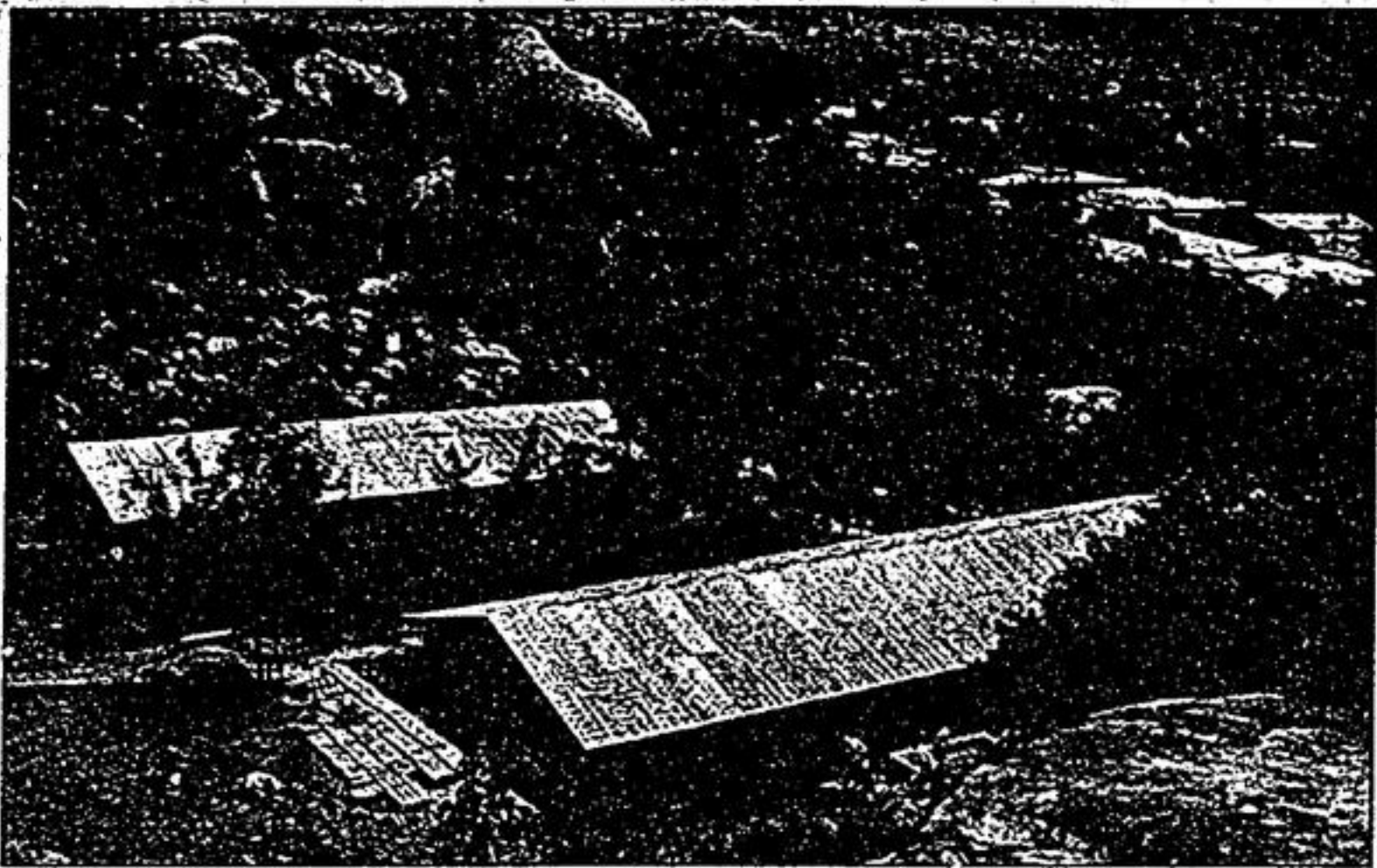


Partnership aims to bring medical facilities to village



Volunteers bring a fridge to the Tanzanian village of Igoma. At right is an overview of Igoma. The village's annual income is \$300 and of every 1,000 babies born, 100 die in their first year.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

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income in Whitchurch-Stouffville is \$90,000, a mere \$300 a year comes into homes in the African village.

Life is fragile there; of every 1,000 babies born, 100 die in their first year.

It's an agricultural subsistence economy with 80 per cent of the population of 42,000 involved in primitive farming.

Tools and equipment for even the simplest trades or farming, if available at all, are substandard at best," Mr. Geense said.

Mr. Neufeld and Mr. Geense know first-hand how the people of Igoma are forced to live.

Last summer, they joined 16 other residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville and Markham to spend a month on a humanitarian project there. They helped build a much-needed medical centre.

"To our group, it was an eye opener as we had never seen such poverty," Mr. Neufeld said. "Homes were, for the most part, shacks virtually on top of each other and all cooking is done outside with charcoal."

Igoma's first medical centre now needs equipment and staff.

"This is where Whitchurch-Stouffville comes in," Mr. Neufeld stressed.

Arrangements are being made to supply seven pieces of basic equipment, valued at

about \$13,000. High on the list is a \$2,000 malaria detection device.

"Malaria is one of the most prevalent diseases in this area," Mr. Geense said.

"A detection device is a must-have. We can buy it in Africa and supply it immediately if we had the money."

Partnership committee members recently met with Markham-Stouffville Hospital officials to arrange for unused equipment to be donated to the clinic.

'Homes were, for the most part, shacks virtually on top of each other and all cooking is done outside with charcoal.'

As well, talks are going on to see if any doctors or nurses from Markham or Whitchurch-Stouffville would be interested in providing medical service in Igoma.

"Our requests were very well received at Markham Stouffville (Hospital)," Mr. Neufeld said.

The partnership committee has also presented the project to Whitchurch-Stouffville clergy. Again, the response has been positive, Mr. Geense said.

Armed with its slogan, joining hands — creating hope, the

partnership committee also made presentations to local service clubs in the hopes their members would back the project. This, too, is proving successful.

The youth in Igoma are being offered educational training in the nearby city and a vocational facility is available if funding is provided.

At a cost of \$250 for a two-semester course, training is offered in fields such as medical lab, plumbing, masonry, electrical, carpentry, computer literacy and food services.

A plan is in the works to have Whitchurch-Stouffville residents sponsor the youth of Igoma so they can take these courses and improve the village's quality of life.

Local students will be asked to become involved with this aspect of the project.

Through partnership arrangements, the committee is busy reaching out to all sectors of the town.

"It's hoped individuals, families, neighborhoods, churches, service clubs and schools will all support partnership," Mr. Neufeld said.

Donations to the partnership can be sent to Stouffville Missionary Church, 6500 Main St., Stouffville, L4A 5T4. Make cheques payable to Stouffville-Igoma Partnership. For more information, call 905-640-3911.



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