

Update on North Kivu

July 13, 2009

Report #112

The following email is from Renee Bove who is working with George Brose for six weeks on an AGLI-supported mediation program in Rwanda, Burundi, and North and South Kivu. This is her recent report on the situation in Goma.

I forward this to you because it is clear that the situation in North Kivu is not improving – they are unable to go up-country and UN helicopters are flying all around. I have looked on the internet about the situation in North Kivu and nothing specific has been reported. So this may be a head-up, or, as usual with the situation in North Kivu, it may just be another false alarm.

Peace,
Dave

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Greetings

Is that drums I hear?...Maybe?... NO. I realize it is the sound of my own blood pulsating in my ears. I am terrified. I am about to climb side saddle onto a motor cycle with a driver that looks like he wants to give this mzungu [White person] the ride of her life. I jump on, fearful my dress will get caught up in the wheel and send me sprawling onto the lava paved road. I touch the guardian angel lapel pin my daughter gave me and pray that you all are holding me the light. We zig and zag through streets crowded with bikes, cars, colorful people carrying everything on their head from bread to 100 pound lava rocks. I have my claws firmly planted into the side of the driver. We have 5 miles to go. I forget to breathe so just as I am taking in a huge gasp of air the World Food Bank truck we are following spits out a huge plume of thick black exhaust. My eyes burn and my nose clogs up but I do not let go. More zigging and zagging. We squeeze between trucks and cows. Other motor cycles wheeze by yelling “mzungu.” We pass UN peacekeepers and soldiers with rifles bigger than I am. We finally arrive at the Catholic retreat center we are staying in. God bless the Catholics. I disengage my death grip from the driver. We made it. The insane thing is that I am ready to do it all over again. I feel Alive in Africa and thank God that you are holding me in the light.

We are in Goma in the DR of the Congo; a city full of struggle – UN peacekeepers, rebuilding

from war and from the volcano that erupted in 2002. Lava flowed into the city taking out the downtown. Yesterday there was a huge fire which destroyed 700 homes, 2000 families or 15,000 people. There is much strife here.

I am finding my concern about bringing Western mediation to Congo may not be a concern. Many of these people are eager for an alternative to this violence. They want information on better ways to communicate. Tomorrow we were to go into a village in the hills but due to heavy fighting we will be going to an IDP camp (refugee camp for internally displaced persons). George and I have spent the last three days working with mediators he trained last year. Oh the stories they tell. They are mediating serious cases of violence and hurt. George has made a difference in their lives. Together, George and I will be training 49 people at the camp. Maybe this small training will make a difference in at least one person's life. I am willing to try.

My short time here has been full of adventure. George is very protective and making sure that I am well cared for by the local folks.

I am wishing you all good health and please, please, keep holding me in the Light. Today we saw many UN helicopters which may mean trouble is near. If that should occur we will leave ASAP (by motorcylce).

Be well my friends,
Renee