

PeaceWays **AGLI**

Fall 2009 Volume IV Issue II

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR:



UNDERSTANDING AND RECONCILIATION

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The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams strengthens, supports, and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). To this end, AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non-governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI sponsors Peace Teams composed of members from local partners and the international community.

Visit AGLI's website at:
www.aglionline.org

For further information please contact:

David Zarembka, Coordinator
African Great Lakes Initiative
of the Friends Peace Teams
P. O. Box 189
Kipkarren River 50241 Kenya
Tel. + 011 254 726 590 783
E-mail: dave@aglionline.org

US Office:
African Great Lakes Initiative
of the Friends Peace Teams
1001 Park Avenue,
St Louis, MO 63104 USA
314/647-1287
Email: dawn@aglionline.org

PeaceWaysAGLI

Joy Zarembka, *editor*

Dawn Rubbert, *copy editor*

Tommy Zarembka, *layout*

PSSI/We Print, *printer*

Editorial Comment

The ride home is great but the euphoria wears off quickly and you know that the next weeks will bring other cases that may not finish so well. But after a day like this one, your hopes will always be high and you look forward to the next opportunity.

– George Brose after a successful mediation in Burundi

This issue of PeaceWays-AGLI – “Love Thy Neighbor: Understanding and Reconciliation” – takes a look at how the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams has changed people’s lives.

In March 1998, as the Baltimore Yearly Meeting representative to the Friends Peace Teams, I suggested that a delegation be sent to the Quakers in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Little did I realize how much this would change my life and also that of my family members. Nor did I anticipate its effect on many of my old friends, new F(f)riends, extended service volunteers, workcampers, readers of my Reports from Kenya and PeaceWays-AGLI, AGLI staff in the Great Lakes region, and, most importantly, Africans that have attended the AVP, HROC, mediation, and other workshops and AGLI-sponsored activities.

In “Welcome Back!” Dorcas Nyambura, a lead Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) facilitator, describes the positive outcome after working with people who pushed their enemies off their land but later agreed to rebuild their destroyed homes.

We have other articles by people whose lives were changed inextricably. Barbara Wybar’s explanation “Why I Do What I Do” is an inspirational story about her involvement in Bududa, Uganda. George Brose in “A Bumpy Road to Mediation” shows how a family dispute was settled. Angela Forcier describes how reconciled women interact in “Why We Should ‘Love Thy Neighbor,’” and Deborah Dakin in “Living Abundantly” describes what she has gained in the United States by being involved with AGLI and Friends Peace Teams.

Adrien Niyongabo, Theoneste Bizimana, and Zawadi Nikuze have forwarded testimonies telling how AGLI work has affected people in their communities. I have an article, “Reconciliation?” which describes what I have learned from Africans through the HROC program.

While the written word conveys a certain aspect of the work, visual aids allow the stories to truly come to life. Videographer Patrick Mureithi has finished his breath-taking documentary on the HROC program, “Icyizere: Hope” (see bottom of next page). We have DVD’s available for you. I ask you to view it to understand more about what we do and then show it to others in your meeting, church, community association, school, and local cable TV station. Patrick himself would like to give presentations of the DVD at welcoming universities and colleges.

The African Great Lakes Initiative has affected many different people in so many different ways. I’m just an organizer, but this is why I am so intent on doing this work with AGLI.

David Zarembka

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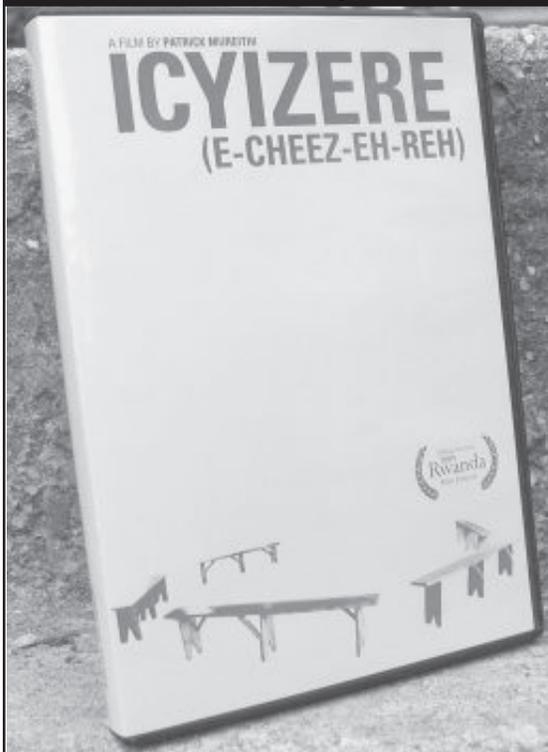
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Just
Released!

ICYIZERE:HOPE

By Patrick Mureithi

A 95 minute DVD documentary on the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities Program



Icyizere:Hope documents the many issues surrounding the Rwandan genocide and its later reconciliation. By witnessing a HROC workshop, viewers see the joy and pain the participants experience as they take part in the three day workshop. In addition, viewers get a personal glimpse of the participants' lives as they welcome the filmmaker into their homes and share their personal stories.

1. You can buy a copy of the documentary for \$20 plus \$5 shipping for personal viewing. We recommend that you send it/lend it to a friend after viewing.
2. If you would like to arrange a presentation of the documentary – at your home, church, meeting, school, community organization, or local cable TV station – we will send you a copy of the DVD along with background material and donation envelopes.
3. Patrick is currently planning a tour with his documentary. He would particularly like to give presentations at colleges and universities. He would need travel reimbursement, accommodation, and an honorarium.

For details, please contact David Zarembka at dave@aglionline.org

Why We Should “Love Thy Neighbor”: Excerpts from a Report on HROC Workshops in Gisenyi, Rwanda

By Angela Forcier

Angela Forcier, a graduate student from the United States studying for her Master’s degree at the University of Cape Town, had the amazing opportunity to spend extended time with 5 HROC participants in their homes over the course of 2 months. This allowed her to observe the interactions among neighboring women and highlights the important benefits of the HROC program as antagonists learn to trust each other again. She will use this research to explore issues around trauma healing and reconciliation in more depth in her thesis. See AGLI’s webpage, www.aglionline.org/publications/articles/hroc/pdf/gisenyireport.pdf for her full report.

To be neighbors involves more than the proximity of your homes, it means sharing your lives. Neighbors watch each others children, they check in on each other in the morning before going to work, they rest together in the afternoon, wash clothes and prepare food together at night. They ask each other for help when it is needed. Help is always needed, whether it is borrowing salt or water to cook, a hoe to dig, or money for transport to visit a sick family member. To be excluded from these interactions, for any reason, means being cut off from your most immediate network of support. There is a Rwandan proverb which states, “a neighbor is better than a distant relative.” In theory, family should be your primary support system, but, in reality, it is those who are closest to you whom you depend upon. However, when you do not trust those living around you, the interdependency that you rely on for survival is impaired.

