

An outsider's perspective on CCMP in ACK Thika Diocese

by Revd Edward Hobbs (Diocese of Exeter)



the result of 3 weeks spent in the Diocese in June/July 2018

Introduction

The first thing I want to do, is to say a big “thank you” to all those who made this trip possible. From those back in the UK; Bishop Robert, Archdeacon Christopher, St Andrew’s Church, various funders, and my family! But also those in Thika; Bishop Julius, Archdeacon David, Revd William Kinuthia and the people of ACK Kalimoni Church, Benson Kangangi, Revd Peter Mungai and the people of ACK Kianjugu Church , Revd James Mugweru and the people of ACK St Paul’s Kianda Church, Theresia in the link department, and I’m sure many others. It truly was a memorable trip, and I am very grateful for the parts you all played.

Secondly, it is also important to say that I can offer nothing more than a 3-week snap-shot, so please forgive me where my observations are wide of the mark, or where I have misunderstood things, or missed them all together!

Thirdly, I propose to structure this report chronologically, based on my journal entries, I will then attempt to draw some tentative conclusions at the end.

Fourthly, if you are totally new to the Church and Community Mobilisation Process (CCMP), to give you a very basic introduction, it is a teaching and bible study program that gets people and churches to ask “what do I have?” rather than “what don’t I have?” What resources, what opportunities, has God has given me, that I may use to bless myself, my family, my church and my community? And then helps people to use them to the maximum.

Week 1 – ACK Kirimiri Parish – Kianjugu Church with the Revd Peter Mungai

Following a briefing meeting in the Diocesan Offices, it was off to Kianjugu Church in a rural parish to the East of the Diocese, where I was generously hosted by Mr Danson Mburu and his wife.

Over the next few days I met many of the members of the local church and heard their stories of CCMP and how it has affected their lives and faith. Here are just a few case studies...

David & Jackson – Farming and Irrigation

It's dry and hilly in Kirimiri Parish, so water is often an issue. You may have land, but without sufficient accessible water it is hard to grow good crops. David and Jackson showed us how they had traced a water supply, and then piped it across their fields to water their crops. This had allowed them much better yields, and to grow other new cash crops. This has drastically increased their income, to the extent that they had been able to build a new house.



Sophia – Shop, rental property and garden

Sophia’s plot, though much smaller, was in a great location for a shop and property rental, being right on the main road. As a result through first digging a well, and maximising her crops and animals, she has been able to build a number of other buildings on the site.



Hannah & Samson – pigs, maize and melons

Hannah and Samson’s plot was another larger one, so once again the issue was water. As a result they also had laid a substantial irrigation scheme, and were farming pigs, alongside other livestock, to increase their income.



Review

In each case, once they had got to grips with CCMP, they reported that it was something about the process that had helped them to open their eyes to what they had, and gave them the impetus to get on and do something about it. Often the initial response to CCMP was unfavourable, as it involved change (not least to Sunday services – from a preach/receive model, to a bible-study/interactive model). But once this initial resistance was overcome, it was warmly welcomed, especially by those who described themselves as having previously been “back-benchers” – those who were present, but not particularly engaged or committed.

The increased income however was far from the only fruit, with in many cases, a reported increase in confidence and self-esteem, and in a new vibrancy to their faith as well. The fact that they laid the responsibility for the change at the door of the church and CCMP, was evident in their increased commitment, both in terms of time and money.

Indeed Kianjugu church were celebrating having recently moved from their old building (on the right of the photo below) to the new one (on the left), that had been built with the increased income produced by CCMP projects, on land donated by a church member. The whole project being funded, and in many cases physically worked on, by a congregation of just 30 adult church members.



Not only that, but as was reported in September 2016 by the Tearfund “connected church” team;

“After a Bible Study about Christians being salt and light in their community, ACK Kianjugu felt convicted. They found out that children with disabilities from a local primary school didn’t have enough food. The church members pooled their resources and gave them over four months worth of food! The teachers, and the District Education officer were astonished by this act of love.”

