



Rwanda – Voices of Hope

by Michael Grosspietsch

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Editorial

This past Tuesday, I became a witness to an extraordinary act of reconciliation, cultural understanding and peace: As a highlight of the very first official Millennium Village Tour, our group of visitors was invited to join a traditional local community party called *ubusabane*. Together with several hundred villagers, we celebrated an hour of cultural exchange and being together in an exceptional settlement that is part of the Rwandan Millennium Village of Mayange in Bugesera District. In this particular setting, both survivors and perpetrators of the genocide live and work with each other.

To demonstrate the success of this concept, two men gave a public testimony of their past experiences, and their stories were translated by our guide. The first was a survivor who had lost his entire family during the atrocities of 1994. His words were extremely sad, but there was also an unmistakable amount of hope in his voice. Then, it was the second man's turn. We were shocked to hear him speak of having killed six relatives of the man standing next to him. He tried to provide explanations but admitted that he also had difficulties to understand his own actions. He has spent almost ten years in prison and feared for his life when he was released, not being able to believe that he could ever be forgiven.

Today, the two men live next to each other and care for each other. The survivor told us that after a long struggle he was able to forgive the killer of his relatives, and they are now able to pay respect to each other again.



The Millennium Village Tour is Rwanda's newest and most intellectually challenging tourism product. Developed by New Dawn Associates Ltd (NDA) in cooperation with the Millennium Villages Project, UNDP, Columbia University and the local government, the one-day excursion provides practical answers to the question how villages in a country like Rwanda can overcome their immense development challenges.

It focuses entirely on the successful project interventions that aim at achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals within a period of only five years.

Most importantly, the interventions are presented by the locals themselves, and the project has created over 250 micro-enterprise opportunities in community-based tourism in the Mayange area. The first tour has generated more than \$500 of direct income to the villagers. Interventions focus, among others, on agriculture, health, education, infrastructure, energy, environmental protection, micro-enterprise development, and community mobilization. All of these are explained to the visitors in a hands-on way. Additionally, cultural activities like the *ubusabane* with traditional dancing and an introduction to the Rwandan cuisine complement the fascinating experience.

This way, the new Tour demonstrates how educational tourism can become a main driver of economic development, poverty reduction, cultural exchange and reconciliation in Rwanda. More information about the Millennium Villages Project is available at www.unmillenniumproject.org/mv/index.htm as well as www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/mvp. To learn about the Millennium Village Tour, contact me at michael@newdawnassociates.com. Happy reading!

Kwita Izina – Gorilla Naming and Fundraising Ceremony

(ORTPN press release)

On Friday, April 27, 2007, the Rwanda Office of Tourism and National Parks (ORTPN) unveiled *Kwita Izina* as the new brand name for its annual gorilla naming event. The ceremony of giving a name to a new born baby commonly known as “Kwita Izina” has been part of the Rwandan tradition for centuries. This ceremony has also been used for the past two decades to give names to new born gorillas.

As a means of raising awareness at the national and international level about the protection of the mountain gorillas and their habitat, ORTPN launched the annual gorilla naming ceremony in 2005. The themes of the previous ceremonies were “Ensure the future of the mountain gorillas of Rwanda” in 2005 and “Recognize the role of the international tourists who selected Rwanda as destination” in 2006. 30 and 12 mountain gorillas were named respectively.



On Saturday, June 30, 2007, ORTPN will be hosting the Third Annual Kwita Izina Ceremony. At this event, names will be given to 23 mountain gorillas at the Volcanoes National Park. The theme for this year is “Caring for wildlife concerns us all”.

Under this theme, we shall celebrate the efforts of all those that have contributed to the wildlife welfare and its conservation. We are expecting over 100 key personalities in wildlife conservation and business to attend the event.

The Gorilla Naming campaign is aimed at ensuring the future of Rwanda’s mountain gorillas and will provide an opportunity for all those who care about the mountain gorillas to contribute to this common effort. Two different but complementary activities are planned for the event: the naming ceremony where selected people will be given the opportunity to name the gorillas in

public, as well as a fundraising gala dinner that will help to raise funds towards conservation of this endangered species.

For further details about the adoption opportunities or the fundraising dinner, please check our website on www.rwandatourism.com or write to info@rwandatourism.com.

