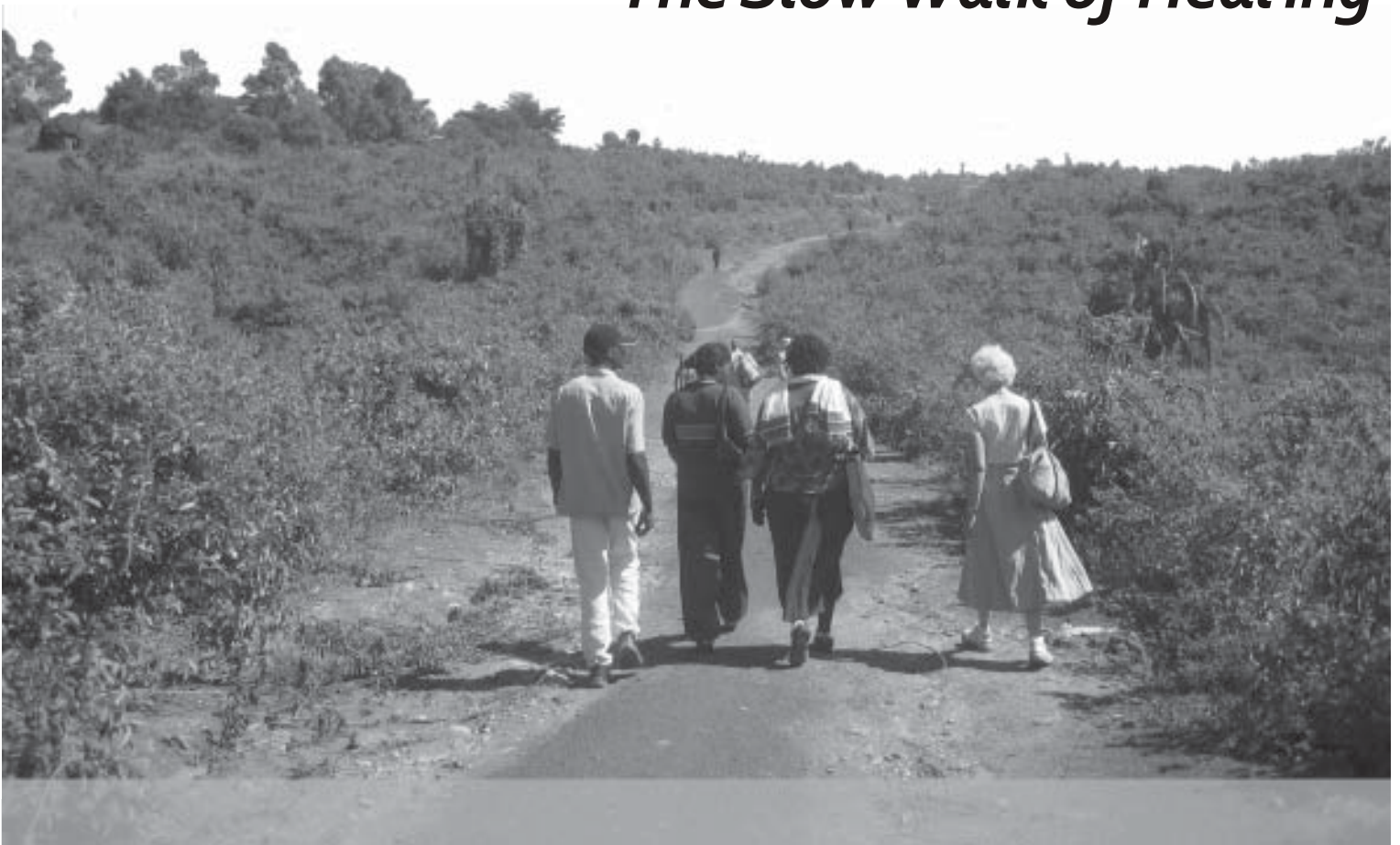


PeaceWays **AGLI**

Winter 2007 Volume II Issue III

Changes of Hearts

The Slow Walk of Healing



Editorial

Many Americans and Europeans think that anything “traditional” in Africa is superior to things imported from Europe and America. Isak Dennison’s *Out of Africa* is a good example of this attitude. In Nairobi, Masai warriors are dressed in traditional costume to attract tourists into curio shops, while the prevalence of Coca-Cola is seen quite negatively.

