

Habari gani, rafiki?

As we approach the half-year mark of our time here in Tanzania, we still find ourselves in transition. After arriving in Mwanza full-time in early April, we have been slowly immersing ourselves into our jobs while also working to get the feel of daily life here. We're learning the layout of the city, setting up our own house, and picking up new Swahili words to help us communicate. This time can be a challenge, as we've come to mission to help others, but we seem to be the ones that need all the help these days.

We both really like the neighborhood in which we live, and we feel we're slowly becoming part of the community as people start to learn our names and greet us on the street. It's very nice, but it can also be very exhausting. For obvious reasons, we do not blend in, so some days all the attention can be overwhelming. It's very common for children to yell "Wazungu! Wazungu!" (basically, "White people!") when we walk by. However, with all the challenges to living here (and there are many, to be sure) overall the experience has been a good one. Though we still rely heavily on the expertise of our fellow MKLM missionaries, we are getting the hang of living here.

Settling into Working Life (By Katie)

I am currently working in the Caritas Office at the Catholic Archdiocese of Mwanza in their Women in Development/Gender and Development (WID/GAD) desk. Founded in 2000, WID/GAD Mwanza is part of the worldwide Catholic Church WID/GAD network whose focus is on gender, HIV/AIDS support and the realization of integral development.

Over the past month that I have been working in this office I have been trying to absorb as much as possible about the day-to-day workings of the office, as well as gather information about previous projects. Because my language is quite rudimentary at this stage, it's a constant struggle to understand what is happening on any given day. I have learned to work largely on assumptions and rely heavily on the information that is conveyed to me through a third party. Obviously, this limits my ability to work and I look forward to improving my language so that I can expand my work abilities. I am quite lucky in that I work with staff members who are forgiving of my language deficiencies and try hard to include me in conversations and that I do not understand.

Currently, I am working with the Archdiocese for the reinstatement of the WID/GAD Coordinator, a young woman named Eda, who was laid off due to budget shortages. Eda speaks fluent English and Sukuma (the predominant local language in this area) and is familiar with the WID/GAD programs in the surrounding villages. We hope to work hand-in-hand to create and support stronger women's programming in the Archdiocese. So far we have been successful in getting her back on a part-time basis, which has allowed us to start visiting village groups for site visits. I love visiting the community groups because it allows me to see the amazing things that can happen through community collaboration.

In May, I visited a group called "Umoja Wakulima Nyamadoke" (United We Farm Nyamadoke, which is the name of the village). This group, which largely does agricultural work as income-generation, started a Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) in 2002 to help their community take out loans to improve their businesses



Katie works in her office at Caritas with her colleague, Eda.



Women from the Kikundi cha Mama Shauri Jema Parokia ya Mayla sing and dance during an April visit. Both Katie and Chris visited the group.

and help with personal needs. The stories of self-improvement were so amazing! One woman, whose husband left her to raise their children alone, said that because of the community group and the SACCO, she was able to buy seeds to farm. This gave her an income, which allowed her to raise her children on her own and pay for their education. Another woman was able to purchase a pikipiki (motorcycle), which she rents out as a business. This woman told us that "I went from nothing to something" because of the help she got from the group.

Polepole Ndiyo Mwendo (by Chris)

This statement basically means "slowly is the way to go," and that pretty well sums up my work experience so far. Because of the nature of my tasks, my work with Capacitar has taken a little while to get off the ground. The work I am doing- assisting with women's and community groups- is a new venture for Capacitar, and it's just taken some time to establish exactly what the work will look like. My first few weeks on the job had me learning some of the Capacitar exercises and visiting different groups to familiarize myself with the main focus of the organization (health and wellness). After a few weeks, my focus shifted to the work of the co-ops and community groups and I have now met all of the groups with whom I'll be working. I've added two more groups to the mix, and now I'll be assisting with 5 different groups: three women's groups, one mixed-gender group of guardians who care for orphaned children, and a teacher's group, which is also both women and men.

My language skills are still very basic, so it is a challenge for me to communicate. While I know a fair amount of words, I'm just not very good at actually putting together sentences, and I **really** struggle to understand others when they speak to me. So my ability to pop out into the village areas and chat with the women about their lives- well, it's just not possible yet. One of the things that we are doing to work around this issue and give me a chance to improve my language skills is the creation of a survey/needs assessment to distribute to the members of the groups. From these assessments, not only will I get LOTS of practice translating the answers from Swahili to English, but I'll be able to learn about the individuals in the groups, what their needs are, and what ideas they may have for the future of their groups.

For one of the groups, I hope to eventually conduct interviews with each of the women to gather the information for the surveys, which will be a great opportunity to practice my Swahili (though I'll still have a bilingual coworker with me to help). UPDATE: As of today, I have received 99 surveys! Plenty to do...

Thank you all for your continued support, and please keep us in your prayers! God bless.

Chris and Katie Reid



My surveys have recently been distributed to four groups. Ms. Mbogoma explains the survey questions to the women's group in Buswelu.

PLEASE CONSIDER SUPPORTING US IN MISSION!

Please remember that MKLM funds our travel, medical, and living expenses, and other costs associated with keeping me in mission. We ask that you consider donating to the Maryknoll Lay Missioners General Fund so that we, and missionaries like us, can continue to serve those in need world-wide.

Financial Support can be sent to MKLM, P.O. Box 307, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0307 or online at www.mkmlm.org. Denote "Chris and Katie Reid- General Support" in memo line or intention box to support us in mission. All contributions are tax deductible.

ASANTE SANA! THANK YOU!