Urukundo Home for Children

A few weeks ago, I got to know an extraordinary lady. Arlene Brown is 76, but she is one of the most agile and driven persons I have ever met. She runs an amazing home for children and has recently also opened a small guesthouse in Gitarama. The benefits are used for her many projects. The following is her own story:

When I began this ministry in 1996, I was asked “What is a 65 year old woman doing in Africa?” What can one person do? I was not sure then, but I came. Let me share with you what I have discovered. Age has nothing to do with it when “God is in charge”. He can use the ordinary person to accomplish awesome things:

I have a home for children in Gitarama. Its name is Urukundo – “love”. I have the greatest bunch of kids you would ever want to meet. They are beautiful. There are 12 girls and one of them is a neighborhood girl my girls have adopted. Her name is Dada and she is special, but of course all God’s children are special. Our home started as a home for girls but, in May of this year, an annex became available and 10 boys became a part of our family. We really are a family. I love these kids and they are my own.



Only Rwandans are employed at our homes, thus helping them to help their families. We purchase from local businesses and use local craftsmen. In this way, we help the economy. Striving to make life better for the future leaders of Rwanda is no small challenge. One of our girls has a great ambition. She has stated that she will be the first woman president in Rwanda. Hey, all things are possible.

Oh don’t think for one minute Urukundo begins and ends with the home for children in Gitarama. The ministry started small and by many standards may still be small. But the HIV/AIDS group that received 23 goats to start a self support system thinks differently. We are devoted to keeping Rwandese families together and to helping small groups to start businesses like bee hives, such as genocide widows caring for orphaned children. Honey is a great business and these women are working together to make it a success. To date we have started 5 groups of widows with small children and orphans, with goats, bee hives and scholarships for the children.

There are over 200 children going to school because scholarships to cover school fees, uniforms, back packs, jackets and sport shoes were given to them. These are kids who would have no chance for an education. We are sending a young woman to Butare University and helping a genocide orphan with lodging so that he can go to school in Kigali. Some day, he will be a first rate lawyer.

Urukundo foundation has supplied a cow to a home for street boys and grass seeds to plant a field so they can feed the cow. We do try to help special circumstances, one of those being a

mother with 8 children already giving birth to triplets. Her need was simple – she needed milk. One mom can't nurse 3 babies and keep them alive. Those babies are alive and well with milk supplied by this ministry.

The local hospital also is on our books. There are many in the hospital who do not have family to bring them food, and so \$100 a month goes from our fund to theirs to supply food. It is not enough but it helps. Contributing to the community project for water helped us to become involved and makes us a part of the community. Our children attend public school with neighborhood children. Our ministry even reaches out to the local prison and helps a poor family feed their dad.

Arlene can be contacted at 08769422 and arlene@spiritworks.org. Her little **guesthouse** is very welcoming and clean, and the chef is excellent. I can definitely recommend a stopover or overnight stay. There is sleeping space for 13 people, and rooms range between \$10 and \$20. Directions: "The guesthouse is easy to find. It is one street above the through street to Butare. Signs are posted at each end of the street. Take the first right off the main through road and the sign is then at the first left. It is just a short distance with another sign on the gate post. We are known so don't be afraid to ask for directions."



Friends of Rwandan Rugby

by Emma Rees (emmareesus@yahoo.com)

I taught rugby to my students, whilst teaching English with VSO in Rwanda. Those students have continued to play where possible, and have gone on to establish and coach teams throughout the country. We would like to further develop the existing coaching structure with coaching and refereeing workshops, and to initiate a new group of passionate rugby people to include youth, women, coaches and referees.

Our 3-month plan (April to July 2007):

- To visit and develop rugby teams for young men and women in Rwandan schools and youth groups outside of Kigali.
- To identify and train potential coaches and referees from these schools or groups (student or teacher).
- To hold a male and female tournament for newly trained rural teams in Kigali to raise awareness and promote youth rugby in Rwanda.
- To identify 12 young men under the age of 14 to participate on a rugby tour to the UK in September 2007 (in conjunction with Tour Aid).

Anyone interested in assisting us would be welcomed. Our contacts:

info@friendsofrwandanrugby.org; www.friendsofrwandanrugby.org

Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW)

The Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW) was founded in July 2006 by a group of university women graduates living in Rwanda. The organisation was introduced by Dr Shirley Randell, Senior Gender Adviser of SNV Rwanda, and its establishment was supported by MIGEPROF, UNIFEM, FAWE and university women's associations at NUR, KIST, KIE and KHI.

