

FIELD REPORT FILED BY LAURIE LEITCH OCTOBER 17, 2007

Hello from Rwanda,
I'm grabbing a few minutes while the car is being loaded with luggage...we're here in Kibuye...a lakeside town. We spent so long at the orphanage this morning, so ended up driving on the twisty, mountainous roads for 2 hours after dark. Then some rain helped complete the delight!

In our headlights we could see people walking along the road in the dark (there is no electricity along the road and in the villages), heads piled high with sweet potatoes, carrying their hoes...in the chilly damp night air. Little children walking alone carrying large water jugs on their heads and shoulders. These people work so hard...just getting the day's water requires half a day or more plus endless reserves of strength. Many of the children don't go to school, due to lack of money for a school uniform and being needed for farming and water chores. The cost of a uniform is \$6 but the per capita income here is \$205 so that \$6 is out of reach for so many people...the cost of 2 lattes from Starbucks. It is a stark reminder of the disparities in our world. It is hard to understand why we have so much trouble raising money to support this work when in the US we all have such abundance.

Had a slightly harrowing experience as we arrived in town about 7pm. Charles went up a one way dirt lane the wrong way and later as we were still driving around trying to find the guesthouse the police stopped us...a very stern guy. We were right outside a little bar full of drunken men...one of whom came to the window and tried to talk the cop out of whatever he had in mind to do. I wasn't too worried at first...but then the time went on and on that he was keeping Charles' ID and other info. Thank goodness Charles knows people everywhere and one happened to be the chief of police...so he called that man who, thankfully, came roaring up in a cloud of dust to help the Mesungus (white folk) and their driver.

Yesterday we went to the orphanage...way, way into the interior countryside. We passed many little villages...mud brick houses, no glass in the windows, the fortunate ones with a goat in the yard. As we'd fly by the children would all run, waving, screaming "musungus, musungus!!!!" We were surrounded by more than a hundred kids at the orphanage...all ages...we saw the woodworking project and the sewing project (the girls make school uniforms). Oddly, there is a small jail full of pink-dressed genocidaires right next to the orphanage. I hope we will be able to come back and do some work with the children.

Met briefly with Father Emmanuel in Butare. He wants us to do a workshop for his nuns so they can better help their community. We told him we would be back in February. A big part of this trip is meeting with groups to lay the groundwork for future work.

Relationships are incredibly important and we must all get to know each other to build trust and orient ourselves to the particular needs of the various groups. and the extent to which what we have to offer fits their needs.

Late afternoon we went to the Genocide memorial at the Murambi Technical School. Very challenging to bear witness there...there are 26 rooms filled with bodies

preserved in lime. So the expressions are still on faces, the death postures are graphic, a mother with a baby clutched to her chest, an entire room full of children, hair still on many heads. Such stark tragedy and juxtaposed with the most beautiful, serene countryside. The chills didn't stop going up and down my back for 2 hours.

Time to climb into the car...we are packed like sardines...but appreciate all the comforts we have.

FIELD REPORT FILED BY LAURIE LEITCH FROM RWANDA 10-13-07

Greetings from Rwanda...muraho (hello),
It is a huge challenge to find working internet here...so today we found one and here I am to tell you more about our work here in Rwanda.

On Wednesday 10/10 we went to the Kigali prison. What an experience to go through the guards with their machete guns, be led by the prison social worker followed by about 100 family members and/or friends of prisoners carrying boxes, bags of food, and other items on their heads to give to the prisoners. Official visiting day is Wednesday....a whistle blows and about 50 prisoners at a time rush out (dressed in pink uniforms...unless they have already been sentenced, in which case they are wearing an orange uniform) and sit on a long row of benches. A second whistle blows and a rush of family members comes running to find their particular prisoner and sits on a bench facing the prisoner. Each group of visitors has about 7 minutes so the talk is fast...with laughter and hugging. When the women prisoners come out the level and volume of talk increases dramatically. This happens right outside the main prison building.

