

Connecting Lives

Eagles Relief & Development Program

www.eaglesmalawi.org



In a world of constant environmental threats, a livelihood beyond farming is vital for survival. This newsletter explores some of the creative, determined solutions that churches are finding with their communities.

Can't See the Trees for the Timber?

How recognising the value of a living forest has transformed a community's food security, environment and hope for the future.

A key part of Eagles' approach is helping communities to recognise the resources around them and build their confidence in their own creativity and problem-solving skills. The people in Kamkwenu, Central Malawi, embody this mindset change – in previous newsletters, we have reported on their fish farm and their permaculture. Now, thinking of further ways that they can care for the environment, they have decided on beekeeping!

(cont on p.3)

Through Disaster and Displacement

If you had lost everything you had worked for, where would you find the hope to rebuild your life?

This challenging situation is common in Chikwawa district, southern Malawi. Many are returning from the refugee camps to which they fled after the storms earlier this year, to find nothing. Mothers and fathers are asking themselves how they can put food on the table when many lost their harvest and their home.

Yet some families have hope. Some families are still able to pay their children's school fees, get medical attention and buy the food they need. They are members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) set up as a result of Eagles' training, where churches came to understand deeply God's call to be 'salt and light' in their communities. Churches chose to set up SHGs to help vulnerable families find security - people meet together each week to save an agreed amount of money. This can be used to meet immediate needs in an emergency, as now, although



many are still focused on long-term resilience. Many families have taken out loans to begin or expand businesses or have rebuilt their houses more strongly to withstand future storms. One group purchased every member a goat! Their determination to continue contributing money through the storm's chaos is testament to the driving need to provide for their families and protect their future.

SHG members are not satisfied with just improving their own lives. Every week, they also discuss challenges in the local area, for example children dropping out of school, and take action. When groups share out money to buy something for themselves (like the goats), they also identify a person in need or an issue they want to address together and contribute towards that.

Astonishingly, Eagles' regular training of churches in this area finished two years ago. Yet the impact has not merely been sustained but has even grown! There are currently 20 SHGs with two more being formed. Jimmy, Eagles' CCM coordinator in the South, puts it down to Eagles' approach - helping people to uncover their own skills and potential and use these to change their own lives. These messages are reinforced through ongoing Bible studies in the SHGs.

Can't See the Trees for the Timber? (cont from p.1)



Before Eagles began working with Kamkwenu, deforestation was devastating, leading to soil degradation and other environmental challenges. Once people learned to value their natural resources, community members explored how to steward the forest to improve their food security, rather than just seeing it as a source of firewood and timber.

They came up with the idea of beekeeping as bees are abundant in the area and the market for honey is big. Rather than looking for help from outside, a pastor-carpenter lent them his tools and the community contributed money to bring in an expert to train them how to make hives from local resources – reeds and mud. Every family in Kamkwenu decided to make two hives, a total of over 300. As honey can be harvested twice a year and each hive can yield 60 kg, they plan to sell it to a company together to get a better price. At MK6000 (£6) per kg, the community are thrilled at the potential!

“My Gateway out of Hunger” - Esther’s story

Esther, a 26-year old mother of five, was often unable to tell her children when their next meal would be. She explains: “We were living in extreme poverty and many times went to bed on an empty stomach because there was no food for the family.” Now, a 29-year old businesswoman, she is confident that those days of struggling for daily necessities are over: “Now it’s history!”

In 2019, her church suggested she join a Self-Help Group. She began a guinea fowl business, buying eggs and selling adult birds. She earned enough to feed her family for that year and invest in her farm, securing food for the year after.

Now she has 15 guinea fowl and sells their eggs. In a year, she makes about MK330,000 (£300), which is enough to meet her family’s daily needs. Her future plan is to expand her guinea fowl farming and add goats too, determined that her children will not go to bed hungry again.



I can proudly say, we have enough food to take us up to [next year]! It's the first that my **family have enough food to last such a long** period of time and this is all because of the Self-Help Group.

CCM Online - Tackling Child Marriage and Abuse

Kennedy has been participating in Eagles' online course in Malawi. The group he has been working with felt inspired to tackle the challenges faced by young girls in their community, including abuse and child marriage. They facilitated a group of girls, together with others who influence their lives, to map their community. They identified their greatest challenges as well as opportunities. Kennedy and his group plan to continue working with the girls to fulfil their vision for their future.



◀ I would say this has been an exciting course for me and for my study group... I know that very soon, what we have started with the community will grow even bigger. We can see it and we know that it will happen. It was too good to be true for many people to understand that people would actually sit down to discuss ways they can help the community without waiting to be paid by someone else. **It is such an opportunity for the church and our group, as I know that, with time, they will come to understand that the Church is being inspired by the word of God to do this.** At the same time, our acts of love in the community have spoken for us... We were able to use the resources that we had to help the people and helping them understand that it is very possible to live a sustainable life with what God has blessed us with. ▶

Meet Steve

Eagles Finance and Admin Officer



◀ I joined Eagles because of my passion for the less privileged. All my life I have grown up seeing people building mansions, buying expensive materials YET just after a few years, all those become boring, old fashioned and unsatisfying. But the joy, peace and satisfaction that comes after helping someone or building someone's life remains forever. This is what motivates me.

I most enjoy bringing a smile on someone's face, building hope and becoming a solution his/her life (or helping someone find a solution). One challenge we have is the presence of different NGOs which use conflicting approaches thereby confusing the communities further.

I am the last born in a family of 6, unmarried, staying and taking care of my siblings. ▶