Africans don’t agree with these perceptions since they see traditional Masai as backwards in the same way we might see the Amish in America and they give soda to their kids for the same reasons we do in America and Europe. Adrien Niyongabo from Burundi notes that some traditions are not good; the division into Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi are examples of negative traditions that need to be changed.

When I first suggested that Alternatives to Violence (AVP) should be introduced into Rwanda, I received much negative reaction from Americans. They said that AVP was an American program and that taking it to Rwanda was just to make again the mistakes of the missionaries in introducing American culture into the Africa context.

Nonetheless I went ahead because I had confidence that the Africans themselves would be able (a) to determine

themselves if AVP was appropriate or not and (b) if it was appropriate, they would modify it to meet the conditions that occur in Africa. The tremendous success of AVP in Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Uganda, and Kenya has indicated that this is the case.

We have done many assessments of AVP in these countries and I have just received the most recent one from Kenya. Here they clearly indicate that AVP is contrary to Kenyan culture:

Males have a superiority complex in Kenyan culture. For example, if you love your wife, you should beat her. This is one way that AVP differs. It takes time for men to understand that women are similar to them. Martin Oloo, AVP participant.

The report states, “When discussing the ‘cultural’ impact of AVP, issues of gender and age were at the forefront. In Kenyan culture women are denied a chance to talk before men and indeed men feel superior to women. Young people are also not encouraged to offer advice to older people. AVP, on the other hand, equalizes people.”

So is it good that AVP is challenging the traditional male/age domination in Kenyan culture or is it bad that AVP is challenging tradition?

David Zarembka

The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams strengthens, supports, and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). To this end, AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non-governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI sponsors Peace Teams composed of members from local partners and the international community.

Visit AGLI’s website at www.aglionline.org

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PeaceWays **AGLI**

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A Little Peace of Kenya

By Aletia Dundas

When I first arrived at the Friends Peace Centre in Lubao, Kenya, I was a bit nervous. I had no idea what to expect and wondered if I would “fit in”. Although I am an Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) facilitator with a background in Peace, I knew that the AVP workshops in Kenya and the Peace Centre itself would be different and new. I was keen to watch, learn and participate. I found that it didn't take long to settle into a daily routine of waking at sunrise, boiling water for a shower, drinking tea, washing clothes by hand, catching a matatu into town, and negotiating the price of tomatoes.

During my first week in Lubao, I was lucky enough to be able to attend a HROC workshop (Healing and Rebuilding Our Community) led by facilitators from Burundi and Rwanda. The HROC workshop process was adapted from AVP to deal specifically with the aftermath of violent conflict. In Kenya, these workshops were being held for community leaders from Mt. Elgon, an area engulfed in violent conflict for the past couple of years. What amazed me was how quickly participants were able to move from being strangers to becoming friends. While those present were the ones hoping for peace, it was often their first time engaging

with people from the other tribe since the beginning of the violence. People spoke honestly and emotionally about experiences of loss and grief associated with the violence; the workshop ended with much talk about getting more people involved, and spreading the message of peace. It was inspiring to be part of this process.

I also had the opportunity to facilitate an AVP workshop, and was challenged by some stark differences between the workshop process in Kenya and what I'm used to back home. Although I needed to remind people that I was a facilitator, not a teacher, and that there is good in all people, I was also humbled by the profound impact AVP seems to be having in Kenya. While I have grown up being quite comfortable talking about my emotions, for many participants this was a completely new and daunting concept. Yet people embraced it with understanding and enthusiasm. While I come from a culture where domestic violence is considered unacceptable I found that AVP is gently challenging violent gender relationships in a culture where such violence had never been challenged before.