Week 2 – ACK Kiganjo East Parish – St Paul’s Kianda Church with the Revd James Mugweru

From a rural parish to an urban one, or at least a suburban one, close to Thika town, where houses are going up fast (faster than the local infrastructure can really cope with!). This is an area with much higher population density, where plots are a lot smaller, and where there are many more rental housing units. Here I was generously hosted by Susan Wamaitha and her family.

The plots may be smaller, the challenges more evident (this may just be the difference between rural and urban poverty), but the questions remain the same; “what is it that God has given you?” “What do you have, and how can you make the most of what you have?”

Again, a few case studies;

Peter - Waste water harvesting, crops & housing units

As well as running an electrical business, Peter has been challenged as to how to make the most of his plot. This has led him to harvesting his waste water to feed his bananas, to removing his flowers, to replace them with citrus, and starting to build what he plans will eventually be 40 rental housing units.



Regina – Chickens, strawberries, rabbits & housing units

From keeping chickens and rabbits for herself and for her family, Regina has expanded to keeping them for sale to generate extra income. She also grows strawberries to sell, and has build a number of rental housing units.



Duncan – Shop and bordaborda

Duncan and his wife are a young couple and are members of ACK ST Paul's Kianda. They were inspired by CCMP an felt challenged to start a shop, and then expand by buying a bordaborda to enable them to make deliveries, and also offer rides.



John – Butchery, computer services & plot of land

John credits CCMP for having opened his eyes to the many opportunities around him. Having first come to faith in Jesus, he was then exposed to some of the CCMP bible studies. Not long after he was employed by an NGO, later starting his own butchers shop, as well as running a computer repair/help service. This has enabled him to buy a plot of land, on which he plans to build a house, and grow crops.



Mary Nyambura

Once again however the good news has not been contained within the walls of the church, but has reached out to help a family in the community who were really struggling. First Mary's husband died, then not long after her sons (then aged 16 and 18) developed a condition which has resulted in them having very limited mobility. With their plot liable to flooding, the family lived in constant fear of water entering the house and putting the boys lives at risk. The church with the help of other churches in the area has built them a new house, up above the flood waters, meaning they can sleep in peace.



Thika Phase 8

It was also great to visit another project emanating from a church in Thika town, where a small group living on an old estate (Phase 8) feeling God's love for the people there and their environment took it on themselves to clean up the area. The ensuing conversations gave them opportunities to speak to people of God's love for them and for their neighbourhood.

ACK St Paul's

The church themselves also have great plans, stirred up by the CCMP process, and its focus on vision and strategy, the church has embarked on a large building project, replacing their existing 300 seater corrugated-iron building with a new concrete/stone 1500 seater. This will not least be funded by the increased giving and commitment stirred up by the CCMP process.



Week 3 – based in ACK Kalimoni Church with the Revd William Kinuthia, but also visiting ACK Gitwe, ACK Swani & the ACK church in Kiandutu slum.

ACK Kalimoni is an up and coming estate on the edge of Juja, it is much wealthier, with larger properties being built. CCMP is only just starting here and it will be interesting to see how it works in a more affluent area. I was generously hosted here by Bernard & family.

ACK Gitwe is rural, and based in a small church up in the hills, in tea country. Here there were a number of similar projects to ACK Kianjugu. Up in the hills water was not as much of a problem, but people were still working to maximise their plots, and farm, especially animals, more intensively. There was an impressive pig project, with one lady farming over 20 animals, but also intensive projects for cows and hens.



It was also great to see pictorial evidence all around the church, of how the congregation members had worked through many of the bible study themes, and sought to express their emerging vision in pictures. Amongst many others; a church caring for widows and orphans (left) and being a light to other churches and communities in the area (right).



There was also a great project sponsored through TOGs (another local initiative) that was helping a widowed grandmother to provide for her orphaned grandchildren. They had previously bought her a cow and some sheep, and more recently were helping her to establish an irrigation project.



ACK Swani is another rural parish, but in a low, dry, area.

Here the approach to CCMP has been rather different, with groups of men and women setting up saving schemes. Whereby they meet up each week and bring a predetermined amount of money. Depending on how many people are in the group, once or twice a year you get to take home all the money, and progress a scheme at their property.