After the initial interview process to review HROC, I selected five participants to spend time with in order to learn more about their lives. I was interested in the composition of the daily life of participants; an ethnographic investigation includes not only what people may say in an

interview, but what they *do* and how they do it, where they go, who they speak to and under what circumstances. It seeks to understand the meanings and values that dictate interaction. Fully aware that I could only gain a glimpse into all of this in the short time I had, my selection was based on several factors. Some participants expressed a keen interest in me visiting them so they were more likely to be willing to participate; some were chosen simply on the basis of good rapport. Others interviewees were not selected for logistical reasons, such as location or lack of time.

Before beginning this exploration into their lives, I visited each of the five participants in their homes to explain my research and the relationship I envisioned between us. All of them eagerly agreed to accept me into their home—working, eating, visiting and resting alongside them. I learned through this exercise how much people value someone visiting them in their home; it demonstrates a mutual respect, caring, and interest in their life. In the weeks that followed, I spent full days with each of the five participants, digging in their fields, peeling what seemed like millions of potatoes, learning to cook *sombe* (cassava leaves) and *ugali* (cooked cornmeal), visiting with

neighbors, going to the market, and snacking on sugar cane.

Since neighbors constitute social support networks and depend on one another both as daily companions and in times of need, if a person does not trust those around him or her, it becomes much more difficult to meet the needs of his or her family. One of the HROC participants I visited, Mama Samwari, told me that before the workshop, she did not trust the people living on either side of her home. Yet, during the time I spent with her, the women in those households were ever-present companions. When we washed clothes, they were also washing and chatting. When we were preparing food, they were also preparing food, in fact, they shared a kitchen. When Mama Samwari did not have water to cook beans, she asked these neighbors. One of them gave her a pair of shoes for her children. When Mama Samwari went to work in her field she left her children under the care of these neighbors, who did the same when they left home. Now she describes these neighbors among the first she goes to when she needs something. She said this is because she learned in the workshop that it is possible to be friends and to love a person from the other group again.

“

If a person does not trust those around him or her, it becomes much more difficult to meet the needs of his or her family.

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Why I Do What I Do: Life in Bududa, Uganda

By Barbara Wybar

Barbara Wybar, a Canadian living in the United States, taught at a private elementary school in Philadelphia for many years and is a member of Germantown Friends Meeting. She attended three AGLI workcamps in Bududa, Uganda and returned on her own two more times. In October 2007, she decided to move to Bududa in order to put the Bududa Vocational Institute and the Children of Peace orphans' programs on a firm footing.

Why do I do what I do? Why is this work I am doing in Uganda such a good fit? I keep asking myself these questions. It has been such a serendipitous journey. I first came to Uganda during the AGLI workcamps from 2003-2006.

The journey seems to divide into chapters. The first chapter would be about an old school friend, Jane Horner Delange. Back in 2003 I stayed with her on my way to Uganda for the first time and she seemed inspired by the story and lived the adventure vicariously. She decided to submit my name to our old school, Study in Montreal, Canada for an alumni award. By some strange turn of events, her candidate won and I was given an award of \$1,000 to take to the Bududa Vocational Institute, the school that we had worked so hard to start and build. For most of my adult life, I had been a mother, a housewife, and a second grade teacher – nothing out of the ordinary. So at the age of 60 to be given an award for the work I loved to do in Uganda seem like an exciting opening to a new chapter in my life. It gave me an opportunity to speak to the whole school at an assembly in Canada. I showed slides and spoke about my passion. Fourteen of my old classmates came from as far away as California and Vancouver Island. We all spent an amazing weekend together. I felt supported and, in some small way, I

felt that I had captivated my old pals with this new twist in my life. In 2007, I rented out my house, packed it up, and planned to move to Uganda for a year. Simultaneously, I sent out hundreds of fundraising letters to literally everybody I knew or had ever known and all my many friends and relatives.

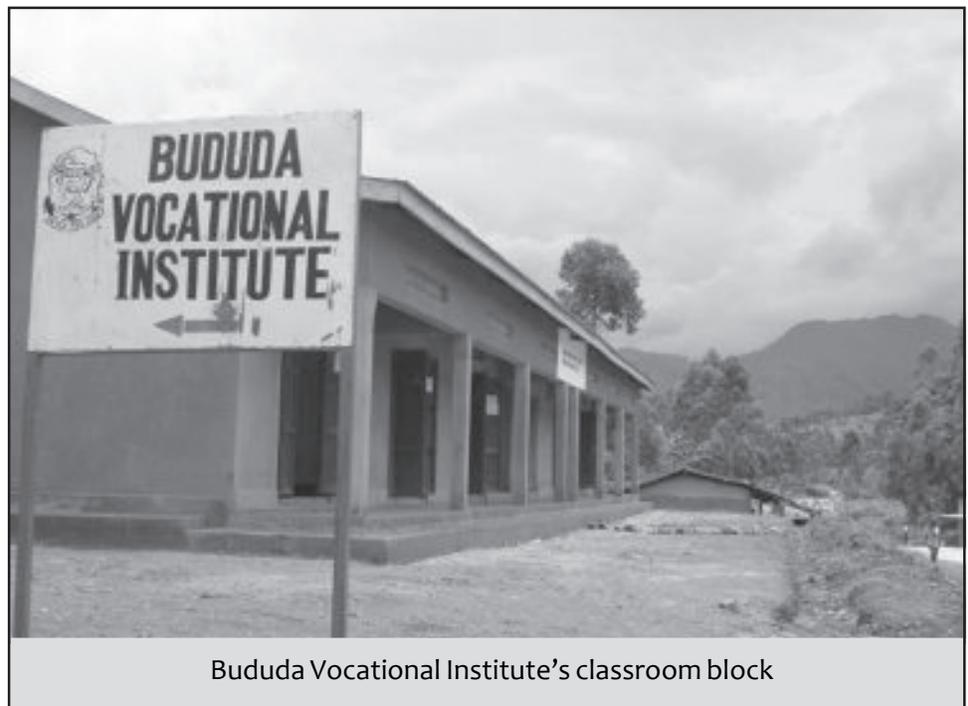
The next chapter was not quite such a happy one as I arrived in this lovely village to find that the school that we had worked so hard for was not functioning well. It was a lonely and difficult time for me. I had to face my fear and stand up to the person I had trusted but who was mismanaging the two programs. I

did and in so doing, learned that I could stand up for myself with nothing bad happening to me.