RAUW is a non-governmental organisation of women who have earned educational qualifications beyond the secondary school level. It is affiliated with the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), which has associations in 81 countries around the world, and the African Federation of University Women (AFUW) which is an umbrella organisation for the associations in African countries. Its membership has grown to 167 in the last seven months and it has a target of 300 members by the end of 2007. Members include Ministers, MPs, academics, accountants, administrators, business women, communication personnel, development specialists, educators, engineers, lawyers, medical and health professionals, public servants and scientists. While the great majority of members are Rwandese, others include residents from Australia, the UK, the US, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Russia, Germany and the Netherlands.

The goal of RAUW is to promote the quality of life of women and girls in Rwanda. Its commitments are to:

- Further the development of education for women and promote lifelong learning,
- Improve the status of women and girls,
- Promote the economic empowerment of women,
- Protect human rights, and
- Promote peace.

Some of the regular activities include monthly Council meetings, public forums on women and gender based violence, public lectures, and reports of members' learning from attending overseas conferences and training experiences. RAUW has also received a grant from the Rhodes Scholars Southern African Forum to sponsor the education of ten girl orphans who are heading families to continue their schooling. Other project applications are in the pipeline.

Full membership of RAUW is based on a degree or equivalent from a recognised university or institution of comparable academic standing. The annual subscription fee is FRw 10,000. Associate and student membership is based on qualifications towards a degree from a recognised tertiary institution and the annual fee is FRw 5,000.

Membership provides the following opportunities: To apply for international fellowships and grants; to receive sponsorship and support for further studies; to be part of a global network of women with a common purpose, to develop knowledge of national, regional and international issues from a specialized women's perspective, to obtain leadership training and experience, and to benefit from international friendship and hospitality.

Contacts:

Joy Mukanyanga (kanyangej2000@yahoo.com), Violet Kabarenzi (vkabarenzi@yahoo.com), Shirley Randell (srandell@snvworld.org)

FAWE Girls' School – the Centre of Excellence for girls

by Sarah Ingabire (fawegirls1@yahoo.com)

FAWE Girls' School, the "Centre of Excellence for Girls", is a public secondary school located in Gisozi, Gasabo District in Kigali city. The FAWE Rwanda Chapter founded it in 1999 in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Its main goal is to promote girls education at secondary school level by:

- Increasing the number of school places for girls,
- Reducing social and domestic problems that girls face,

- Providing a conducive, gender-sensitive learning environment for girls, especially in sciences and math, as well as
- Empowering girls to demonstrate their academic capabilities.

Today, the school has 720 girls from form one to form six (grades 7-12) and 33 teachers. The physical facility has grown from 1 classroom in 1999 to 18 in 2006. There are now 14 dormitories, 2 science labs and a computer lab with around 40 computers. There are sports facilities, a sick-bay, and housing for six teaching and management staff. Classes are taught in both French and English.



Promotion of Science learning and information technologies:

Historically, girls in Rwanda lag far behind compared to boys in enrolment, participation and performance in science, mathematics and technology subjects. There are many reasons, among them reluctance on the part of the authorities to build laboratories in girls' schools because "hard sciences are not for girls". As a response, a computer center with Internet connectivity was opened at the school to encourage access to new information technology. All the girls now have some exposure to computer use. Many can use the Internet for communication and academic purposes.

Exhibition: "Rwanda – the road to recovery"

by rYico (ryico2003@yahoo.co.uk)

July 4 marks the end of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. For Rwandans this date represents the return of Imana, their God of life and protector whom many believe was temporarily absent during the horrific three month long genocide of 1994. As a nation, this date marks the beginning of the road to recovery.

Rwanda is slowly reclaiming its popular name, the Land of a Thousand Hills. Its unique landscape, valleys, and temperate climate are attracting increasing numbers of visitors to a country that remains proud of its people, culture and achievements. Today, its capital Kigali is calm – people go about their daily business, chat, joke and laugh – yet the ghosts of past horrors are always close by to disrupt this apparent tranquility. There are still unanswered questions – where did this hatred originate? How can reconciliation take place? How can life win over death?

The exhibition "Rwanda – the road to recovery" is the first of its kind in the UK to explore the above questions. It incorporates photographs, paintings, film, crafts and literature which act as vehicles for exploring and understanding Rwanda, past and present. The artists involved in the exhibition offer varying perspectives on Rwanda's journey. Rwandan painter Patrice Shema entitles his work "Rwanda adored", emphasizing the country's beauty, courage and resilience from a Rwandan perspective. Helen Wilson will be exhibiting paintings from "Making sense: a Rwandan story". Helen explains "I want to express as much as possible about Rwanda as it is today the beauty and the tragedy, and the dignity and grace of its people in my paintings".