ACK in Kiandutu Slum



It was also a privilege to be taken into Kiandutu Slum by one of the local lay leaders there named Senator. It was great to meet some of the church members, and to hear some of their stories. The church is clearly already active there, and whilst CCMP is not yet running in that location, it got me thinking; what might it look like if it did? Here is an area of the upmost need, how could, how should, the church be serving here, and how might CCMP play a part in that?

Other events/engagements

As well as visiting many different homes spread over a range of different contexts, I also preached in the three host churches on Sundays both in English and through a translator, which I certainly enjoyed (and I hope they did too!). I also visited many small groups/prayer cells, where again it was great to get to know people better, and really be able to engage with each others questions. I met with two youth groups which I especially loved. Great groups of younger adults, keen to go on with God, and start to lead and to do church differently in order to reach future generations. This linked in well with an excellent clergy training day aimed at youth ministry run by the Kubamba Trust. It was great to be able to encourage them in this direction if they are going to avoid some of the mistakes in the UK, and the subsequent decline in children and young people in the church over here.

There were also a number of visits to enjoy some of the great scenery; Sharp Hill, Fourteen Falls, Blue Post, Nairobi, Mboki Tea Factory, and Thompsons Falls, for which I am very grateful.

And the whole trip was rounded off with supper at the bishop's house, and a debrief with all those I had worked with. In ended up being a long and stimulating discussion about CCMP, and the state of the church in Kenya and the UK.

A few (very tentative) conclusions

- 1) Clearly there is much to celebrate. In most places where CCMP has been trialled it has had a positive impact, once initial resistance is overcome (of which more later). Here is a project, and a process, that is empowering people, and churches, to lift themselves out of poverty and subsistence, to a more stable and sustainable pattern of living. Revd William and Benson, and no doubt many others, I salute you!
- 2) Also it is important to point out that not simply is the process helping people to develop and make the most of their physical and economic resources, it has also been blessing them spiritually, both as individuals and as churches. I heard on several occasions how individuals had moved from the back benches to the front benches, and even into significant positions of leadership, as a direct result of the teaching from CCMP.
- 3) The churches themselves are also strengthened as a result. The positive outcomes are resulting in a positive Spiritual momentum, and a change in their financial situation. Many of the churches I visited were planning, or in the process of, substantial building projects. And as people largely give to vision, and give when they feel encouraged and empowered, this too is a testimony to what is going on.
- 4) In all of the places I visited they reported initial resistance to CCMP. Now to some degree this is inevitable, as most people don't like change!. However, with such a common negative initial reaction, there may yet be more work that could be done about how CCMP is introduced and explained, and more use made in new churches of church members with positive stories to tell. I also know William and Benson have already begun to engage with this.
- 5) As yet, with a few notable exceptions, it seems to me that the evangelistic and outreach potential of CCMP is as yet being underutilised. In the UK at least, where Christians have to earn the right to be heard, and where people outside of the church are asking "will this have a positive impact on my life?" more than "is this true?" CCMP seems to provide a fantastic way in for the local church to serve, help and bless people, and then in time to share the gospel with them. It felt to me that CCMP was certainly blessing Christians and the church, but it could be doing more to bless the local community. For where the church is seen to be looking outwards, and being good news to others, you can be sure that the church will grow.
- 6) Not simply in relation to CCMP, but for the church as a whole, I also want to encourage the development, and empowering, of younger leaders. Presently many of the churches in Thika Diocese are blessed with strong contingents of younger people (something often lacking in the UK) and to keep them, and to prevent the church from ageing (as again is so often the case in the UK) they need to be given permission and encouragement to lead, and to do things differently, to reach their own and subsequent generations.

- 7) It very much felt that funding training for CCMP, and leader development, had been a good use of funds from the UK. This meant that the churches on the ground felt a real sense of ownership and pride in the projects they had undertaken, because they had done them themselves and hadn't relied on help from outside funding.

Many thanks again to all who made my trip possible. I have been hugely enriched by my time with brothers and sister in Thika, and look forward to continuing to develop our relationship in the coming months and years.