To resolve this situation more fully, I decided to stay in Bududa with my African friends. If I left, there would be no more money going into the project, the teachers would all be out of jobs and the students would be without a school. We found another geographical location to have the school and we held a workcamp to prepare it. We opened our doors a month later and we have not looked back since.

Over the last sixteen months that Bududa Vocational Institute has

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Bududa Vocational Institute's classroom block

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been in operation, there have been fifteen volunteers from Canada and the USA. With each volunteer, I have learned new skills and opened doors for the institution. Each volunteer brought his or her own gifts, talents, and perspectives. For example, one amazing couple, Paul Hogan and Geri Fitzgerald, came in February 2008. Paul is a lawyer and Geri is a banker who I met through my neighbor. They worked tirelessly for five weeks to put policies and procedures in place, draft contracts, and set up the school accounting system. Geri put in 12-hour days and the finished product was a document we use daily and from which we can make budget projections and summaries. We have been truly blessed with all the help we have received: college students, high school students, sixty year olds, businessmen, an actress and a nursery school director. They have each brought their individual skills and their interest to the village. Like me, they have all learned from these villagers about life and another way to live it. It is a win-win situation, especially with the younger students. The North Americans learn a lot and the Africans are simply delighted to have their interest and friendship. In fact, the real story lies with the Africans who bring so much to me and to all of us who visit.

I find myself growing as an individual because of the people I work with and the situation I find myself in, overseeing the Bududa Vocational Institute and coordinating the Children of Peace sponsorship program. More than at any other time in my life, I find myself totally engaged and focused. I eat to live, not live to eat. I work seven days a week, start before 6:00 am and end after dinner. It is a challenge. It is



Bududa Vocational Institute's sewing class

helping in the simplest ways, feeding the hungry, teaching, and nursing the sick. I like the people and, for the most part, the people like me. I accept my own company. In fact, I now relish the few hours that I can claim as my own on a Sunday, if I am lucky.

I am not so spoilt. Cabbage beans and rice twice a day is okay with me. Pit latrines, no running water, and no electricity do not spell hardship to me. I am learning to know myself, to know what I stand for and what I believe in. Somehow, in this environment, where simplicity is the order of the day, principles are adhered to more easily. One's values and morality, brought from the West, sometimes fly in contrast to those of the village. Therefore, since one's ideology is always questioned, one becomes more certain about one's stand.

But why am I doing this? Why do I love it so much? Does it have to do with my Christian upbringing, I wonder? People ask me if I came because of a calling. I am perplexed. I say I came out of a spirit of adventure. I have a friend in Canada, Malcolm Evans, who is a minister in the Anglican church. He is convinced it is God's work I am doing. I explain that I love what I am doing, but I would not call it "a calling." He says, "God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform". I know the hymn well. This takes me up short. Is he right? Maybe. Have I been led to this by God and I just do not know it? What I do know is that these early teachings in Sunday school are still with me.

As a child, I wanted to help the poor. My Dad helped me. Then I got caught up in the life that was set

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HROC and the Batwa Ethnic Group in Rwanda

By Theoneste Bizimana

Theoneste Bizimana is the coordinator of the HROC program in Rwanda. Recently the program has been concentrating on the ostracized Twa group.

The Twa are the smallest of the three ethnic groups in Rwanda (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa). You may know them by the name “Pygmy.” Twa are also known by another name, “abasizwe inyuma n’amateka,” which translates as “people whom history has left behind.” This can be understood to mean they have been forgotten.

During the genocide in 1994 some were implicated in the killings and some were killed, but they are rarely recognized in relation to the consequences of the genocide. Since this group has been ignored by Rwandan society on the whole, they have lived independently from other communities, believing no good could come from living among other Rwandans. At times, they have even gone so far as to not even consider themselves Rwandan. As a result they live in villages inhabited only by Twa. They don’t send their children to school (and there are no schools near where they live), and they do not participate in any government activity.

Although identification as Hutu or Tutsi has been eliminated under the Rwandan Government’s program of unity and reconciliation, the term “Twa” is still in common usage, along with the many stereotypes associated with it. Being marginalized in society, and as victims of the genocide, they are a highly vulnerable population.

To help the Twa deal with these consequences and to recognize their rights as Rwandans, since 2003,

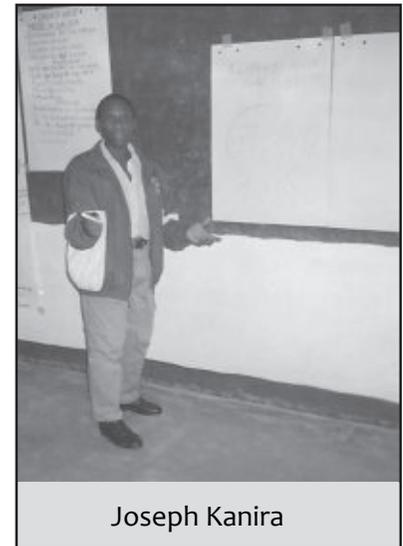
HROC has been working closely with them by drawing them out of their isolation and beginning to connect them with others. The main objective of HROC is to help people to heal and to build relationships in order to create sustainable peace. This general peace must come from the effort of everyone in Rwanda. The Twa need healing and a sense of belonging, which can encourage their positive participation in the country around them. By including everyone in the process of building peace, we are confident we will reach our objective.

Joseph Kanira is a HROC facilitator who has provided a lot of help in introducing HROC to his Twa community. I talked with him in order to know why HROC is important to his population and he shared this information:

-HROC has increased awareness and understanding of the concept of trauma and trust among Twa.

-HROC has established a basic lasting relationship between Twa and other ethnic groups.

-Many Twa have started to recognize their rights as humans and as citizens of Rwanda, and to participate in trauma healing, reconciliation processes and development in the broader community. They no longer stand or sit close to the road begging. They now work for their families and they have started sending their kids to school. They always say that HROC has set them free.



Joseph Kanira

-The local authorities are thankful of what HROC has done in their cells and sectors [local government administrative units]. Before HROC, if they called for a meeting or any other community activity, Twa would not come – but today, those who attended the HROC workshops are the first ones to participate in any government activity.

Though a step has been taken, the way is still long. Those who have attended, request more workshops and it is the wish of Joseph Kanira that every person could be reached by HROC.

In the future, we intend to conduct more basic trainings with only Twa. Then as a further step toward building their relationships based on full trust, more advanced workshops that will bring Twa together with Hutu/Tutsi who have also participated in a basic workshop.

