



Just.Equipping

PO Box 2984
Gatineau, QC
Canada, J8L 2X5
Tel.: 819-617-1112 - Fax: 819-617-1114
allard@justequipping.org
www.justequipping.org
Registered charity #889184891RR0001

Report on Mission 6: Discerning and Crewing

Africa Great Lakes Region January - April, 2011

*I am your servant; give me discernment
Psalm 119:125*

Mission 6 was a joy and a blessing!



Our charcoal for cooking

Two days after arriving at our house in Gisenyi, in northern Rwanda on the border with Goma, RD-Congo, we walked down the road to visit with Frère Gabriel, a Canadian brother who has worked for over 30 years with youth in central Africa. What, we asked, is the

most important thing we can offer our brothers and sisters here after 5 years of teaching in Restorative Justice? Follow-up, he said, without hesitation.

And so, virtually upon arrival, we had confirmed what we had felt in our hearts since returning to



April genocide memorial parade.

Canada the year before! The shape of our work had to take another form. The four main projects (and several smaller initiatives) we are involved with had to be corralled, supported, pruned, encouraged, equipped and strengthened. During this mission, we provided the occasion for networking among various chaplaincy groups in the Great Lakes area and had many wonderful weekends together at our house. As you know, Just.Equipping does not start anything in the name of Just.Equipping – we ‘crew’ along with the locals, lending a hand and nurturing.

We did some teaching in Restorative Justice but with smaller groups and for 1 to 3 days only.



Eileen teaching

Together with our colleagues, we chose areas of study which we felt we needed to look at such as Work Plans, Sustainability, Stress and Trauma, and an Annex to the Mediation Protocol for Sexual Aggression. We listened to each other. We cried with each other. We laughed, ate together, prayed and sang (and those of us who could, danced!). We visited in hospital and in prisons. We helped three groups obtain legal status to work in prison ministry. We set up the Petit Sanctuaire Gisenyi with furniture to receive both victims and workers. We made field visits and shared in the women’s sewing workshops. We spent a significant amount of time with authorities at various levels from municipal to national and with prison

directors. We hollered at each other during card games around the table late at night.

Let me share with you a couple of our areas of major involvement.

The Letters Project: Several years ago, inmates at the Gisenyi Central Prison gave Chaplain



Chaplains Canisius, Lazare, John, and victim survivors

Lazare 400 letters which they had written to their survivor victims of the genocide asking forgiveness. They wanted these letters delivered. Sound simple? How do you find about 500 or more people in the mountains and cities of Rwanda more than 15 years after the genocide? There are no street addresses, no postmen who go door to door, no records of moves. No one among our chaplains has a car, most routes are passable only by motos or on foot. Where does the money come from to set out on this adventure when our chaplains are having a hard time feeding their own families and keeping their children in school?

We began by setting up a Victim – Offender Protocol which they diligently studied and adhere to faithfully. It keeps them on track and ever respectful of the victims in the midst of extremely emotional and heart-wrenching encounters.



Judy and Fine at Le Petite Sanctuaire, Gisenyi

Then, as money came in, the five trained chaplains divided up the letters and set out in teams of two across the country. Nothing we have ever witnessed in our lives compares to

this project and the impact it has on the lives of the people of Rwanda. Both victims and offenders are transformed by the process and volatile community problems are mended. The chaplains suffer enormous strain as the work is both physically and emotionally draining. To support the project, we have set up the Petit Sanctuaire in Gisenyi – a small house equipped to receive victims when they come down from the mountains to meet the offender in prison, and to give a place of rest and refuge to our chaplaincy workers. Each case requires about 3-4 encounters. Each encounter costs about \$60 CND. We have covered about 85 letters so far, but feel a sense of urgency, that time has become very important for this project. We need to work much faster while both victims and offenders are still available for reconciliation and to give them back a more peaceful and hopeful future. If you want to see God's grace at work in 2011, come check out this project! Consider helping us financially to deal with the more than 300 letters still waiting to be delivered.

Le Petit Sanctuaire Goma: The core group in Goma, RDCongo who work under the leadership of Reverend Simeon Muhunga are living saints. They are dedicated to bringing God's love and life-changing potential to the prisons,



Chaplains Corneille and Monique, with Judy

victims and families and authorities in this war-torn and ravaged area of the world. They have set up a community chaplaincy which centralizes their work out of an unfurnished house in Goma. They are penniless, often not well, very hungry,



Pierre, instructor Balo, Corneille, John and new machine

without significant salaries, carless and with many children at home for lack of school fees. And yet, and yet....they faithfully visit the prisons, receive the destitute and hurting victims, welcome the women who have been sexually assaulted in prison and now have a child to support on the streets, counsel with ex-offenders and advocate for best practices in prison. They are unbelievable and worthy of \$10 a day each to maintain them in their work. They need help with health care costs such as malaria medication, dental work and glasses. One of their pressing needs is for frequent new pairs of shoes. For those of you who are familiar with the city of Goma, you will know why! They walk many kilometers each day over very rough lava rock on very poor roads and they literally wear their shoes out. A pair of shoes: \$20CND.

