GROWING SITE No. 2

PAVING THE WAY FOR FAMILY SIZE DRIP IRRIGATION KITS

Grow More Food – a learning curve for everyone

On 25th Jan 2015 we visited our second experimental growing site in Runda, Nairobi. By now Liquid Lever Irrigation had built on the success of the first growing site and reconfigured its largest drip kit, up from ‘60 shrub’ to the 500 plant layout in the photo (left).

For the time this was generally regarded as being an optimum size for a small family to install and operate. Large enough for a family to grow a useful crop of mixed varieties but not too large that a failure would be catastrophic.

This growing site was easier to operate and control. At least that is what we thought.

The idea was that the young family living in the rusty hut towards the top righthand corner of the photo (right) would look after the plants and dine off the harvests.

Well the first lot of plants died – they did not manage the watering properly. And the second lot of plants got eaten by everything with multiple legs, wings and mandibles.

Whilst Chryspin concentrated on tutoring the family, we had to urgently forward money to purchase a backpack sprayer, pesticides and fertilisers. But we got there in the end. The family became expert in the daily chores of growing vegetables – they had never done anything like this before in their own village. And this was a real eye-opener for us. We take so much for granted here in the UK - Gardening is a part of our way of life.
What did we learn from this work?

Well the 500 plant drip kit was eventually a great success. But we need to supply a full package of support and not just drip kits and instructions.

If we are to expand our support and help more vulnerable families and disadvantaged groups of people we need to be prepared to do the following:

1. Preferably work with small groups of needy people living close together with access to a plot or plots of land, also close together. Rather than with single families, unless they are large and have their own suitable plot of land.

Work in conjunction with existing organised groups, e.g. religious, as they can provide a cohesive force, good communications, and facilities for meetings/tutorials.

2. Be prepared to supply drip kit packages comprising:

- Appropriately-sized drip kits with full installation and operating instructions in a local language.
- Water tank, Trestle for water tank, Backpack sprayer, Fertiliser, Pesticides, Hand Tools & Seeds.
- Water – yes in some cases we would need to be able to purchase even the water for irrigating the crop at least for the first crop of vegetables/fruit. 1 cubic metre (1,000 litres) costs approx. £1.
- Diagnostic materials and personal tuition to enable the grower to identify problems, pests, fungus, etc and take the correct measures to counter these.
- Tuition and preferably group tuition over a protracted period – from planting seeds to harvesting, storing and cooking.

How can we best support Esther’s Ladies and other needy groups of people?

Network to identify vulnerable groups, then

- Motivate the people to become involved

Then if they really do want to grow food for themselves and have a passionate group leader:

- Supply a hardware package to suit their needs
- Support them from seed to saucepan
- Attract funding to enable this to happen.

If they do not want to cultivate anything – don’t force it on them.

www.growmorefood.org ☰️ @GrowMoreFood ☑️ facebook.com/GrowMoreFood ☞️ +GrowmorefoodOrg