While at the Peace Centre my particular project was to conduct an evaluation of the AVP workshops in Kenya.

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Continued from page 3: **A Little Peace of Kenya**

Similar evaluations had taken place in Rwanda and Burundi so we had some useful examples to assist us. In order to evaluate the impact of AVP in Kenya, and determine strategies for the future, we interviewed 40 workshop participants from a variety of geographical locations, age groups, and occupational backgrounds. Men and women were equally represented. This evaluation was made possible through funding from AGLI and the grant I received from Australia Yearly Meeting's Peace and Social Justice Fund.

Through the course of the evaluation it was found that AVP is having an impact on both individuals and communities. Countless testimonies were given as to how lessons from AVP have been applied in the home; where physical and emotional violence is common. AVP had also helped people understand and deal with emotions and trauma in their lives. *"Before the AVP workshop my anger could not be relieved without beating somebody but now I have developed a friendly heart"*, said Noel Wanyonyi, a young lady who attended the workshop.

Those who deal with violence or conflict in their work, — particularly pastors, prison officers and social workers — indicated that the principles of AVP had not only given them useful tools for approaching conflicts in these workplaces, but has also led to suggestions and initiatives that will foster dialogue and support in the future. *"I realized that it's not through violence that we can change prisoners"* said Arthur Agiza, a prison officer. People also made suggestions about ways to improve the workshops, and the organization in general, and these tended to be things like "make the workshop longer", "get more funding so we can hold them more regularly", and "focus on areas where violence is entrenched".

I know that my short time at Friends Peace Centre will provide me with many happy memories and insights into the Kenyan experience. Certainly I will be taking a much greater chunk of Kenya with me than any piece of me that I will leave behind. I enjoyed being part of such a delightful community and hope that my small contribution will have been useful to those continuing the work.

Aletia Dundas is a Quaker from Australia and has been involved with AVP in her home town of Sydney since 2002. Aletia completed her Masters Degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney in 2006, and most recently was working on the Peace and Disarmament Programme at the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva.

Continued from page 12: **Imperceptible Change of Hearts**

"The Journey of Trust" is an activity that I had always called as "The Trust Walk." I had done this particular team-building exercise at least once a year growing up—in school, at camp, whenever I was thrown into a new group. I had been partnered up, blindfolded, and led around the room so many times that I no longer thought about it; it became just another thing I had to do before I could move on to what was actually important. It was not until I stood in front of rows of survivors and released-prisoners at my first HROC workshop in Kibuye that I truly understood the heart of the game. As pairs of Rwandans guided one another outside the workshop room, down the gentle slope of the hill, and carefully over the small rocks nestled into the earth, the magnitude of what was happening suddenly became clear. When you come from a place of comfort and security, where there was always someone to tuck you in at night, trust is easily built because there is no reason *not* to trust. In Rwanda, there is *every* reason not to trust. To behold a shy, widowed woman close her eyes and offer her hand to the man that destroyed her once-happy life was singularly beautiful. This small movement, this slight touch was everything. You imagine there is that kind of strength and benevolence in the world, but you rarely get to witness it. That day in September, I saw a world transformed through the eyes of every Rwandan in that room, a transformation in the richest, most profound sense of the word.

So, how do people live together? In workshops across Rwanda, I found my answer. I can't explain it to you, but I know that I have seen it and felt it. In trust walks and games, in the tenuous clasp of hands and the small, imperceptible change of hearts it is there and it is making all the difference.

Bethany Mahler is a candidate for a Master's in Conflict Transformation at the School for International Training in Vermont. She worked at the Friends Peace House from the summer of 2006 to mid-October 2007 and was co-author of "Now I Am Human."

