
AGLI - Report from Kenya - March 16, 2010
Need for Cell Phones

Dear Friends,

The Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities program (HROC - pronounced HE-rock) in Burundi is in the midst of an Election Violence Prevention Program for the five elections between May 21 and September 7. As part of a grant from the United States Institute of Peace, HROC has formed Democracy and Peace groups in nine volatile communities in four provinces of Burundi. Each group has 80 participants who have received the basic HROC workshop and follow-up training to unite disparate people into cohesive groups that will work together to prevent violence during the elections in their community. We have finished this training process and the participants are enthusiastic about working together, even perhaps at risk to themselves.

As an add-on to this project, we have decided to implement an Early Warning System with 100 to 400 of these participants who will be called "citizen reporters". Each will have a cell phone with unlimited calling and text messaging with every one else in the System for the five months from May through September. When an incident develops in a community, the citizen reporters will be able to contact the Call-In Center in Bujumbura to report events as they occur. Then, if advisable, the citizen reporters and others from the Democracy and Peace group can come to observe the incident. Observation frequently is what keeps people from perpetrating violent acts. Moreover conflicts frequently occur as rumors spread and the citizen reporters will be trained on how to give verifiable reports. These reports will be analyzed at the Call-In Center and forwarded to Quaker policy organizations throughout the world.

We have found that the cell phone system in Burundi is unable to carry pictures or emails so the system will have to depend upon voice mail and text messaging. Nonetheless we would like some of the citizen reporters to have advanced cell phones that can take pictures as we intend to visit the communities regularly and can download the pictures to a computer. Consequently, we are asking people to

donate to us advanced cell phones that can take pictures. These will need to be able to use SIM cards and be unlocked. In the United States only T-Mobile and AT&T use SIM cards. Please notify David Zarembka at dave@aglifpt.org if you are able to collect some of these cell phones.

The number of citizen reporters will mostly depend upon how many cell phones and calling cards we have. We would like to buy Nokia 2330 phones costing \$40 plus an extra battery costing \$10. The unlimited airtime is \$9 per month—for five months this will be \$45. We would appreciate any donations towards the purchase of the cell phones, extra battery, and calling cards. Again please contact David Zarembka at dave@aglifpt.org for details on making a contribution.

Thank you for your consideration.

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If you want to travel quickly, walk alone. If you want to travel far,
walk with others. ~ Traditional African Proverb