



Baking Bread, Building Businesses & Reducing Poverty

Update March 2015

Please find below an update on the Bakery project in Ikotos, South Sudan, which Scott Bader very kindly supported the set up of in May 2013. emerge poverty free has now been able to visit the project, as the civil unrest is currently confined to other areas of the country.

Literacy, Numeracy & Business Training

The literacy and business training is now running again, after a break for Christmas. Many people from the first cohort have dropped out of the project, due to various reasons listed below. However, there are still approximately 35 students attending the training, which includes the cohort preparing to open a second bakery who joined in February. A few members from the first cohort have joined another literacy class held by ANCC, as they already knew a little bit of English and wanted to advance faster.

The group has got a new female teacher, Emoya Regima, who is supported by the new ANCC Project Assistant, Aboda Davidson. He has vast experience in teaching, and was previously a tutor at a Teacher Training College (TTC). The classes are held at the TTC, 5 days per week, every Monday to Friday from 4pm to 6pm.

The most common response for why the returnees want to learn English was so that they could then go to Uganda to purchase food, as it is so much cheaper and only a 45 minute journey away. Other reasons mentioned were: the ability to write numbers that people understand at the market, and being able to name people in their mobile phones.

Bakery Group 1

This group is much smaller than it was in October, with only 15 people active in the group. Many of the previous members obtained jobs during a mass recruitment for the army, police, wildlife protection and fire brigade that took place late last year by the Government.

The bakery is operational and they produce approximately 120 bread rolls day. The flour is purchased in Torit, as it is much cheaper than in Ikotos. People accessing the grinding mill prefer to pay money rather than a percentage of their grind, so this has proven to be the most cost effective way of obtaining flour, and the profit is greater. The bakery pays our local partner ANCC, who regularly travel to Torit (it is a 4 hour car journey away) and they purchase the flour for the bakery. Unfortunately, the bread baked is still not enough for the members to provide AIC Primary School with bread every day and still improve their own lives. Instead, they have started giving bread to the school for special occasions, such as Christmas closing ceremonies etc. This semester they will try to give bread to the school every Friday.

Most days the bakery sells the bread at the market, and uses the unsold bread to feed their families. If all bread is sold, the group make SSP170 (\$38) per day. The bakery is open 7 days per week, but it is 3 groups of 5 people who take turns in baking during the morning (7-9am), when it is still cooler outside.

Apolonia Ihsu, 38, is the chairperson of the group. She was the chairperson last year as well, and was re-elected by the members this year. She was born in Ikotos, but moved to Torit in 1987, when her father was killed in the war. Two years later, in 1989, she moved to Khartoum with her husband. He was a teacher, she was a housewife. Together, they have 7 children who all went to school. Two of the children are now at university, and five at home with Apolonia.



The husband decided to marry another wife, and is still in Khartoum. He does not help her look after their children in any way and no longer speaks to Apolonia. This is the reason she decided to move back to Ikotos. She said that it is difficult catering for the children and she dreams to have her own shop. The project is good, but it would be good if it was accompanied by VSLA (Voluntary Savings and Loans Association). She would invest her loans in flour, so that she could buy more flour and make a greater profit. The group received 3 days training earlier this year, which was good. To make the project better, Apolonia said that they need a small canteen, so that the community know that they are there. They would like to open a café in the market. At the moment, they sell bread from a stand which is, according to Apolonia, not as good. The profit comes back to the group, and they purchase new ingredients and share the rest.

Grinding Mill

The grinding mill is located at the house of a member of the group who lives about 500m from the bakery location and is operated by 2 men, from the returnee group. The reason it is not located next to the bakery is because the area where it is now located does not have any other grinding mills. The mill runs from early morning until midday, 7 days per week. People from surrounding communities come to grind flour and as previously mentioned, they prefer to pay money, rather than provide a percentage of their grind. One jug (approximately 2.5kg) cost SSP1 to grind. They generate approximately SSP150/day (\$33) which indicates that they grind around 375kg per day – much more than first expected.

Bakery Group 2

At the time of our visit, this group had their 3rd mobilisation meeting. 25 women and two men attended. They meet twice a month, on the first and 3rd Saturday of each month. This group is very excited to open their bakery at the end of April, but have asked to get a grinding machine for “simsim” (sesame) instead of a regular grinding mill, as they think this will help them generate more profit. ANCC are looking into the price of this and I wanted to confirm with you whether you would be happy with this slight adjustment?

They said that there is still a large market for bread, as not enough is sold at the market and they could also focus on cakes, which the other bakery is not making. The profit will be used to get their households organised, pay for their children to go to school and have better welfare for the family (example: being able to buy medicine).



Rose Ilaha, 30, was born in Khartoum but her parents were both from Ikotos. She was married to a soldier in Khartoum, who died in the struggle. Rose was a housewife, and used to sell firewood at the market. She moved to Ikotos in 2012 with her 5 children.

She is not doing anything now as it is difficult to start a business in Ikotos, especially without start-up capital. To provide for her family, she is begging from others. When she wakes up in the morning, she never knows if there will be any food that day. On a good day, the family eat twice – in the morning and the evening.

Rose speaks fluent English, but she is attending the literacy classes anyway as she wants better handwriting and because she wants to improve her English so that she can speak to everyone.

When asked about the future, Rose says that the future will be brighter. She is very motivated to work hard to get a bakery to work.

Future

This project has had several difficulties in its initial stages, but overall it is having a great impact on the people in that community. The quantity of bread baked is not as large as first anticipated, but it is still slowly increasing. As the profit increases, they will be able to purchase more flour and by doing this, bake more bread.

To ensure that the bakeries will be able to provide bread for the AIC School and to increase the impact it is having on the lives of the returnees, we would like to ask Scott Bader if it is possible to assist the first two bakeries with an accompanying Village Savings and Loans Programme. This would be instead of opening the third bakery? Please do let us know if you see this as a viable option, and we would be happy to talk about this with you further. Please don't hesitate to ask should you have any other questions. I'm looking forward hearing from you.

Kindest Regards,

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