A visit to the community

On Tuesday 14th October 2014, Mike Brown and Luci Appelbe, accompanied by their driver and friend, Alex, visited a group of women and children living with the effects of HIV and AIDS.

17 miles to the south west of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, lies the small yet bustling town of Ngong. Travel a few miles further along dusty, bumpy farm tracks with no street lighting into the Ngong hills, and you’ll come across the ‘hamlet’ where Hannah and her family and friends live.

Twelve women and two young children live together in this rusty, corrugated iron hut. It is stiflingly hot inside. There is no reliable electricity or running water. The water is harvested from the roof when it occasionally rains.

Three generations of women and children are living in these sub-standard conditions, they have been excluded by their own villages and the rest of society because of the stigma associated with HIV and AIDS.
Friends now, and part of a much larger network

This group of ladies is part of a larger network of 150 families all affected by HIV and AIDS in some way. They receive support from The Ecumenical Day Care and Support Women Project (EDCSWP) which is led by Esther Wanjohi, whose boundless energy to help others is contagious. Tel: +254-725793081

During the visit, Mike and Luci of Liquid Lever Irrigation Ltd were able to demonstrate to twelve of the ladies how to use a drip irrigation kit with just a bucket and water collected in their makeshift gutter to irrigate crops. Most of the ladies had a keen interest to grow their own fruit and vegetables, and some even have small kitchen gardens where they grow crops such as spinach and kale.

Seeing the enthusiasm of the ladies to start growing new crops, Mike Brown, Managing Director of Liquid Lever, and Founder of Grow" More Food, wanted to leave what he could with the ladies so that they could start using the kits straight away. Mike said “We left seven of our small ‘10 Plant Drip Kits’ with the community that day, free issued with the promise to help with more kits as soon as possible.” The ladies already had access to some of the essential seeds for growing in Kenya, and indicated that they may also be able buy some more from the markets in Ngong in the future.

Given that the ladies in this community have been isolated from society, they tend to have a lot of spare time each day. Empowering the community with the tools to grow fruit and vegetables will hopefully encourage the ladies to enjoy gardening as a hobby, and help them to learn good practices for growing crops. It may encourage the groups of families to trade surplus crops between themselves too.

Mike explains the simple and effective design of the kits
Good nutrition is essential

So well received were the kits, that since leaving Kenya Grow More Food has been requested by Esther Wanjohi to donate a further 143 drip irrigation kits to her precious network of women and children so that they can grow their own fruit and vegetables.

Esther points out that access to fresh fruit and vegetables is absolutely essential for people living with the HIV virus. Talking about the drip irrigation kits, she says “this will help all the families that are affected by HIV/AIDS to grow fresh fruits and vegetables which is vital for their health”. Esther is looking forward to the day when she can visit the communities and see how well the ladies are doing with their irrigation kits and new kitchen gardens.

Why is irrigation important in Kenya?

Irrigation is crucial for millions of people in Kenya, and all across Africa, as agriculture is the backbone of the economy - yet water supplies are unpredictable and unreliable. Often people do not have access to municipal water supplies, and in dispersed village communities such as this one in the Ngong Hills, the only water source is rain or a bore hole.

Rainfall is extremely unpredictable, particularly in recent years with the impacts from climate change, and people often store rainwater in a tank when possible. Bore holes can be an excellent water source, however they require a lot of resources to build and communities such as this rarely have the funds needed to build.

Rain and water from a borehole is perfect for crop cultivation, but the method of delivery to the crops is crucial. Other drip irrigation systems cannot be used with ‘dirty’ water, and the drip irrigation kits that Grow More Food supplies have been designed specifically for use in these situations.
Grow More Food looks to the future

Grow More Food is thrilled to start helping people in need to grow crops. The charity’s objective is to promote sustainable development for the benefit of the public, and this is specifically through the donation of drip irrigation kits to people in vulnerable situations in dry land regions across the world that need to grow food and cannot afford to purchase the necessary equipment.

Grow More Food has been approached by other community networks and small-scale farmer groups to donate drip irrigation kits to them also. Unfortunately, the charity cannot meet the requests from these groups as it does not have sufficient funds to cover the costs of purchasing kits. Grow More Food desperately seeks the assistance of corporate sponsors and private donations to help people in dire need of better nutrition and a better way of life. Grow More Food has no formal income stream and its costs are met in full by its three Trustees and by Liquid Lever Irrigation Ltd.

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The ladies were thrilled to receive their kits

We left the community with a buzz of excitement in the air