Photographs from the series "Hope after hatred" by Karen Kessi-Williams depict Rwanda's memorial sites, the traditional justice process, the Tutsi resistance movement and the prisoners. Mark Alastair's work is inspired by the dramatic beauty and lure of the Rwandan landscape &

his close work with rYico. Photographers Nina Chodha and David Mowbray's work looks at the approach taken by various communities in their contribution toward the reconciliation and reconstruction process.

The exhibition is presented by rYico, a Brighton based charity dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable young people in Rwanda (www.ryico.org). It will run from July 2 to 25 at Jubilee Library, Brighton.

For directions and opening hours, see <http://www.citylibraries.info/libraries/jubilee.asp>.

80 Percent Angel – Rwanda

by Parker Snyder

The lotus flower blooms in muddy water and marvelous deeds spring forth in Rwanda. Both are beautiful because they are improbable.



During the genocide, media was used to perpetuate a message of hate but media can just as well be used for good. That's what motivated my fiancée and me to move to Rwanda to start a media site. We produce video for free for people who need it most. At 80 Percent Angel we tell stories of good work through video, audio, text and photography. Basket weavers teach rural women to save, a peace association aids genocide survivors, and a film maker resolves conflict in his art. These are a few of the stories we tell.

The media site is predicated on the idea that you can influence human behavior by reinforcing positive habits. Each of the 12 videos we've produced and stream online feature a Rwandan Caring Habit, such as "Do your best", "Protect the environment" and "Never again". The habits aren't trite or inconsequential. They are the basis upon which a civil society is constructed. We created the name 80 Percent Angel because we are all capable of the unspeakable if we are indoctrinated with a message of hate or forced beyond our human capacity to resist evil.

Whether we acknowledge them or not, the habits are a set of working principles that can influence behavior through repetition and practice. Caring Habits Rwanda is a program in planning, formally adopted by the National Unity & Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in October of 2006. Kasia and I were invited by the program's founder, Elaine Parke, to write a business plan to fund the project through its pilot stage.



It's a marriage: 80 Percent Angel and Caring Habits Rwanda. We're partners in thoughtful persuasion. Together we produce visual media to demonstrate to the world that progress in Rwanda is real. Unity and reconciliation are not abstract concepts. They are the habitual actions of a concerned few who believe in peace.

What's the future of 80 Percent Angel? We intend to replicate this model all over the world. In July 2007, we're holding a film camp in Eastern Europe to train two core teams to go to post-conflict countries, most likely Cambodia and South Africa. To see how the media site got its start, visit www.80PercentAngel.com/?video=1 or contact us at info@80PercentAngel.com.

Water

by Shirley Randell (srandell@snvworld.org)

“Water is the lever for development” is the motto of PROTOS, a Belgian water development NGO whose goal is to work for a better world for underprivileged people by providing them with access to safe drinking water. Today, more than 1.1 billion people do not have safe drinking water and 2.6 billion people live without decent sanitary infrastructure. PROTOS provides equal opportunities to the less favored, either by providing them with safe drinking water or a clean toilet in the immediate surroundings, or by enabling them to make optimal use of the available water for agriculture.

According to Hester Kapur, the local representative, engaging with local people is of paramount importance and PROTOS’ strategic objectives include emancipating local people with regard to their local or central government, and bringing all interested parties around the table to avoid conflict around water. PROTOS also puts a lot of emphasis on equal opportunities for women, a principle shared with SNV Rwanda which is working with PROTOS on supporting the participation of women in water projects planning and implementation.

Another of SNV’s partners, COFORWA, a local Rwandan NGO, is collaborating in this important project. Its mission is to help rural populations to reach water under good conditions, to improve sanitation and to train people locally who will deal with the development and maintenance of the water infrastructure. COFORWA has contributed to the construction of half of the water infrastructure in the rural areas in Rwanda.

Capacity building requirements span the entire cycle of COFORWA work, including the staff, the administration and members. These include 47 committees who supervise water supply systems, 1200 3-people committees managing water points, committees at sector level responsible for supervision, study and technical maintenance and 30 cell-level committees who are responsible for coordination.

