

# STEP OUT FOR KAGERA-THE BIG 40

Could you walk 40 laps of your hallway, 40 circuits of your garden or 40 miles around your local area during the 40 days of Lent? Something for everyone from toddlers to Granny and Grandad, the Sunday stroller to the super-fit. You set the target and then ask your friends to sponsor you, your child or your grandparents. And perhaps as you do each lap you can think about a different person or situation in Kagera. These are all real people and situations but their names have been changed. Before you set off for each lap, read one of these foot-sized thoughts to inform your prayer and fire your imagination on each step of the way.

- 1 Meet Samwel. He's planted maize on his shamba (farm) and is praying for rain so that the seeds germinate. A good crop will feed his family for a few months.
- 2 Climate change means that the rains are unpredictable now so Samwel finds it difficult to know when to plant. Too early and the seeds may dry out, too late and they may be washed away in the torrential rain.
- 3 Samwel's wife cooks some of their maize cobs on a charcoal burner to sell at the market. They are saving money to buy a small solar panel and battery for their home so they don't have to use kerosene lamps.
- 4 Meet Rehema. She's a widow so farms alone. She's giving thanks to God that her neighbours send their young boys to help with her harvest.
- 5 Rehema works hard on her land and sells vegetables at the market to enable her to send her teenage daughter Anna to secondary school.
- 6 In Anna's class there are 100 pupils, but Anna is keen to do well so she can get a job eventually and support her mother. She knows that education is a privilege.
- 7 The school has enough classrooms for the students, but no kitchen. Meals are prepared under a tin roof on large woodfires and Anna and her friends eat outside or in their classrooms.
- 8 Sara, the school cook, wasn't paid when the school closed at the start of the pandemic. She had to rely on her shamba to feed her family and buying basic necessities became a real problem.
- 9 Piped water often doesn't run to the school, so most mornings students can be seen trudging down to the river to collect it in large buckets. Anna has already had an hour's walk to school.
- 10 Many people are out in their shambas during planting time. Rehema often works with her neighbours on their land to share the load. Children play together as their parents work.
- 11 People also help at the church tending the tree nursery. When the saplings have grown some will be given to those who have looked after them. Others will be sold to provide income for the church.
- 12 The Church and Community Mobilisation Process has been active in several villages, and there the crops are thriving. Some people have rigged up drip feed pipes to give their plants a steady supply of water.
- 13 In one village after CCMP education, the village came together to build a 45,000 litre rainwater tank. People now spend less time walking to the river 600m down the hill to collect water or wash clothes.
- 14 CCMP has started savings and loans groups and they gather excitedly with their weekly contributions of maybe 50p. Many are planning to start small businesses, like beekeeping or market stalls.
- 15 With CCMP advice, Jimmy has planted new drought resistant crops including avocado trees. Avocados are a good cash crop, bought by truck drivers on the way back to Dar es Salaam from Burundi.
- 16 CCMP training has shown Jimmy that farming the land is a blessing, not a curse, and that the land is a gift from God for him to care for and make good use of.
- 17 Jimmy now helps with CCMP training, passing on his knowledge and enthusiasm to neighbours. His farm is a model for others in the region.
- 18 Anna wants to be a nurse when she's old enough. She'd like to study at the Diocesan nursing college near the cathedral. On Saturdays she helps her mum at the market selling their crops to help realise her dream.
- 19 There are no GPs in Kagera. Patients may be able to go to a village health centre, or else they will have to get themselves to the Diocesan hospital. Many live on £1 a day and it costs £3 to see a doctor.
- 20 Malaria is endemic in the area and people often fall ill with it. Poor families wait too long to see a doctor as it costs so much. This can have fatal consequences.



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- 21 Sometimes a specialist doctor will visit the Diocesan hospital for a day or two. The training being supported by the Lent Appeal will enable permanent specialists to be employed.
- 22 Many patients have to walk long distances to the hospital. A woman in labour may have to walk up from her village in the valley 1000m below.
- 23 The hospital staff sometimes have to wash bedlinen by hand because there isn't enough money for electricity for the washing machines.
- 24 The Government now requires church leaders to have formal qualifications. Our support for student bursaries at Kagera Christian Theological College is even more vital. Many students have little education.
- 25 Peter is a lay evangelist and studying at KCTC. He only has primary education as his father died when he was 11 and his mother needed his help on the shamba. He is a great leader in his church.
- 26 Peter is a married man with 5 children and will be at KCTC for a year's certificate course. He sleeps in a dormitory with 7 others and they share 4 drawers for their belongings. It's enough.
- 27 The theology certificate is in Swahili, the national language, and the diploma in English. For many students even Swahili is their second language as they speak in their local language at home. It's difficult.
- 28 A mobile phone is a godsend for the students to keep in touch with their families at home. Sometimes they can't afford a 30p voucher for airtime and miss their calls home.
- 29 As well as studying, students fetch wood for the KCTC kitchen, prepare and plant the college shamba, clean their classrooms, and service college bicycles. Rather different from student life in the UK.
- 30 On Sunday at dawn, Peter sets off on a college bike to his placement church 12 miles away. The pastor and church leaders have breakfast ready, a cup of sweet tea and mandazi (doughnuts).
- 31 Pastor John has no transport to travel around his large parish, up and down the steep hilly paths. He needs a motorbike so he can spend more time working and less time walking.
- 32 There is a large Sunday School in church and at Easter 15 children will be confirmed. They will each given a bible. They will now be able to read to their parents, some of whom are illiterate.
- 33 Rehema enjoys two happy afternoons a week at choir practice. She loves to sing in the three-hour services each Sunday, giving thanks to God for all that she has.
- 34 Grace, the Sunday school teacher, is visually impaired yet lives on her own in a small mud hut that church members built for her. She has a rainwater tank by her door, saving her trips to the river.
- 35 Her home is near neighbours who keep an eye on her and make sure she has enough food. She in turn takes classes with their children, teaching Bible stories and songs.
- 36 Pastor John visits Grace every week although she lives 3 miles from the church. Often they take a gift of something given in the offering at church the previous Sunday.
- 37 In most churches there are people who can't afford to take money for the offering, so they may bring bananas, beans or maize cobs. These are auctioned for church funds or taken as gifts to church members.
- 38 In Pastor John's church 100 plastic chairs have been bought. The rest of the congregation sit on uncomfortable low benches for services 3 or 4 hours long.
- 39 Pastor John's Church is too small for the growing congregation. They are working hard to use the resources they have to build a new larger church. It will take many years, but with God's help they will succeed.
- 40 Bwana asifiwe! Praise the Lord! You've completed your big 40 challenge. Asante sana! Thank you very much from those in Kagera who will benefit from your generosity.

If you'd like a sponsorship form there's one on the next page. You may need to change it a bit, depending on the challenge you have set yourself.

When you've collected your donations, visit [www.cofesuffolk.org/bishops-lent-appeal](http://www.cofesuffolk.org/bishops-lent-appeal) to find out how to get the money to Kagera.



