

Rwanda Diaries



VISIT TO WIDOWS GROUPS

Saturday 14th April: We set off around 9am after breakfast for Bugusera – first stop was the community centre where 3 groups of widows meet for fellowship, support and prayer. The widows 80 – 100 and some men are seated on benches waiting patiently for us. We have to distribute 60 or so goats, which have been purchased with funds, raised back home in Scotland. Somehow we find ourselves moving along rows, the women rising one by one, beaming, and enveloping us again and again in warm, engulfing hugs. Such love – from women who have known such brokenness and have themselves lost the love of their lives – their life partners – in such horrific and unspeakable circumstances. We are introduced to GRAZIA MUKACYIGEE and SPEZIOSO MUKANDORE, leaders of two of the three groups of widows. Jean Gakwandi introduced the team and explains what we are doing in Rwanda.

Maria a spokeswoman for the group, thanked us and said “*We have no way to repay you but we can do one thing – we can pray for you- as we know you will be praying for us*”. Eventually we all headed outside where the goats were milling around. The team were to hand out the goats to the ladies. First task to catch a goat! And take it to its new proud owner. Some goats came more willingly than others! Eventually all the goats were all teamed up with their respective owners and after saying farewell to those lovely people, we headed off for our next adventure – having received so much from those who have so little of this worlds goods and yet brim over with the love of Jesus. Our meeting has enriched us with these folks, and we are humbled by their grace and love. **By Anne Reid**

STREET KIDS RESCUE PROJECT

Every day we arrived at 10am at the Elgise Vivante to a sea of excited children, eager to see what we were pulling out of the van for them to play with. It was easy to identify the street kids as the church had supplied them with smart maroon T-shirt's to wear. Ten volunteers who work with the project twice a week joined the team. Each volunteer had 10 children under their guidance. We had a mixture of activities: Played games, shared teachings from the bible, puppets, and arts and crafts and prayed with them. The kids responded positively to all and seemed to have fun! We were able to take the kids down to a nearby field. This was excellent as they were able to run around in a wide- open space. One funny memory I have is trying to teach the kids how to play rounders. It took a while for the interpretation to get through, but once they got it, they were off. At one point I looked across the field and was so pleased to see kids running, laughing and having fun. A number of kids were keen to share their stories. One by one they came up to tell of the transformation that's taken place in their life. Disturbing and sad stories of how they were forced to leave their homes through poverty, abuse or because their parents had died. They spoke of how they survived on the streets with practically nothing - raiding bins to find coal to sell. It struck me, when listening to these kids that each and every one of them has a story to tell. They are not ordinary teenagers, but young people who had already experienced so much pain and grief in their lives. They have been forced to survive on their own and excluded from the community and from having a life! The street kids have renamed themselves “*Friends of Jesus*”. It was clear to see when they worshipped that their lives have been renewed and now they have hope. The volunteers have a passion for young people and are keen to be good mentors to them. Paul has many plans for the street kids project. One is to build a bakery in order to teach the kids news skills that they could use to earn some money. He also intends to build more bunk beds in the back for the kids to sleep on. The **GOOD** unexpected happened throughout our time Rwanda and especially with the kids work. One thing I didn't expect was to feel so close to the kids and people in the church in such a short space of time, it was amazing and precious - I know we were all very sad to say goodbye : **By Claire Higgins**



Evening Meetings

When you think of this church, picture a large hanger, surrounded by African mud houses and covered with a corrugated iron roof which made the place bake in the heat and reverberate with deafening noise when it rained. When it rained very hard, which it did at times, it also *let in* the rain! However that is only the externals! As its name suggests, the people (who are the church) were warm, generous, with an amazing sense of musicality and rhythm. Pastor Paul, as he was always referred to, decided that whilst the team was there he would also make use of us by laying on meetings on four of the evenings for the ‘youth’ from their church and sister churches in Rwanda. This was apart from the two Sunday meetings in which we took part. So each day, from about 4pm (Africans are never too exact about time), their place was filled with about 300 young people - singing, clapping, and dancing to the sound of high velocity, high rhythm praise to God. Callum, Chic and I were privileged to preach at these meetings – sometimes one after the other! I majored on the ‘Fatherhood of God’ on the Sunday, and we amplified this theme into other areas of the Christian life during the week. What was most moving about these meetings was to realise that many of these young people (now in their mid-twenties), singing and dancing to the Lord, were orphans or survivors in some way of the Genocide. Not only did we preach – we befriended and prayed for our Rwandan brothers and sisters. We even sang to them! God was among us in the midst of suffering. What a privilege to be there.

By Alistair Macindoe

Visit to Bugesera Project

The project at Bugesera continues to be very exciting and encouraging and was visited by Archie and Morag Bathgate and Joe McCall of the fundraising group. In the last few months further fields have been cleared and planted with pineapples, groundnuts and fruit trees. The combination of those fields with those already planted with bananas will provide both food crops and cash crops (which will be sold to provide income for the orphans and widows community). The goats given out in April will greatly raise the yield through the manure as well as be a further source of income through the sale of kids.

Further land is under negotiation for purchase and, God willing, will be used to dig the well as it is nearer the water table. The cattle stall and cattle will then have a source of water and fodder crops.

The local authorities have given a large parcel of land to Solace – sadly left empty after the genocide. This land has room for twenty houses and we believe God that all those twenty houses will be built and provide a home and community for survivors at present homeless. Solace have asked to call the village “Comfort Rwanda Village”. Archie, Morag and Joe were at the laying of the foundation stone in April and the whole group are continuing to work hard on behalf of the widows and orphans of Bugesera with all kinds of amazing fundraising ventures! Another house has now been built separately from the village as emergency accommodation for Chantal, whose story will be put on the website.

The project is also providing support for education fees for primary, secondary and university education. A number of orphans are now being supported in this way and are looking forward to a future of hope.



*Susan,
Chantal, &
Marion*



Pineapples



Building a House for Chantal