Living Abundantly

By Deborah Dakin

Deborah Dakin is an Iowa Friend who teaches viola at Augustana College. She was formerly the Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) representative to the Friends Peace Teams and wrote this as an email in response to funding concerns. She has organized speaking tours for a number of AGLI partners in the eastern Iowa region. Friends Peace Teams also sponsors program in Colombia, Central America, and Indonesia.

One of the greatest things that I have gotten from my involvement with Friends Peace Teams (FPT) is what I have learned from the folks who do this peacework in circumstances so far removed from my own non-war zone US life. I can say that they have given me faith lessons and that it would be hard for me to begin to give back even a fraction compared to what I have gotten.

We are all familiar with the story of Jesus feeding the multitude with loaves and fishes. John tells the story with an added twist that personifies what the FPT Africans have taught me, and strikes right to the heart of what we are called to do.

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in all.

(John 6:5-10 NRSV)

One thing David Zarembka talks about that has made a strong impact

on me and others is the concept of living and acting in "abundance" versus living and acting from "scarcity."

Frequently David tells us that Africans inspired in their many projects, have a first response that is one of faith: "This is a great idea. Let's pray and act and make this happen!" Everyone recognizes that Americans in similar situations frequently have a completely different first response: "This is a great idea. How much will it cost? Can we afford it?" It is obvious when comparing life in the US to the countries where we work, who has much and who has little in terms of money and resources and yet we find that it is the Americans who are frequently limited in vision because of our tendency to act from scarcity instead of abundance.

Partly because of what our African, Latin American, and Indonesian Friends have taught me, I find myself continuously having a strong reaction to the language pervading our country about the financial crisis and how we don't "have anything." I do not want the pervasive view of "scarcity" that permeates almost all discussion about money in this country be the basis of how I think about FPT. I read many of Jesus' parables as a call for generosity, and one that is a challenge for rich and poor to answer alike. But it is also the key to what he is calling the Kingdom of God. This generosity is not talking about a "dollar amount"

but how we feel about what we have and what we give.

If people in this country are worried about their dollars then a donation to FPT is certainly a fantastic investment since a few dollars goes a very long way. After all, FPT has almost no waste in the budget. David once told me a weekend workshop that we raise funds for [HROC or AVP] costs about \$35 per participant. Isn't that amazing? Where else can you get that kind of return on so few dollars?

Please understand that I am not underestimating anyone's financial concerns. I am not saying that an American's financial worries do not qualify as "real." I recognize that some people in the United States are really financially strained during this economic crisis. But I don't want to waste time trying to figure out "who can give what." I constantly struggle to not join the crowd in worrying about my own family's finances, so I'm speaking of what I am trying to do, not what already is. This is what I thank the Africans for showing me: If our work truly IS based on the faith that Jesus taught, we should not limit our vision to only our small, human capabilities and what we could accomplish with or without God's help

Let's do the work, and have faith that we will get what we need. 

A Bumpy Road to Mediation

By George Brose

George Brose, a mediator from near Dayton, Ohio, has traveled for the last three summers to train and then mentor mediators in Rwanda, Burundi and North and South Kivu in the eastern Congo. The mediation approach AGLI is using is called “transformative mediation” and fits in well with the concepts of AVP and HROC. Here is a report from one of his practice mediation sessions which shows the complicated and family/community based mediation common in Africa versus the very private, individual mediation done in the United States.

Philippe Nakuwundi, Jeanne Masabo, Edith Niyonsavye, Anne-Marie Ntamamiro, Jean-Berchmans Ndayishimiye and I drove almost 45 minutes together on a bumpy dirt road to get to a primary school where we were greeted by a representative of the local peace committee. The participants in the mediation arrived shortly after. All greeted us, but some refused to greet each other and it was clear that lines had already been drawn and tensions were high.

In greeting people, I met one man who had come as an observer, Jean-Marie Vianney Hazushimana. He greeted me in Kirundi, which I do not speak but said I could understand. He spoke my languages, Swahili and French, both fluently and told me he had first fled Burundi to Tanzania in 1972. He had come back several times but each time was forced to flee again. He said he was neither Hutu nor Tutsi, but had descended from a *mwami* (chief) clan the Hansa family and they were considered royalty and not tribalized. I had read about this the night before. He had a younger sister in Ottawa, Ontario, and I said I would try to contact her when I got home to say I had met him. I then went in to observe one of the two mediations which had already started in the peace center office, a building still under construction.

When I got there, they were in caucus (talking to each side



Leon Mkangya Alenga, mediation coordinator in South Kivu, on left and George Brose, mediation trainer, on right

separately). One of the mediation observers, Josias Nduwimana, a Quaker pastor from Kibinda, told me, “George, this one is very difficult.” A widow and her two young boys are in conflict with her brother-in-law, the brother of her deceased husband. By custom, the brother-in-law is supposed to dispose of land to benefit the widow and himself. It seems that the widow took it upon herself to sell off the piece of the land that the brother-in-law wanted to keep for himself.

In the mediation, the widow is sitting with her two boys, about age 11 and 12. The brother-in-law is sitting with his family. There are a number of people on the far side of the room. The disputants are against the walls on both sides of the co-mediators. There are a number of people in the

room apparently from the extended families on both sides. It looks like a trial with spectators. One of the brother-in-law’s relatives walks out followed by his wife. Capitoline Burakuvye, a mediator/observer goes out with them. The older boy now speaks. The brother-in-law shakes his head asserting he is not in accord with what the boy is saying. Then the widow speaks as I step out to take a phone call from Bujumbura. There seemed to be a lot of action while I am outside. When I come back in Jeanne is making of summary with which no one seems to agree. Okay, they can correct and clarify as part of the process. Who are all the spectators? Are they relatives with vested interest? Does this become a face saving exercise with so many spectators? I don’t know, but the

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Francis, the Rongai contact person, was there too to help out in the community. In this photo, Francis is with Kalenjin women, who were very active the whole day.

The youth mix water and soil to make the mud mixture that is used to build the walls around the houses.



“This was my best photo,” states Dorcas. “It shows how the people who were enemies could come together and help.” In the photo are Mr Maina, on the right, and Mr Vincent, on the left. They are Kikuyu and Kalenjin respectively. “The people were of opinion they be the ones to start mixing the mud because they did a superb work as a team. They were working together throughout the day.”

Men at work



“The day could not be over without me (in white t-shirt and a cap) trying my hand in mixing the mud.”



After a whole day of work every one was happy about how the day has been. In this photo was one of the completed houses. It was decided that after some days they will come and smooth the walls of the house ready to welcome the family back. After finishing the work we were given lunch and tea. During the meal Njambi was very happy and could not stop saying thank you to everyone. She said, “I first thank Mr. Francis for inviting me to the HROC workshop. It has made me realize regardless of what happened, I still have good neighbors who want me back. My husband didn’t believe that this house will be made for me by my neighbors, but I now know he is very happy.” The day was great for me because I was able to witness great love between neighbors. They showed real commitment and said it was a sign of good relations returning in their community.