There are two brothers who live near each other where I live. Two months ago, they were in conflicts and they had blocked the way between them. When I came back from the HROC workshop, I took a step of bringing them together so that they can work on their conflict. I succeeded, now they are real brothers. Really, now HROC is well known because of the exemplary life of those who attended its workshops.

Comment from follow-up HROC workshop

Friends' Prophetic Voice

By Malesi Kinaro

Dear Nancy [General Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation],

Things must be pretty hectic as you and colleagues prepare to receive delegates for the FWCC Triennial. The theme of the conference [*Finding the Prophetic Voice for our Time*] is very appropriate in the world today. With wars and conflicts, effects of global warming and other destructive human activities the world is in a state of great disrepair. How I wish it were possible for our beautiful world to be repaired.

So I pose to ask even myself, what is my prophet voice in the middle of the chaos? Even if I were to know, as many of us know, what is the best way to speak so that that voice can be heard?

For me as a Kenyan Quaker, my deep concern is how Quakers in Kenya can re-discover our heritage as a peace church. How can we or at least some of us be available to calm the voices that are so hot around us especially in this election year? How can we reach out to people who are hurting themselves in Mt. Elgon, in Molo, in Central Province? Who among us will have the courage to reach out to the armed youths cutting off people's heads within the Sabaot Land Force or the Mungiki?

A few of us hope to do this in the near future. We have started the journey with support from the African Great Lakes Initiative and hope to continue more vigorously. We need

you Friends gathered at King's Hospital School in Dublin to hold us in the Light. For me this is one way in which we can find our prophetic voice. The ability to comfort and help in the healing, to hear the story from all sides and to have the courage to ask those in position of responsibility to LISTEN to those voices not with guns but with a desire and a plan to correct the wrongs that lead people to act worse than animals. My counseling professor always stressed that you can only succeed in counseling if you earn the right to be heard.

We at Friends in Peace and Community Development (FPCD) hold you in our prayers. We pray for journey mercies for all who are travelling. We pray for a spiritual renewal for all those gathered for without this we may give a human prophecy rather than that which comes from God.

As we think globally we must continue to act locally for it is only the collective small actions of many that can bring sustainable change to the world. LET OUR LIGHT SO SHINE IN THE WORLD THAT THOSE WHO SEE US WILL KNOW THAT CHRIST LIVES IN US. LET THAT LIGHT CHANGE THE BOMBS INTO MACHETES, THE GUNS INTO TRACTORS, HOES, GREEN ENERGY.

Thank you for keeping me informed of what Quakers are doing in the world by sending to me the FWCC newsletter.

Peace,

Malesi Kinaro

Malesi Kinaro is Founder of Friends for Peace and Community Development that has built the Friends Peace Center in Lubao, Executive Director of the Uzima Foundation, and former Executive Secretary of FWCC—Africa Section.

The Returnees' Plight

By David Zarembka

Last year on November 26 I was at Kagarama Church in Kigali, Rwanda, attending services when I noticed that Josephine Mukangoga was not in the choir. Josephine is a lead AVP facilitator and the accountant at the Friends Peace House for the AGLI programs. She is also a loyal member of the choir. The next day I asked her why she was not in church and she replied that she was visiting her mother. She proceeded to tell me her story.

In 1959, when the Belgians were still the ruling colonial power in Rwanda and the first violent conflict between the Tutsi and Hutu had begun, Josephine's parents, who were children at the time, fled east into Karagwe District of Tanzania. Her mother lived there for nearly five decades raising her family. Then in November 2006 she and two of her children and their families, as part of 60,000 Rwandans and Burundians refugees, were expelled from Karagwe District with one day's notice and forced to return back into Rwanda. They had to leave behind everything that they could not carry. Much of what remained was then looted by her Tanzanian neighbors. The Rwandan Government sent these returnees to a resettlement camp in Nemba next to the Burundian border. There is one bus from Kigali each day making only one round trip to Nemba. So Josephine had gone to visit her mother, brother, and sister that Sunday.

