

March 2015

Quarterly Update

I trust you are doing well and I thank you for your continued support and prayers for TM Ministries activities. Year 2015 started well with great anticipation for growth in advancing the Kingdom of God and improving people's lives. TM Ministries' focus this year has been on the economic issues facing the pastors and families in Matungulu/Tala, Kenya. These activities received support from Trinity Church, Kingdom Grant program this year. Trinity Church, through the Kingdom Grant Program, gave 10 (ten) thousand US Dollars - five thousand dollars to be used for purchasing dairy goats for the poor and disadvantaged families in Matungulu, under the Food Security Program, and the other five thousand Dollars for the Pastors' Microfinance Program. In addition, Trinity Church, through Kingdom Grant awarded additional five thousand dollars for the Reading Club program which is supporting weak students in the area. In the past three months TM Ministries has concentrated on strengthening pastors' groups and training women groups on how to take good care of dairy goats, as we prepare to hand the goats to them.

Pastors' Equip program

In the Pastors' Equip Program we have witnessed great improvement with pastors' groups. Four of the pastors' groups are doing exceptionally well. The four groups have a total number of 36 members. They meet every month to pray, encourage one other and to share their challenges in the ministry. In addition, they have "Table Banking" where they contribute little money into a kitty and members who have needs can borrow from the kitty. Pastors had agreed on each group starting their own "Table Banking" as a way of learning how to save money and to get used to borrowing and paying before they can graduate into borrowing from the grant given by Trinity Church. They gave themselves a four months grace period to do so. In addition, pastors had requested for training on investment and management of loans. We have had one workshop so far, and we are having a second one on Tuesday, April 28th, just before the 36 pastors, start applying for their investment loans.

For the pastors groups which are struggling, we appointed one pastor to visit them and assist them where necessary.

Pastors are excited about the program because:

- i. It is helping them save some money (the money the pastors have been contributing goes to their account which is maintained, on their behalf, by TM ministries.
- ii. The program helps them borrow money at very small interest rate for investment

- iii. Being in a group where they can share with one another gives them the support network and a sense of belonging.
- iv. The pastors are hopeful that if they continue to save, they will have some personal retirement money to use when they retire.

TM Ministries goal is to continue to develop this program to help pastors have decent living as they advance the Kingdom of God and maintain their dignity when they retire from the active ministry.

Food security

The Food Security Program, which targets women groups in the community, started two years ago. There are currently four groups with a total membership of sixty women (60). These groups started with growing of traditional food crops which are very nutritious and easy and inexpensive to grow. These traditional crops include cassava, sorghum, sweetpotato, and pumpkins/squash. The groups have been doing very well growing these crops, with some even having surplus to sell. This year, with the help from Trinity Church, the groups are going to get dairy goats to help them supplement their diet by having own source of milk, hence protein. The milk will be of great importance to the young children who rarely get enough proteins they need for their growth and development.

For the last three month the groups have being going through a series of trainings on how to take care of the goat and preparing for the arrival of the goats by planting fodder crops for feed. In addition, we have tried to prepare, in advance, for the dry period and to make sure that the goats will produce to their fullest potential. We have done this by purchasing **Folder Trees Seeds** which we gave the groups to plant at the beginning of March, when the longs rains arrived. The folder trees includes: *Leucaena leucocephala*, *Leucaena diversifolia* and *Gliricidia sepium* and are good source of protein for the dairy goats. The seedlings from this species are almost ready for transplanting. We plan to add more folder trees which are rich in protein for the dairy goats and which can be harvested and dried to be used during dry seasons. These trees have an additional benefit of being good for maintaining the fertility of the soil and can increase yields of other food crops when grown inside the crop fields. This is something very important in the area because fertilizers are expensive and not easily affordable to the families we target. Finally, the groups have just, this week, completed building the goat sheds and we will be going to purchase dairy goats next week from a place called Kirinyaga, which is in Central Kenya, where dairy goats were introduced several years ago, and have therefore fully adapted to the Kenyan environment. There is so much excitement, among the woman about this, and they cannot wait to seed the goats. Besides preparing for the goats the women have been receiving spiritual nourishment from one of our pastors who visits them, and teaches them from the word of God, once every month during the group meetings.

Reading Clubs- at the beginning of the year we started one reading club and preparations are under way to start three more in May this year.

Okello Family- Finally, our oldest daughter Shaddi will be graduating from high school in May 2015. Her plan is to pursue a course in medicine sciences and to be a physician, but she is yet to make a decision whether to do it in Kenya, Uganda or in the US. She already has several admissions from colleges in US. Two of the Colleges, Calvin University College, in Grand Rapids and Messiah University College in Pennsylvania, have given her partial scholarships on tuition and other fees.

We kindly request you to join with us in continuing to pray for TM program activities and for Shaddi. Please pray specially that God will guide us on the right direction to take regarding Shaddi's college education. Thank you and God bless you.

Ruth and Julius Okello