Another range of capacity building requirements requested from SNV Rwanda include training in ICT applications like Power Point, Publisher and Access, and website development. Other support required is in the area of strategic planning and monitoring, supporting income generating activities, evaluating COFORWA’s impact on the environment and establishing a permanent centre for training in water technical maintenance.

Recommended background material from previous newsletter editions

- *Africa: Continent of economic opportunity* (angela@ste.co.za)
- *Guide des destinations indigènes* (www.indigene-editions.fr)
- *Keepers of memory* (alegisi2004@yahoo.co.uk)
- *With what remains* (victoria.bullock@hodder.co.uk)
- *Steve, l'enfant égaré* (uwayisaba@hotmail.com)
- *100 Days* (alegisi2004@yahoo.co.uk)
- *Rwanda alive: those who listen* (info@gng.org)
- *Guide André – 75 restaurants in Kigali* (avak2000@hotmail.com)

Some international tour operators offering Rwanda

If you are a tour operator and would like to be included on this list, please contact the editor.

United Kingdom

Absolute Africa (0208-7420226; absaf@absoluteafrica.com; www.absoluteafrica.com)
Discovery Initiatives (01285-643333; enquiry@discoveryinitiatives.com; www.discoveryinitiatives.com)
Live Travel (020-88946104; phil.haines@live-travel.com; www.life-travel.com)
Rainbow Tours (020-72261004; info@rainbowtours.co.uk; www.rainbowtours.co.uk)
Reef and Rainforest Tours Ltd (01803-866965; alan@reefandrainforest.co.uk; www.reefandrainforest.co.uk)
Safari Consultants Ltd (01787-228494; bill@safariconsultantuk.com; www.safari-consultants.co.uk)
Sarus Bird Tours (0161-7617297; nigel@sarusbirdtours.co.uk; www.sarusbirdtours.co.uk)
Steppes Travel (01285-650011; africa@steppestravel.co.uk; www.steppestravel.co.uk)
Sunvil Africa (020-82329777; africa@sunvil.co.uk; www.sunvil.co.uk)
Volcanoes Safaris (0870-8708480; salesuk@volcanoessafaris.com; www.volcanoessafaris.com)
Wildlife Worldwide (020-86679158; sales@wildlifeworldwide.com; www.wildlifeworldwide.com)
World Primate Safaris (0870-8509092; sales@worldprimatesafaris.com; www.worldprimatesafaris.com)

USA

Africa Adventure Company (800-882-9453; noltingaac@aol.com; www.africa-adventure.com)
Ker & Downey (281-3712500; info@kerdowney.com; www.kerdowney.com)
Volcanoes Safaris (770-7300960; salesus@volcanoessafaris.com; www.volcanoessafaris.com)

Germany

Globetrotter Select (08171-997272; info@globetrotter-select.de; www.globetrotter-select.de)
Top Trail Tours (0221-2708960; info@toptrailtours.de; www.toptrailtours.de)

Switzerland

Zingg Event Travel AG (01709-2010; zet@bluewin.ch; www.zingg safaris.com)

South Africa

Unusual Destinations (Pty) Ltd (011-7061991; rita@unusualdestinations.com; www.unusualdestinations.com)
Wild Frontiers (011-7022035; wildfront@icon.co.za; www.wildfrontiers.com)

Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania

The Far Horizon, Uganda (41343468; info@thefarhorizons.com; www.thefarhorizons.com)
Origins Safaris, Kenya (020-331191; info@originsafaris.info; www.originsafaris.info)
R&N Xplorer Africa Safaris, Kenya (723684974; rnxploresafaris@gmail.com; www.gorillasafaris.netfirms.com)
Volcanoes Safaris, Uganda (41346464; salesug@volcanoessafaris.com; www.volcanoessafaris.com)

There are also many tour operators in Kigali that can arrange visits to Rwanda, including international travel and vehicle-hire. For details contact the **Rwandan Office of Tourism and National Parks (ORTPN)**:
+250-576514; info@rwandatourism.com; www.rwandatourism.com

“**Voices of Hope**” is the successor of “**Behind the Headlines**”, edited by Janice Booth.

It is encouraged by the Rwandan Embassy in London and by the Rwandan Office of Tourism and National Parks (ORTPN).

Nevertheless, the content is the sole responsibility of the editor who, on the other hand, relies on the adequacy of the contributions. He promises that the information contained in this newsletter is correct to the best of his knowledge.

Article contributions are highly welcome: If you would like to send an article, or if you have ideas or comments, please get in touch at voh@newdawnassociates.com.

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