We have been scheduled to meet with a group of about 25 prisoners...selected by the Director of the prison. But, as soon often is the case in this kind of work...the prisoners were given no choice about coming to the group...so we tossed out our first plan of work and heard from them about their frustrations, about the different groups in the prison (for example, genocide planners are incarcerated along with those who have committed "lesser" crimes during the genocide). There are clearly tensions between the groups...and we decide that meeting with individuals and small groups who trust each other.

We work in pairs with the men. Their stories are very compelling and it is hard to keep remembering that these are people who murdered many neighbors in their communities. Their humanity is very evident to each of us.

We also attend a prison fellowship gathering inside the prisons where we address a group of 400 prisoners...men, women, and a few babies (even the babies are dressed in pink). They sing and dance and we join in the dancing to the hilarity of the prisoners. I sit with the women prisoners and hold one baby girl...I turn her body to face the choir so my white skin doesn't frighten her.

Our time at the prison (one full day) is very help-ful in planning a more extended project for prisoners and trauma.

The past 2 days we have presented a TFA workshop to 25 counselors and peer support staff of 4-5 survivor organizations. Talk about learning!!! I'm sure we learned more than the participants, although participants were very enthusiastic and said they wanted more time. As you can imagine, the case discussions were challenging and often gruesome. These

dedicated workers are faced on a daily basis with the aftermath of horrendous trauma. They are a creative and skillful group of practitioners.

There are many ways our model needs revisin in non-industrialized countries and in working with human-tohuman inflicted catastrophic trauma like genocide and trauma. Our team of 4 kept modifying and simplifying on-the-spot...and I believe we did an "acceptable" job...and I know we will do bettere the next time, based on all we have learned from the attendees.

Tomorrow we leave Kigali for Butare in the south. We will go to Mayaga orphanage on the way as well as another genocide memorial at the Murambi Technical School. Then, on to Kibuye and eventually to Gisenyi on Lake Kivu. There is so much to tell and not enough time to tell it right now. I hope this begins to give you a feel for our work here thus far.

I'll end with a quote from a genocide memoriaql here in Kigal:

"If you must remember, remember this...
the Natzis did not kill 6 million Jews...
nor the Interahamwe kill a million Tutsis.
They killed one, and the another...
Genocide is not a single act of murder.
It is millions of acts of murder."

by S. Smith Aegis Trust, 2004

Sending love to each. Count your blessings every day. Laurie and the rest of our team:
Larry Shaw, Karen Froming, and Amanda Gregory

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Greetings form Kigali, Rwanda!

It is Tuesday noonish here....we have been working hard...getting ready for the first training on Thursday (re-writing some material to simplify, eliminating slides, etc.). There are at least 4 survivor groups coming to the workshop. We went to the main office of We Actx (the sponsor), a center for women raped during the genocide and many with AIDS now. What a great organization! They have programs for men, women, and children. I only hope what we have to offer is helpful to them.

Yesterday we met with the Prison Fellowship...a very nice priest and social worker. They are excited that we will do 4 small groups tomorrow at the prison...two with prisoners who have admitted guilt and 2 with those who haven't. We'll also do individual interviews as well as collect assessment data. We are meeting with the Minister of Prisons in the early morning to plead our case to be able to videotape. They want us to come back in February with some kind of program designed to help the prisoners...so we are going to tell him that reviewing the tape will help us in the program design.

People are very curious at us...most look quite stern initially but can smile a bit if I smile at them. I think there must be a level of human distrust that has permeated their cells. We see people with missing limbs, hacked scars on their bodies. I mentally subtract 14 years from the imagined age of anyone I see to see how old they were when the genocide happened. No one was untouched as you can imagine.

The genocide memorial in Kigali is a beautifully and respectfully designed building...much like the DC holocaust museum only smaller....skulls, bones, clothes, and many photos. Then, outside, 3 mass grave each with 100,000 people or parts of people who died just in Kigali alone.

We will go to 3 more memorials over the course of the trip...more grim than the one in Kigali. One has the bodies still on the floor just as they died...with lime poured over them to stop total decay.