While the conflict within Rwanda is between Hutu and Tutsi, their neighbors outside the country see them both as "Rwandans." The Tutsi in Karagwe District had fled Rwanda from 1959 to the early 1960's and were put in their own refugee camps. The Hutu who fled in 1994 during the genocide were placed separately in their own refugee camps. But when both groups were recently expelled, about 258 families, mutually suspicious of each other, were resettled together in Nemba. Josephine asked me if AGLI could support some AVP workshops in Nemba in order to teach the two groups how to solve problems peacefully so that they could build their new community together without hostility and possibly violence. AGLI agreed to do four basic and two advanced AVP workshops in Nemba.

On March 23, 2007, when I next returned to Rwanda, I visited the second of these AVP workshops. Nemba is in a remote area, high on a ridge overlooking the river that was the boundary between Rwanda and



David Zarembka (AGLI coordinator) and Innocent Rwabuhiri (AVP-Rwanda coordinator) speak with participants and facilitators at Nemba AVP workshop.

Burundi. Because there was no water, it has been uninhabited, except for the grazing of cows,. The World Food Program was bringing a water tanker to the site each day to fill up two gigantic canvas "jugs" and the people then came to them to draw water as if they were going to a spring. The people live in small huts covered by plastic to form the walls and roof. The only use of these "huts" was to sleep at night and store a few personal items. The school was built of poles covered with plastic; they are now beginning the construction of a brick school house on the site. When I arrived in Nemba, Josephine introduced me to her sister. Her mother had returned to Tanzania temporarily to see if she could dispose of any property which remained.

The AVP workshop was being held in a very small room with only partially filled mud walls, and again a plastic tarp roof. The twenty participants and three facilitators barely fit. I sat down with the participants and had a discussion with them as they began their lives all over again in this new, bleak environment. In Tanzania most people speak Swahili, the widely promoted national language. It is in Tanzania that I learned my Swahili. So I was very surprised to see that only one man was fluent in Swahili. Another older man began speaking in Swahili, but quickly reverted to Kinyarwanda. None of the women were willing to speak in Swahili. This indicated that these Rwandan refugees had been totally

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Healing HIV-Positive Women

By Florence Ntakarutimana

Frequently the most compelling comments are found in original reports. In Burundi and Rwanda AGLI is developing a specific Healing and Rebuilding Our Community workshop for HIV-positive women. Since the traumatic experiences of the HIV-positive women, rather than being over, will more than likely increase in the future, these workshops will need to be different than the current one developed to deal with the trauma of war. Issues of living with HIV/AIDS need to be included. To develop this workshop, HROC-Burundi invited twenty HIV-positive women to three workshops. The first was a basic AVP workshop, the second an HROC workshop, and the third an HIV/AIDS workshop. Below, with some light editing, I have reproduced the reports of these three workshops. HROC-Burundi and HROC-Rwanda are now in the process of developing this new HROC-HIV positive workshop and will soon be conducting trial workshops. David Zarembka, AGLI Coordinator

Basic AVP Workshop with HIV Positive Women

Twenty women were invited, but only nineteen finished the workshop because one of them got sick at the second day. At the first day, they were not very open to share their experiences of life, but as we moved on with the workshop, they started to manifest their joy and how they were pleased by the workshop. Here is what they testified:

-First of all, I am thankful to be invited in this workshop. It is very different from other workshops and seminaries I have attended. When I got the invitation, I asked Felicite how much money I will receive each day and she told me that there is no

stipend. I told to myself: let me go for one day to see what they are doing. Surprisingly, I had been very pleased by the teachings. Instead of the one day I was planning to participate, I wished even to continue for a week. My dear friends, I am honest, after these three days with you, I discovered that the thinking of money was a poor thinking. I gained how to resolve conflicts without using violence. It helps me so much because at home I find myself almost always in conflicts with my neighbors. Now I am ready to let the transforming power work within me and many things will change.