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disputants apparently agreed to the spectators being in there.

After a few more rounds of conversation, the man who bought the land says that he would back out of the deal if the parties would be willing to start over in the traditional way. I think he will still get some land and the brother-in-law will save face. There is a bargain struck, and all the family members stand up and applaud. Jeanne summarizes again to make sure everything is clear.

The peace committee leader, Marc Ndarigendama, then makes a speech to the room, tells the young boys that he hopes they will remember this day, and that problems can be resolved. It must have really been bothering the extended families as so many were present. Everyone made the sign of the cross and sang a beautiful and unusual hymn in that it had no beat, no hand clapping at all. It was a very haunting melody. I was allowed to record this part of the process and it was a truly wondrous event. I have never seen anything like this in ten years of mediating. The peace committee person, Marc, also wanted me to take a picture of the event so that it could be hung in that room as a reminder to the community. We had a boisterous ride back to Gitega, amazed that the case had come together in the last minutes before our scheduled departure. To me it was like days when I was a cross country and track coach and the athletes had trained hard and performed well.

The ride home is great but the euphoria wears off quickly and you know that the next weeks will bring other cases that may not finish so well. But after a day like this one, your hopes will always be high and you look forward to the next opportunity. 🌍



Graduates of mediation class in South Kivu, Congo



Mediation trainees in small group discussion



Mediation role play

Applying These Teaching: Testimonies from North Kivu, the Congo

By Zawadi Nikuze



Salome Mapendo Sife

Salome Mapendo Sife is a 31 year old mother of eight. The children range from age 11 months to 14 years old.

My husband and I are originally from Shabunda in South Kivu but my husband was working in Mweso Hospital as a nurse. Life was good in Mweso, my husband was earning a good salary and I had a *kitenge* (African fabric) business, sold salted fish and had a small cosmetics shop. We had been living in Mweso for a year when the war erupted. That was the turning point of our life.

On September 7, 2007, war broke out in the Congo and we left with our children. We were fearful to carry anything else. The whole village was on the road, some people were able to carry a few belongings and cattle. On the way, I lost my 7 year old daughter and I got more depressed. We arrived in Bulengo internally displaced persons' camp on September 13, 2007. By God's

grace, I found my daughter in the camp with other lost children. She was with another little girl, whom we later adopted.

We were extremely hungry, tired, thirsty, dirty, and had no shelter. During the day, we were roasted by the sun and in the night we were soaked with the rain. Each family was entitled to 5 liters of water per day; there were only 4 latrines for thousands of us. Due to lack of proper sanitation, cholera broke out and many people died. Other people drowned in lake because we did not know how to safely fetch water.

Life continued to be difficult and I contemplated joining my father in Kindu. I then learnt that he had been killed with my 5 brothers, my 3 uncles, my grandparents and family friends. They had taken refuge at our farm and the killers had found them there. This made my life even more difficult and I wished I was also dead!

At the same time, my husband could not stand the suffering and joined a group of stressed men who used to drink the local brew from morning to evening. This brought a lot of quarrels and fights in the home. The children suffered the most for both my husband and I were taking our stress to them. The idea of running away with children came to my mind because my husband was becoming more violent and we were all frustrated.

When the Friends Church under the Goma Relief program begun the

training in Bulengo camp, my husband was among the first group. After the 3 days of HROC workshop, he shared what he learnt and he begun changing a bit. He stopped spending his whole day drinking.

In October 2008, I also attended a HROC workshop and I was really blessed. The sharing moment helped me see that there are other people who are also suffering even more than me. Johari's Window [a HROC exercise where you realize how others see you and how you see yourself] also helped me to understand myself and others. I have also attended the Alternatives to Violence workshop which has been helpful too. Now I consult with my husband and there is no more violence against our children.

I had developed hatred against Tutsis because they are the source of our suffering but we have some Tutsi here in the camp and we are all undergoing the same suffering. I tried to find out who killed my father and all who were with him and I was shocked to learn that it was his own people, our own tribesmen. This changed my perception and I am no longer discriminative. I apply all these teachings in my Women's Loan Group work, especially when there is a difficult conflict. I thank everyone, including the donors and facilitators, for the different peace workshops they bring to us in the camps for we live in a conflict environment.

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By God's grace, I found my [lost 7 year old] daughter in the camp with other children. She was with another little girl, whom we later adopted.



Ways to Give



1. Stay informed on the progress of peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region of Africa.
2. Pray for/hold in the Light the success of AGLI programs in the region.
3. Attend an AGLI presentation.
4. Coordinate an AGLI presentation for your meeting, church, and/or community.
5. Choose a specific AGLI program and actively follow its development.
6. Join an AGLI workcamp or become a short/long term team member in the region.
7. Support AGLI or a particular AGLI program with your tax-deductible donation:

* Mail a check to Friends Peace Teams/
AGLI, 1001 Park Avenue, St Louis, MO
63104 USA

* Make an on-line donation with your credit/
debit card by visiting the AGLI website,
www.aglionline.org

* Become a regular monthly or quarterly
donor. Contact tzarembka@comcast.net for
details.

* Host an AGLI fundraising event.

* Ask your meeting, church, or other
organization to include AGLI in their annual
budget.

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Floribert Mushi is a 36 year old married father of five. He too has adopted a child.



Floribert Mushi

I came from Ngungu in Masisi. Right now I am based at Mugunga internally displaced persons' (IDP) camp. I am a nurse by profession but I used to be a farmer, too. I led a good life in Ngungu. Professionally, I was well paid and my farming was also doing well. I used to

harvest 30 sacks of potatoes, 20 sacks of peas, and 18 sacks of beans which I would sell in Goma. I also had livestock which I used to sell in our local market. But, by the time I fled, I only had 25 sheep which were all eaten by the militias.

I fled in November 2006 with nothing. Life was difficult in the camp; no shelter, no water, no food. We slept outside for 6 months. This situation made me a bitter, unhappy man. I was developing some hatred towards some people and ethnic groups.

In May 2008, I attended the HROC workshop, then AVP, conflict transformation, mediation and I also participated in setting up the peace committee of Mugunga. All these peace teachings have helped me a lot in dealing with day-to-day conflict in the camp. My wife also got a chance of participating in HROC and this helped us manage the trauma in us and in our children.

In March this year, my tent was torched by bad people in the camp and all the belongings perished in the fire. These guys were caught and the camp directing committee was suggesting to delete their names from the list of IDPs but I said, "No, let's settle this by peaceful ways of dialogue".

