they may wish to do about them.

Since starting this letter, Congo has been placed last in a World Bank annual survey of countries to do business in and we have also heard that Lubumbashi is the twelfth fastest growing city in the world! We had noticed the dramatic increase in traffic!

Peter and Atiyyah are both enjoying school very much now and doing well and have some good friends. Peter's best friend is Jacob, from Tanzania. He and his brother came for a sleep over the other day, which went off very well. Thank you all for your prayers on this.

Praise God for:

Peter & Atiyyah both now have good friends at school.

We asked a few of our supporting churches to provide a bit extra to enable us to continue our programme while we seek funding. Thank you for your positive responses.

For our team, who continue faithfully despite the setbacks.

Please pray for:

On Friday we were asked to submit a funding proposal to Anglican Relief & Development in the US. This is a big encouragement to us. We had to send it today. Please pray we will be successful this time. They decide in November.

That the first micro credit group will be successful in their enterprises and will repay their loans on time.

Love

Eric, Sandra, Peter & Atiyyah.

Stop press.

The well is nearly 10 metres deep now and they have reached water!