-When I knew that I had AIDS, I became so violent before my husband and children. The "I message" was far from me. I was blaming my husband and accusing him to bring the HIV in the family. I could even insult him in front of our children. But now I am ready to use the transforming power within myself in talking to my husband so that we may work for the future. We had stopped doing projects for life, we were drinking and eating, telling to ourselves that tomorrow we will die.

-I am so pleased to attend this AVP workshop. It gave me more insights about how to help people in complicated times and conflicts. I went back into my life and found that I had been violent without knowing. I liked much the topic of transforming power. The "I message" is for me a constructive way of communication that I will be using in my daily life and work. I saw also that violence can bring trauma. I found that AVP workshop and HROC

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The time after we came back from the workshops had been for me a time of introspection. I found that I was really bad. I regretted the time I lost in seeing bad in others instead of seeing good. I regretted also the time I lost judging them instead of helping them. Now when neighbors in my community are in conflicts, they call me to help instead of calling judges. I am proud of that; I feel that am important in my community.

Comment from follow-up HROC workshop



Continued from page 7

workshops are complementary. I am lucky to attend it as HROC facilitator and worker.

Also, to be with these women pleased me so much. They need love, and compassion. It is as if they had no hope and no friends. But at the end of the workshop, you could read joy and trust in their eyes. When we separated every body was laughing and we had hope of meeting again for the next HROC workshop.

HROC Workshop with HIV Positive Women

The women who participated in the last AVP basic workshop in Magarama are the same women who participated in this HROC workshop. Three of them were sick and did not come. They were so excited to meet again one month after the AVP workshop. From the beginning of the workshop, they were very open to share their experiences of their lives in their sickness, and each one who gave his testimony encouraged and comforted others. Felicite Niyonzima, Chantal and Cassilde who have been open in giving their testimonies from the beginning of the workshop in giving their testimonies helped others to be open.

-When I learned about Johari's window, I saw that there is something I know about myself that others don't know: the HIV/AIDS I live with. When I realized that I had HIV five years ago, it was not easy for me to accept that traumatizing situation. I hated life and planned for suicide. But I felt sorry for my children who would stay orphans, and I

stopped suicide. Many things changed in me because of this workshop: Before, I could not be with and talk to others; I was thinking that everyone hates me because I am sick; and many times in our culture, somebody who is suffering from AIDS is abandoned. To see loving and kind people like you who take care of HIV positive people is rare. Really I can say that you had been my doctors. Now I feel happy, and to be with others pleased me so much. The time of sharing our experiences healed me because I saw that there are others who have the same problem as me, and I learned from them that I have to consult a doctor.

-I had attended many workshops about AIDS but I had said that I will never attend any workshop because I was not interested by the teachings given. The intention of many was to gain money using our sickness; that is too bad. I am surprised by how this workshop is very interesting. The last AVP workshop was good but this HROC workshop is very special. It is a healing workshop. You know that in our culture it is shameful to say that you have AIDS. But the time of sharing our experiences healed me. Now, I believe that to talk heals.

-I liked very much the topic about the tree of trust and the tree of mistrust. Before this workshop, I was like a tree of mistrust because when my husband and I knew that we had AIDS (we were married young) we decided to not have a child; and in our

Continued on page 9

culture, when you don't have a child, you are blamed. Our neighbors stopped relationships with us because of our sickness. I had no friend. Sometimes my husband and I used to blame each other, accusing each other to be the one who brought the sickness. That is really traumatizing. Now I feel something like a great burden falling down. I can underline that the methodology you used contributed much in my healing: there was a lot of fun and relaxations. You did not stand before us and give us much notes as others do in the seminars I attended; each one participated in giving ideas. I have much to say but I am limited by the time. In few words, know that I got healed from my trauma because of this workshop.