Now I use these teachings in resolving differences in my family and in the community. We thank you for such teachings for it helps us in difficult situations. Please take these teachings to the people in our villages for they are suffering and are very traumatized. I was there recently and they are undergoing a lot of things. They are in conflict and there is no peaceful cohabitation between the farmers and cattle owners. I strongly believe that they will change like we did in the camp. 🌍

Reconciliation?

By David Zarembka

David Zarembka is the Coordinator of the African Great Lakes Initiative of the Friends Peace Teams and lives in Lumakanda, western Kenya.

Do you really believe that reconciliation is possible between mortal enemies? Is revenge and retaliation a basic human trait that makes true reconciliation remarkably unlikely? Is Nelson Mandela considered an icon because he did not seek revenge against the white apartheid community when he became President of South Africa in 1994?

Venancie Nyirabyimana is a Tutsi survivor of the 1994 Rwanda genocide. In 2007, she attended a Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) workshop sponsored by the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams. Before the workshop she said that she didn't think she could ever forgive the killers. The workshop was also attended by the Hutu man whom she witnessed killing her two brothers with a machete and her younger sister with a spear. He had just been released from prison. On the third day of the workshop, there is a trust walk done in pairs and one person is blindfolded and the other leads the "blind" person around, then they switch places. Here is what Venancie said when she was, by chance, paired up with the man who killed her siblings:

During the trust walk, the person who killed my family was my partner. I was shaking because my partner was a known killer and very strong. I thought he might throw me down. But he also had fear and he took me gently, kindly. I asked, "Will you lead me in peace?" After the trust walk

with him, I felt it was not good to stay in my grief and had no fear against him.

Before the trust walk, Venancie illustrated one the basic attitudes that impedes reconciliation. This is the dichotomous world view of Good versus Evil (which in religious terms is God versus Satan). This leads people to want to adopt the role of the Rescuer who helps the Victim and condemns the Perpetrator. Reconciliation demands that this simplistic worldview be reexamined.

Bethany Mahler attended this workshop and wrote:

When you come from a place of comfort and security, where there was always someone to tuck you in at night, trust is easily built because there is no reason not to trust. In Rwanda, there is every reason not to trust. To behold a shy, widowed woman close her eyes and offer her hand to the man that destroyed her once-happy life was singularly beautiful. This small movement, this slight touch was everything. You imagine there is that kind of strength and benevolence in the world, but you rarely get to witness it. That day in September, I saw a world transformed through the eyes of every Rwandan in that room, a transformation in the richest, most profound sense of the word.

The Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities program (HROC) originated in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide and in Burundi near the end of the civil war. Its purpose was, and

is, to bring together both sides of a terrible tragedy so that the cycle of violence might be broken enabling Hutu and Tutsi to again live together in peace and tranquility. Over time the program has developed these six principles:

1. In every person, there is something that is good.
2. Each person and society has the inner capacity to heal, and an inherent intuition of how to recover from trauma. Sometimes the wounds are so profound that people or communities need support to rediscover that inner capacity.
3. Both victims and perpetrators of violence can experience trauma and its after-effects.
4. Healing from trauma requires that a person's inner good and wisdom is sought and shared with others. It is through this effort that trust can begin to be restored.
5. When violence has been experienced at both a personal level and a community level, efforts to heal and rebuild the country must also happen at both the individual and community level.
6. Healing individuals from trauma and building peace between groups is deeply connected. It is not possible to do one without the other. Therefore, trauma healing and peace building efforts must happen simultaneously.

HROC workshops are three days long with half the participants from

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one side of the divide and the other half from the opposing side. The curriculum was created to introduce participants to the concept of trauma, to build a sense of trust and community within the workshop, to facilitate initial expressions of grief and mourning, and to establish concrete ways to deal with anger. Using Judith Herman's stages of recovery as a conceptual framework, HROC participants are moved through the four stages of 1) Establishing Safety, 2) Remembrance and Mourning, 3) Reconnection with Community, and 4) Finding Commonality. It is a participatory approach which utilizes culturally-appropriate games, song, prayer, and discussions to empower people to find their own meaning within the teachings. Participants are asked about and encouraged to share their experiences, which then become the basis for the learning. It is an environment where there are no wrong answers; where a person's knowledge and opinions are valid and real even if s/he cannot read and write.

But does this work? Here is the testimony of Muhutu Juvenal, a 60 year old Hutu from Burundi:

I was put into prison in 1998 accused of having participated in the killings of Tutsi in my neighborhood. My wife, knowing how false that accusation was, could not resist and got seriously depressed. Up to now, nine years later, she is crazy. I am not sure if she will recover! Though I was waiting for the death penalty, I got released in 2005. Really this was a miracle for me! I could not believe that I was acquitted.

I attended my first HROC workshop in July 2006. This was

my first time to be face to face with Tutsi, after my release from prison. It is true that no Tutsi came to my home and said that I should be arrested again. But inside of me, I kept this grudge in my heart against them. The time we met in HROC workshop, I could not tell you how it came to me to think that we would be arguing over my issue. Contrary, we were led in wonderful discussions where we learned about things that wounded us, shared our burdens, and so on. I discovered that it is when you sit with someone and share with him that you understand that the person is not garbage. Once you have stored sweet words in your heart, they stick there and they help you to eliminate the bitterness. It is amusing to see how people in the community started trusting me. They often come to me asking for advice in the conflicts they may have because they are, for sure, witnesses of the goodness that is within me. They are the first ones to obviously notice the real change that took place in me. I want to keep being the model in my neighborhood. I committed myself in assisting those in conflicts for I know what prison is like and I would never wish that any one else would live what I lived there. It is woeful!

When people see their children fighting with each other because of ethnicity, they begin to think, "When these children grow up, will there be another cycle of violence, worse than the last one?" "Worse than the genocide" is hard for me to imagine. But the next round will not be genocide, rather a mutual slaughter so perhaps it will be much worse. People with this experience realize that reconciliation and return to

normal living with the neighbor (enemy) is essential for long term peace. As Salvator Ndayziga from Burundi says, "We adults ought to find ways to get along together as different ethnicities so that our children would start from there".

Sylvain Toyi, a Hutu from Burundi, makes another point:

Before the workshop, I liked to be alone most of the time. My heart was exhausted from carrying all the bad stuff I had. After the workshop, I remember that is when I slept more deeply than any other single night since 1993.

This is a frequent comment. People who have been carrying around anger, bitterness, hostility, and fear for years talk about how a great load or burden has been lifted off of them when they realize that reconciliation is both possible and necessary. When reconciliation occurs, people report feeling that they have rejoined the human family. Frequently their first step is to stop beating/screaming at their spouse, children, family, and neighbors. It is these who are closest at hand who suffer from the anger and bitterness of those traumatized by events.