Legalities: Just.Equipping is crewing with our three chaplaincy groups who are in the process of becoming legally authorized to work in their countries: ICOPUR in Rwanda (Initiatives



Pierre and Jean Bosco signing Burundi papers

communautaires pour unité et réconciliation), PJRIDI in RD-Congo (Promotion de la justice réparatrice et des initiatives de développement intégral), and Barnabas Africa in Burundi.

It is very important in these parts of the world to be well and duly accredited to accomplish the work in prisons to which God has called these people. BUT – the processes are long and expensive and the hoops to jump through at times seem

endless. It is hard not to become discouraged and it requires endurance and patience as well as faith that the funds will come to keep the processes on track.

Twungubumwe Village: This year we were not able to help Pascal Niyomugabo build or roof any additional houses in the inspiring



Bugesera Pascal and wife

Bugesera village projects which are comprised of genocide victims and perpetrators. Funds permitted us to underwrite two outhouses and buy a moto for him to use to supervise the 18

cell associations with over 1200 members. (Costs to rent motos every day were becoming exorbitant.) These and other reconciliation villages in Rwanda are outstanding examples of God's transforming power and we are happy to be able to offer them teaching, fellowship and a forum for sharing.

Training and Renewal Venture

Canada: We continue to bring to Canada one or two potential leaders each year. This year, Reverend Pascal Fossouo has taken the Queen's Restorative Justice Intensive spring session. He



Pascal Fossouo

is now visiting chaplaincy in Ontario and Quebec and will wrap up his program with a few days with Pierre and me in Gatineau. We then hope to welcome Christine, a law student from Goma who is working in the Goma chaplaincy group and will try to complete her thesis while in a quiet

setting at the Just.Equipping office. She is trying to obtain a visitor's visa and would need prayer for positive and smooth results. This is an expensive program, but it has produced some astounding results and allowed chaplains who were exhausted and ready to give up to be renewed and carry on.

There is more! Please remember:

- Burundi chaplains have organized to visit all the prisons in Burundi once a month! An ambitious plan only successful as God provides.
- The foodstuffs or other articles needed to bring inside when chaplains visit a prison. They cannot arrive empty-handed.
- Underwear for about 1000 women prisoners and ex-prisoners and chaplains every year.
- Baby and maternity packages for the women and babies in Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Goma prisons and released prisoners. A package usually contains a baby blanket, underwear, soap, items of baby clothing, a large wrap, toweling. We also like to bring fruit for all the women and children in the prison, and if possible, 'sosoma flour' for the babies.
- Teaching supplies and toys for the toddlers in prison with their mothers, and for pre-school children in the reconciliation villages. These children are in need of stimulation and learning possibilities.
- T-shirts for juveniles in prison and programs for them after their release.



Meal time

- Food for all the people who come daily to share with us in our ministry of hospitality. Food is not cheap and it is always a challenge to feed many friends and visitors every day.

- The Lamp Project in Goma prison. Our chaplains have provided lamps and kerosene (\$50CND per month) so that there is light in the prison between 6pm and 6am. This will increase the safety of inmates – women especially- and staff and authentically proclaim John 8:12.



Lamp Project, Goma Prison

- Soap, shoes, rice, beans, medicines and school fees for all our team members.
- Money for material, sewing machines, parts and repairs and a daily drink and banana for the girls in the sewing workshops. Also, the Linda Fund which puts aside a small amount of money to pay fines for women to be released from jail.
- Bibles and other study books, dictionaries and material in French. These get snapped up like Ice Cappuccinos on a hot day!

There is so much more to say. The themes of our last mission were 'discernment' and 'crewing'.



Bugesera survivor Monique and Eileen

In the interests of discernment, I think it is high time to end this report although many partners and involvements have not been mentioned. In the interests

of 'crewing', I want to say how much we are completely indebted to those of you who support this crazy adventure financially and prayerfully, who collect and drop off things for us to bring, who come along for the incredible ride (Eileen!! John!!), and who keep things rolling at home (Irene!! Jacqueline and Gaston!! Vaila and Garry!!) while we are in Rwanda, and in Rwanda (Fine!! Jean Claude!! Christophe!!) while we are at home.

We have rented a house year-round in Gisenyi and are subletting it for 6 months while we are back in Canada. It is the first really suitable building we have had for what we believe



Theo the cook

the mission needs to offer in terms of hospitality, safety and facilities for teaching and so have taken on this significant financial responsibility in faith. We hope to return at the end of October,

2011 and use the month of November to blitz the Letters Project with as many visits as funds will allow. We do not know how long God will grant us the strength and health to do this ministry, but we are certainly ready for the long haul (or howl...). We do not know where finances will come from, but as God provides through you, we will use them wisely and prayerfully to his glory. We need to integrate maturely the many faces of misery, corruption, poverty, jealousy, sickness and hurt. We need to constantly remember that God alone transforms hearts and lives and situations, and that we are amazingly being allowed to witness this work.

With appreciation,

Judy Allard
Executive Director



That's all!