-My husband died of AIDS and I stayed with my five children. To feed them became so hard to me. One day, one of my children was confused by the situation and told me that it would be better for me to die because I am useless to them. I got angry and threw a knife at him. He ran out and the knife did not touch him. From that day, that child is no longer at home, he lives with his grand-mother. Since that day, I started to feel bad and many times I judged myself that I was going to kill my own child because of anger. That traumatized me so much. Sometimes I could not sleep, other times I have bad dreams. I asked him for forgiveness but I don't believe him when he tells me that he forgives me, I keep feeling guilty. That would not happen if I had already attended a workshop like this. Yes, the workshop helps me so much but I still need a follow-up.

HIV/AIDS Workshop with HIV Positive Women

Everyone was eagerly waiting for the workshop. Participants were hugging each other in happiness and everyone was on time. The workshop was done in the techniques and methodology of HROC workshops with fun and relaxations as well, and we inserted the lessons about AIDS. Here is the summary of what we did each day:

Day one

We started by song and prayer as usual and a devotional time. After welcoming each other and knowing the objective of the workshop, we set up the ground rules. We took time to share how they put into practice what they had learned in the HROC

workshop; what were the results. The people said that they are living a new life; a life of reconciliation and peace. They gave many testimonies. In the afternoon, we focused on the introduction to AIDS, where we were told what is HIV, AIDS and the statistics in the last three years.

For the second day,

We dealt with where the viruses of AIDS is found: in the blood, urine, and secretions. We learned how one becomes contaminated by the HIV/AIDS. The facilitator told us also the importance of consulting a doctor whether you are sick already or not. After that subject, many gave their testimonies of how they knew that they are sick and how they now live with the sickness. We took a time of listening to them and here is what they told us:

-Cassilde: I did a blood test because my husband died sick and he died weighing 40Kg [88 pounds]. When the doctor told me that I am sick, it was not easy for me to accept it. It was beyond understanding. But I finished by accepting it and now I take medicines at a regular time as the doctor told me now I am ok. But HROC contributed much in the good life I have now.

-Therese: I and my husband are suffering from AIDS as I told you in the last workshop. To accept ourselves was hard. Now we take medicines as the doctor told us and we use condoms when we do the sexual relationships.

-Felicite: I did the blood test after the death of my husband. Because I follow the advice of the doctor, I am ok as others. Many guys used to ask me to marry them and when I tell them that I am sick they don't believe me. They think that it is to refuse them. I feel sorry for those who still have fear of doing the blood test. They are killing themselves. Many of them are contaminating others. It is too bad; let's stand up and help others to know how their life is.

-Chantal: My husband died of AIDS but he did not tell me that. I did the blood test because I was suffering from different sicknesses at the same time. When I started to take medicines, my body reacted badly to them. The doctor changed the medicines and now I am ok. I advise those who still have fear to do the blood test to change.

Continued from page 9: **Healing HIV Positive Women**

After many other testimonies of those who are sick, the participants who don't know that they are sick or not because they have not yet do the blood test said that now, they are going to do it next week for the good of their life. I let them know that Chantal is the one who does the blood test in Gitega hospital. She promised to welcome them and to keep confidentiality.

In the afternoon, we dealt with how a person can live well with the HIV (which included to do the blood test, to consult the doctor regularly and to take medicines). Some advice was given to people who give themselves medicines or who do not follow the advice of the doctors. We also presented other disciplines: to take rest, to eat adequately, the use of condoms for the couples already sick and for the protection of the partner who does not know because he has not yet taken the test.

A facilitator brought condoms (female and male) and told us how to use them. For many participants, it was the first time to see female condoms.

Day Three

This day was dedicated to trust building. I liked much how Emile did this. He showed how HIV/AIDS positive people were treated in prior years. In the past: such persons were devalued, set apart and blamed. There was no medicine, there was no long life for the sick people. There was no effort to help them. He showed what is done in the present time: there are Associations to support sick people, there are medicines for long life of sick people, children may be born safe from a sick mother, the sick people are valued, they can work in offices as others. He said that things will continue to be better in the future. If God wants, the medicines to heal may be found.