However, this reconciliation is not supported by everyone. For example, after one of the HROC workshops in Cyangugu, on the southern edge of Lake Kivu in Rwanda, some participants who wished to reconcile encountered much hostility and resistance from others in their villages. As a result, the Rwandan Government had to supply guards at night to protect Beatrice Mukayiranga, a Tutsi survivor, and Samuel Komezusense, a Hutu perpetrator, who had become reconciled. Theophile Nyirinkindi,

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Reaching a Common Reconciliation

By Adrien Niyongabo

AGLI has been supporting Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) workshops in Burundi since 2002. Mutaho is an up-country community where the HROC program has been very active since the beginning. This is a report about one recent three day workshop which illustrates the effects it can have on people and the community.

A HROC workshop took place on May 13-15, 2008 in Rurengera, Burundi. This workshop featured next door neighbors from the Hutu community mixed with Tutsi who had originally come from that same community but some of whom are now staying in Mutaho IDP camp. 21 participants – 10 men and 11 women – attended with five facilitators conducting the workshop – Joseph Ngendakumana, Sebastien Kambayeko, Dorcas Ndagijimana, Pascasie Nduwimana, and Eraste Ndikumana.

On day one, the participants did not want to express themselves so much and some could not even smile or laugh. As the workshop went on, they started not to fear each other any more and their faces became brighter.

When we entered in the “Loss, Grief and Mourning” session at the beginning of the second day, tough matters came to the surface. We need to remember that all these participants know each other because they belong to the same community even though some are now staying in the IDP camp. In fact, whatever was done or happened to one of them was almost known by everybody. That is why the sharing became so fluid and deep. They mentioned their relatives who got killed, their belongings which got stolen or destroyed in 1993. It was expected that a workshop of this kind would be emotional as folks are gathered

close to where the horrible events took place. Consequently, the facilitators provided needed services for those who struggled with their emotions.

There were two participants, one from the IDP camp – a Tutsi woman – and another from the village – a Hutu man – who conjointly asked for more time to work on the issue that was between them since the 1993 war. Here is their story: When the war started, the Hutu man came to the Tutsi family. He had been sent by a group of other Hutu who were hunting Tutsi to check if there were Tutsi males hiding in the house, especially the brother-in-law of the Tutsi woman. If there were any males found, he was to capture them and take them to the group of Hutu who were killing the Tutsi. So, when he arrived in front of the house, he pushing roughly on the door, his eyes open like a monster. The woman and her kids got terribly frightened. Shocked by the act and trying to protect the kids, the woman took her hoe as a weapon and went to fight against the man. As he was too strong, he took away the hoe and started beating her. Letting her rolling on the ground, he checked in the rooms and nobody else was found. He went back furious!

These were now the two people meeting, after all these years, in the workshop. Well, these two folks asked for a special time and they were taken to another location for more privacy with one of the

facilitators leading the dialogue. They finally succeeded in reaching a common reconciliation. It was with big smiles that they came back to join the group, sharing with the rest of the group that they are healed from carrying such a big burden for years. Then, there was another shivering that occurred in the room when it was revealed that it was Pastor Sebastien (a Tutsi and HROC facilitator) whom the man had been hunting that time and he now was among the facilitators of that workshop!

On the last day of the workshop, participants were more open, joyful, and interactive. They even expressed that they would feel happy to stay for one more day. Below are some of the many quotes from participants.

- *These teachings have helped me so much for I had become careless because of what I lost. I could not undertake any activity that would inquire effort from me for I was saying that there was no need. Since the war took away my dear loved ones, I decided to get drunk every single day. It is painful, I tell you! It is now that I have been in this workshop that I stopped this bad behavior because I understood what was wrong with me. I promise you that I am going back to work instead.*

- *Every single night I came home, my wife and kids had to*

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Reconciliation?

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the local Friend's pastor, reports that it took two or three days after the HROC workshop to negotiate the end of fighting in the community between those supporting and opposing reconciliation.

In the United States, think about the death penalty and its "closure". Think of why millions of people are currently in US prisons. Think of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Think of the ongoing hostility from the time of slavery. Think of the genocide of the Native Americans. In each case, we, as Americans, have not moved beyond the anger, fear, bitterness, and hostility towards a renewed world of reconciliation and tranquility. We have much to learn from the survivors, perpetrators and bystanders of the violence in Rwanda and Burundi.

Note: Most of the examples and quotes in this article come from the African Great Lakes Initiative publication, "Now I Am Human: Testimonies from the Healing Companions Program in Rwanda and Burundi," by Bethany Mahler and Florence Ntakarutimana in Rwanda and Adrien Niyongabo in Burundi. The complete report can be found on the AGLI webpage, www.aglionline.org/publications/articles.htm.

Reaching a Common Reconciliation

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hide themselves. Breaking the pot on fire (before the food would be ready) had become my easy thing to do. You know, I deprived several meals to my family. I am ashamed! It is time for me to change and I am going to do it. I want to be a tree of trust for my family. More, I will tell those with whom I shared beer to stop and plant the tree of trust.

-The time I spent in this workshop will remain unforgettable for me. Those I used to fear have been the ones I talked to, shared food with and, at the end, we were good friends. It is possible to rebuild again our neighborhood as people who remained in the village and those who are in the IDP camp.

-The example from our two friends touched my soul so deeply that I feel I want to put

forth my own story, too. When the war was hot and we were fleeing in the bushes, a Hutu woman told me: "Why are you still tying that evil child on your back?" Meaning that the child is evil because I am a Hutu and my husband is Tutsi and therefore the child is considered a Tutsi. "Take him down and throw him away!" Did she forget that he was my child? Did she mean that my loving husband was evil? Since that time, I decided not to be with that woman and had been holding such hatred and anger against her. But, this workshop taught me how to let it go. I want to meet with the woman and tell her how what she said wounded me and that I have been able to forgive.

We closed the workshop with a request from participants to be invited again. It was also asked that many workshops would be conducted for more people of Rurengera. 🌍

AGLI Team Members

Working Group, USA

Laura Shipler Chico, Anna Crumley-Effinger, Rosalie Dance (recording clerk), Rachel Fretz (clerk), Rachel Madenyika, Adrien Niyongabo, Sue Nowelsky, Tom Paxson (treasurer), Mumia Shimaka.

