

Restoring the Breach

Steve & Rachel Good

April 2015

Encouragement

Our office mate has worked at World Relief for seven years. When she first arrived, she planned to only stay for six months as the salary was lower than she was used to. She is Catholic and had never worked in a faith-based organization before and was excited about what she was learning in staff devotions. Her words were “Wow! What was this? I was learning so much!” Her church asked her to share the Christmas story with them one year. They were so happy with her sharing that they asked her to be their “mother” and teach them once a month. She teaches men, women and children and uses the materials from the WR devotions.

This story encourages me because sometimes devotions feel routine and I don’t get a lot of feedback on the materials that I find to use. It’s good to know that God is at work.

Challenges

For two weeks in March Rachel participated in a training of the new WR “Integral Mission” curriculum that we will be using. One afternoon we went to a village and some community people and church leaders were invited to talk about current beliefs and potential barriers to change.



This is the summary of what they said:

- ⇒ Community beliefs about helping people in need: “If we help others, others will think we have more to give. If I give something I won’t have enough left for myself. We are all poor so we can’t help people.”
- ⇒ Problems in asking forgiveness for fear of being thought of as stupid. Witchdoctors become involved in revenge to pay back.
- ⇒ Witchdoctors – “They are still helpful when you are sick and get medicine from them. They need to protect our houses. They are more powerful than God. They are very important people in the community.” They believe sickness is caused by a curse and the only way to remove the curse is to go to the witchdoctor.
- ⇒ Inadequate understanding of poverty (only seeing it as material not as broken relationships between God, others and the environment). But being poor may mean someone who does not have relatives.
- ⇒ “Churches are a waste of time.” Mainly women go as a social activity. The churches are very weak.
- ⇒ The Bible is a holy book. Witchdoctors use scriptures. They have a respect for the Bible but don’t really understand it and use it out of context.

So, we have plenty to pray about! These beliefs run deep. Many of them have not heard the truth. The good thing is that when they join a Discipleship Group they do learn what the Bible really says and what Jesus has done for them. Some are coming to faith, but there is still a large harvest to be brought in.

Our friend and community leader, Atalia (September 2014 letter), is still leading discipleship groups and is encouraged about what God is doing in the village of Mukhotwene. We continue to raise funds toward Atalia’s support and the WR Church Development program she works with. If you would like to give toward this project in Mozambique, please mark your contribution to Harvest Community Church for Atalia.

Steve's Travels

On March 1, Steve took off on a two week trip in Rwanda, DR Congo and Burundi, was "sort of" home one week, then went to Zambia for 13 days.

I spent three days in Kigali, meeting with the members of our economic development team at WR. Most of our focus was how to link Integral Mission (IM) with WR country offices and church networks to impact both spiritual and material poverty faced by communities. One frequent question over the years has been, "How do you do agriculture, finance or business through the local church?" That is challenging as generally churches and business foci are not very compatible. We are edging toward a solution with the IM concept as we will help church networks set up separate committees of congregational members who are not invested in church management to help guide the economic efforts of savings groups, improved agriculture and microbusiness development.

In DRC, after the microfinance board meetings we went to see the Irish potato project in the mountains. We met four different groups and all were happy and excited about their recent harvests. One group harvested 75 metric tons of potatoes and has seed in the warehouse, sprouting for the next season. It was easy to get excited with them.

We spoke to a local chief. He was very happy that WR was helping these farmers grow food for the village. He said that group members are eating well, their children are in school with parents paying school fees, they are selling potatoes to the community for food and the community is benefiting as food is shared with those who ask for money from group members. His only complaint was that the area has many people, yet only 50 are in the association. While the area is more food secure, he would like to see more people benefit from the activity.



The group themselves said they benefit by being; 1) group work oriented, 2) the group field is better protected by the local authorities than if they were individuals, 3) they can obtain a group market price that is better than individual prices. The best thing about this project is the agronomist working with them to assist and guide them. These farmers are also in savings groups which helps them learn about saving and handling their own money. We want to learn more about the interaction between savings and agriculture activities so we plan to revisit them and do more in-depth research on how these two programs interact and assist the farmers.

Prayer Requests: Work permits and 5 year residency applications. Continued guidance in our work and for those we labor alongside. Peace in Mozambique between political parties and African neighbors. Pray for an end to xenophobia in S Africa and retaliation by other countries.

Thank you! Steve and Rachel Good

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