We'll remain here in Kigali until Sunday, then go south to Butare where we have a meeting at the university. It is about a 3 hour drive. I look forward to seeing the more rural areas of the country. Rwanda is about the size of Maryland. As I said before I left we won't go into Congo due to the instability there...but we will go to the border town (which is safe) and the Congolese will come to meet with us about designing a mental health clinic.

I believe that this trip will lead to more TFA work for us...hopefully in February when we return for the FGM work in Kenya.

Laurie Leitch, Director of Development & Evaluation

THE EFFECT OF THE GENOCIDE ON SURVIVORS

by Dr Peter Hall excerpted from: Doctors for Human Rights website

It is difficult to envisage a more terrible and frightening experience than being a Tutsi in Rwanda between April and the end of July 1994. But it may be wrong to see the psychological stress of the genocide as a discrete episode. The distress that the survivors suffered and in many cases continue to suffer both preceded and followed the genocide. The intimidation of Tutsis started long before the Habyarimana plane crash. Leading up to the slaughter there had been a sequential ratcheting up of ethnic antipathy in a country where the killings of Tutsi men, women, and children carried out in 1963-64 matched the brutality and horror of the 1994 genocide. Bertrand Russell, the most famous pacifist of his day, called it then "the most horrible and systematic human massacre we have had occasion to witness since the extermination of the Jews by the Nazi." Nor does the ending of the conflict resolve many psychosocial factors that conspire to delay full resolution of any symptoms - full recovery may rely upon the reconstruction of social and economic network, cultural institutions, and justice.

The main factors contributing to psychological stress in the survivors are, in three parts, intimidation before genocide, suffering during the genocide, and suffering after the genocide

INTIMIDATION BEFORE GENOCIDE

- the ethnically targeted killings and political murders in the years before the genocide, such as the massacre at Bugesera
- belonging to a well defined, disdained and discriminated against minority group
- the ongoing requirements of employment quotas - the so called ethnic balance
- the easy accessibility to the ethnic identification section of the identity card - you could not disguise your ethnicity
- the demonisation of the RPF and Tutsis in general, especially through radio propaganda via RTLM and newspapers

SUFFERING DURING GENOCIDE

- the horror of witnessing the deaths of friends, relatives and loved ones,

- especially children
- the fear and expectation of probably being murdered and of loved ones, especially children, suffering in the same way
- the terrible brutality of the methods of murder
- bereavement
- the intimacy of the relationships between victim and perpetrator
- the scale of the killings
- the inability to grieve properly for dead relatives because there was no time or opportunity
- the inability to properly bury their murdered relatives in a culture where burial ceremonies are important
- the inability to find any identifiable body of a murdered relative
- the threat that the targeting of the whole of a population to which a person belongs represents to individuals within that population
- the hopelessness of the predicament - it must have seemed that death was inevitable and that nothing could be done to avoid it
- the absence of loved ones to provide support
- the loss of sanctuary traditionally provided by the church
- the abandonment by the international community, the sense of not mattering to the rest of the world

SUFFERING AFTER THE GENOCIDE

- continuing bereavement - the loss through death of a loved one, especially if sudden or violent is one of the most severe psychological stresses an individual can undergo. Vulnerable people are at risk of developing psychiatric problems and almost any psychiatric disorder can be precipitated by bereavement.
- anxiety about missing relatives and the absence of news (are the dead, are they injured?)
- the loss in confidence in human beings in general and particular social pillars such as priests, doctors, nurses and teachers - the professions were well represented amongst killers
- the loss of identity that results from the loss of and breakdown of previous social networks.

- by the poverty of existence - many survivors experience a sharp drop in social circumstance
- the lack of basic necessities
- the absence of counseling
- the response to the Rwandese predicament by the world
- any social stigma associated with wooded, being raped, having children outside marriage,
- being dependent on others
- the uncertain future in personal terms
- the actuality or prospect of living cheek by jowl with perpetrators
- the threat posed by living among people who have murdered
- the uncertainty that justice will be meted out
- the threat posed by the polarisation of society
- the possible loss of religious conviction
- typical Rwandese stoicism inhibits demonstrativeness