Staff:

Dawn Rubbert (program manager), Kathy Wright, SL (FPT administrative coordinator),

Tommy Zarembka (fundraiser/publicist), David Zarembka (coordinator)

Burundi:

Alexandra Douglas, Marcelline Girukwishaka, Adrien Niyongabo, Alexia Nibona, Florence Ntakarutimana, Desire Nzeyimana

Kenya:

Getry Agizah, Janet Ifedha, Gladys Kamonya, Malesi Kinaro, Dorcas Nyambura, Eunice

Okwemba, Bernard Onjala, Peter Serete, Joseph Shamala

North Kivu, Congo:

Zawadi Nikuze

Rwanda:

David Bucura, Josephine Mukangoga

Uganda:

Hellen Kabuni, George Kutosi, Barbara Wybar

“ I have made many new friends and old ones have come out of the
woodwork to support me. Now my task is to see that
what I have begun goes on long after me. ”

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out for me: McGill University, graduate school, marriage, children, then no marriage, and fulfilling work as a teacher. Then came volunteering in Bududa with AGLI, then Africa full time.

I think I like it because it is a challenge. How do you help people with so many difficulties, usually revolving around money, health, food, education, crime, promiscuous sexual activity that leads to pregnancy or AIDS?

In the two programs that I oversee, I have met with so many heart rending problems, it is sometimes hard to focus on anything else. Here are a few of the children who are on the front burner at the moment.

One Saturday not too long ago, 12 year old Ivan was not with his class. He said he was sick and so I left him to wait to see the medical officer. He never did, but one of the fine teachers reminded me that he was not well. We talked to him and I saw silent, embarrassed tears flowing as he tried to look at his belly button. He said his mum had gone to Kenya and he was living with a stepmum and he did not have enough to eat. Sure enough, under his jacket he was skin and bones. He was starving and he had so many jiggers in his feet he could hardly walk. My friends at the guest house worked for two hours to remove the jiggers and I fed him everything I could. Then the program kicked in and we attempted to get his full family involved in rectifying the situation.

Here is another example: Four lovely orphans' (orphans in Africa

are children with one or less parents) mother died suddenly at Christmas time and they are left with a very seriously alcoholic father, who turns into a thief when he drinks. The two older children, twins aged 13, were in the Children of Peace program before Mum died and then when I returned after Christmas we added Simon (age 5) and Sylvia (age 7) to the program. There is also Cyrus who is 2 years old, but we have no facilities to handle him. We have hired a local woman to care for the kids and do their washing, and we give her food to feed them and soap, but the system does not work perfectly. Dad gets drunk and sells off the provisions we have given. The local woman gets sick, at times, and needs money herself. The oldest girl, aged 13, wrangles with her hopeless father and he threatens to marry her off so he can get a bride price for her. It takes constant monitoring to oversee this family.

Bududa Vocational Institute is not without its own set of harrowing stories of problems and here is one about Margaret, a mature student we sponsor. I think this one tells best what we are trying to do and how sponsors' money is spent. In November, the headmaster of the school and I walked the hillsides surrounding Bududa and spoke to as many people as possible to recruit new students to enroll in the Bududa Vocational Institute for the new school year. On the way down, it began to rain hard. We took shelter in a peasant's home and waited for the rain to stop. It took an hour. We sat with Margaret, a woman of about 50 years with a sad expression on her face that spoke of one who is resigned to her lot. After a while,

the headmaster began to get Margaret's story. She had five children and they had been in private schools when her husband decided to take up with a much younger woman, had two children with her and built her a house just across the clearing. Margaret has to look out her door everyday and watch this as she and her children are ignored and the children, had, unfortunately been pulled out of school as there was no money.

We suggested to Margaret that she come to our school and learn a trade. She came the next day walking for four miles barefoot in her best dress. She comes everyday to learn to be a tailor. We have made her a uniform and she wears it with pride. Best of all, her teachers tell us that she is a very good student and, although she has not been educated beyond Primary Seven, she tries hard and is able to do the calculations for garment cutting. Now Margaret can be seen with a smile on her face and it comes easily which makes me happy.

I am not sure that I have explained adequately why this work that I am doing in remote Uganda is such a good fit, but I know in every fiber of my being that it is and that I am helping in some small way. I feel a sense of purpose. I have made many new friends and old ones have come out of the woodwork to support me. Now my task is to see that what I have begun goes on long after me: My goals are to register the school, to see that it is well established and that it runs as any fine North American institute and then to find big foundations to permanently fund the school. 



(Author, Dorcas Nyambura [on the right] with Lucy Njambi, in a head scarf).

We are very busy putting mud on the walls. This was my first experience in building a house, let alone put mud on the wall of any house. The participants were very happy to see me back so soon and helping them in rebuilding their neighbors' house.

WELCOME BACK!

By Dorcas Nyambura, Kenyan HROC facilitator

Supported by Chace Funds of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the Healing and Rebuilding Our Community(HROC) program in Kenya has conducted 25 workshops. One of these was in a community called Majitamu (meaning "sweet water"). This area is in the middle of the Rift Valley where local Kalenjin and Masai people and the Kikuyu people who had moved into area had severe conflict, with the Kikuyu fleeing during the unrest. This is a prime example of concrete (or at least "muddy") effectiveness of a workshop as the HROC participants agreed to rebuild three houses that had been destroyed during the conflict so that the Kikuyu could move back into the community.

This mini work camp was decided upon during the HROC basic workshop that was held in the area on 10-12 August 2009. On the first day of the workshop, most of the participants from the Kalenjin community gave their expectation was to have all their neighbors who had run away during the post elections violence return home. They stated they were ready to welcome them back. On the last day after Mr. Francis, a Masai man, stood up and said that they are ready to welcome all who had fled the area. He was very remorseful and he reminiscenced about the good neighbors they had and how they lived in peace with one another. He also said that the area had never had any tribal conflict even when other areas in the country

experienced the same during earlier elections. He appealed to members of his community not to ever do what they did again. Then, Mrs. Lucy Njambi, a Kikuyu, who fled from the area to the Internally Displaced Persons camp, stood up and said, "I am willing to come back, but I have no where to come back to. My house was burnt and all my property stolen." There was a heated debate and then people began to pledge what materials they could give in the shortest possible time. They were able to get iron sheets, posts, and nails to build three small mud and wattle houses. August 22nd was the date set for when they will all come together and help to rebuild Jambi's house and two others. On this day I was there to help out and see if they were

going to live up to their word. When I got there at the time they had agreed upon, I was shocked to see all the three houses - Jambi's and two others - standing waiting to be *bomwad*, (to put mud in the walls). They had already fixed the posts and the iron sheets to all the three houses.

The day that everyone had waited for had finally arrived and people arrived in Majitamu in time to start the day's work. I had heard that the men had come very early. Almost all the participants in our last HROC workshop were present and those who could not make it sent their spouses or children. All tribes were represented.

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