

I CARE Post



Fall 2013

Celebrating Christmas in Igoma

Over the past number of years, numerous sponsors have asked me whether the people of Igoma celebrate Christmas and other holidays which many of us enjoy here in Canada. As you will learn below, many of the children in our program are Christian and therefore celebrate Christmas. In order to understand how the day is celebrated, our Family Services Director, Marcelina Jacob, has prepared the following.

"Christmas and New Years in Igoma are considered to be the greatest celebrations and events of the year and are held in very high esteem. Most I CARE families are Christian hence they celebrate Christmas. Arrangements often start early; as early as the beginning of the month of December. Those who can afford to do so will decorate Christmas trees and buy presents for family members. People often like to wear new clothes and eat special meals. These may include pilau (spiced rice – pictured on right) and meat, chicken or fish. Sodas would also be a great addition to complete the meal. On Christmas Day the children and their parents attend a special Christmas sermon depending on their denomination.



The Roman Catholics usually attend Noel on the night of 24th December to welcome Christ's birth at mid-night and a special mass follows in the morning. People then celebrate throughout the day and go out in the evening.

The children take a stroll and eat ice cream whereas the parents may visit other families. Photos are usually taken in the gardens of hotels for those who can afford to do so. The day ends but the spirit of celebration continues until New Year's Day.

The difference is the content in the sermon but Christmas and New Year's Day are celebrated much the same way. People watch and wait to welcome the New Year at midnight. They ululate, beat drums and burn improvised fireworks to welcome the New Year. Morning mass celebrations follow. The only other event that rivals these two during the year is Easter which is also held in high regard."

Letter from the Director's Desk



Above: U.S President Obama with Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete greeting crowds in Dar Es Salaam

"Ultimately, the goal here is for Africa to build Africa for Africans and our job is to be a partner in that process."

U.S President Barak Obama made this statement during his visit to Tanzania this past July, part of a three country African tour. After reading these words, I took a moment to reflect on the approach which I CARE and the Stouffville Igoma Partnership have taken towards providing aid to the people of Igoma. The relief and aid delivery philosophy espoused by I CARE specifies that the indigenous I CARE staff are uniquely involved in, and committed to, their community. By working alongside these individuals and relying on their knowledge and understanding of the Igoma community, we are able to ensure the aid and relief we deliver is culturally harmonious.

When it comes to key decisions facing our program, such as altering the management of monthly I CARE bills at the Urafiki Health Clinic, deciding when a child should be removed from the program or changes to staffing, we use a consultative process to ensure all views are shared and given full consideration. I communicate not only with the Board of Directors here in Stouffville but with our Family Services Director and Tanzania based Program Director. Through these conversations, we learn of the unique situations facing the

people of Igoma which we, as North Americans, may not have considered. This approach ensures that I CARE's Igoma based leadership team plays a significant role in important decisions facing our program and more importantly the children and families in their community.

When I was first approached and asked if I would become Program Director, I struggled with the thought that due to my lack of knowledge of East Africa, I was ill equipped to make decisions on how best to run a sponsorship program. After almost three years of working together with our staff in Igoma, I have come to learn that they play a far larger role in guiding our program and it is my role to help them along the way. As President Obama noted, I am "helping Africans build Africa" and I am confident that this approach is best.



Above: Signs welcoming President Obama to Tanzania

As we reach the end of 2013, I would like to thank each of you for the continued support of the I CARE program. On behalf of all of our Igoma based staff and volunteers here in Canada, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Asante

Marcus

Updated Child Information Cards for 2014

Traditionally at this time of year, we mail out the updated child information cards along with the renewal letter. Unfortunately, the cards are still in transit from Tanzania so we were unable to include them in this mailing. The cards are expected to arrive in the Canada over the coming weeks and will be mailed out to you as soon as possible.

Christmas Letter Package to Igoma

With the holidays quickly approaching, many of us begin the task of writing our annual Christmas cards to friends and family. As sponsors, many of you may also wish to write a message of good wishes to your sponsor child and their families in Igoma.



After the wonderful response we received from our sponsors last year, we plan on sending another package of Christmas letters to the children in Igoma this December. Once received, our local staff will ensure each message is translated and distributed to the children ahead of Christmas Day. If you would like to participate, please send your letter or card to the I CARE mailing address noted on the bottom of this newsletter. Please write "Christmas Card to Igoma" on the envelope so I know to include it. If you would prefer an email message be shared with your I CARE child, please send your message to icaretanzania@yahoo.ca. Please write "Christmas message to Igoma" in the subject line. It would be ideal if all letters/emails

can be sent to us by December 1 so that they can arrive in East Africa and be distributed in time for Christmas.

Education Support for I CARE Children

2014 is shaping up to be a year of change for the I CARE program. By January 1st, I CARE will have transitioned from having 5 part-time field workers to 2 full-time field workers. This change in structure will allow our program to grow and formally take on another important component of a child's life; education. Aside from visiting families and assisting with administrative tasks such as the preparation of letters and the related translations, these two full-time field workers will be tasked with tutoring children in our program so that they can excel in school. As many of you have reading the child information cards, numerous I CARE children are strong students and are achieving exceptional results. However, based on a suggestion from our local staff, we felt offering additional tutoring support would not only ensure our stronger students continued to excel but also assist those requiring additional support. Details of this education support program are still being determined but we are excited for the possibilities. Stay tuned for more information in 2014.

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