We finished with a look at sick people in the community. We said that such people can use their wounds to comfort others, to serve many, to be useful and important. The participants thanked so much those who started and funded this program and wished it to continue.

I was honored to be with these women all three times. I learned much from them—like patience. Thank you for the project and the support. We really had a good time in Gitega.

Florence Ntakarutimana is the HROC training manager in Burundi and has taken on the responsibility of developing the HROC workshop for HIV positive women.

“This confirmed my observation that refugees in another country have few rights and their refugee camps are nothing more than prisons without walls.”

Continued from page 6: **The Returnees' Plight**

isolated from Tanzanian society during the decades they were in the refugee camps there. This confirmed my observation that refugees in another country have few rights and their refugee camps are nothing more than prisons without walls. One of the women commented that they wished to have more contact with Rwandans since the language and culture had changed since they fled Rwanda.

When I spoke to Josephine and the other AVP facilitators, they told me that AVP was accomplishing what we had hoped. The two suspicious groups were beginning to accept each other, to see each other as human beings, and were learning how they could resolve the many conflicts inherent in building a new community peacefully through discussion and negotiation. Due to the need and success of this small project, AVP-Rwanda developed a proposal to do the same six AVP workshops in six other resettlement villages in eastern Rwanda. This proposal was funded by the Drane Family Fund of the New Hampshire Foundation. As I write this report the AVP workshops in these six camps have just begun. Let us pray for these returnees as they begin life anew and wish them peace and prosperity as they build their communities.

David Zarembka is the Coordinator of the African Great Lakes Initiative of the Friends Peace Teams and lives in Lumakanda, Kenya, with his wife, Gladys Kamonya.



A house in Nemba

Updates

AVP in Kidaho, Rwanda: The local government administrator in Kidaho requested a meeting with Change Agents for Peace, International [AGLI's sister organization funded mostly by Norwegian Quakers] and Friends Peace House trainers. A formal request was made for intervention with 30 families identified by the local government as parties to sometimes conflict, sometimes violent, both in their family setting and in the local community. A parent has been killed by a child, or a wife by a spouse in at least three of these families. Local government officials have identified these families as potential flashpoints not only in their immediate neighborhoods but also in the larger peace-building process in northern Rwanda. In response AGLI agreed to support three Basic AVP workshops for sixty participants, two from each family. The workshops are now in progress.

HROC in Burundi: Allison Lavigne and Lisa Wong — both Masters of Social Work students at Wilfrid Laurier University in Kitchener-Waterloo, Canada — are doing an internship with the HROC program in Burundi. They began in September and will continue into December 2007. They have attended a basic workshop in Nyakibingo and helped develop activities for the first advanced Healing Companions three-day workshop held in Mutaho which they co-facilitated. They report it “was an amazing experience hearing the stories and hearing about the changes participants have made since the basic workshop”. More recently they have participated in a strategic planning meeting for HROC, attended an FWA meeting for members with HIV/AIDS to discuss the services provided and further services needed to be developed. They attended Circle of Sisters meeting – a Church affiliated group of women who get together weekly to socialize and do income generating and education activities and visited Mi-PAREC and are becoming familiar with local healing and reconciliation groups. Lisa and Ali are working with HROC Rwanda and Burundi to develop the HIV/AIDS workshop mentioned elsewhere in this publication.

From HROC-Rwanda: “Because of a lack of necessary time to grieve and mourn for those who were lost during the war and genocide, people are unable to let go of their pain. They remain prisoners of their past because their hearts are heavy with pain. They are trapped within their memories and are unable to trust others or find hope for their own lives. At the smallest provocation this pain and grief can turn into renewed hatred and conflict instead of being used to build new relationships. It is because of these past and present situations that Friends Peace House initiated a series of programs dealing with healing and peace building. Among these programs, HROC strives to build peace and healing within various communities. Since 2003, HROC staff members have conducted approximately 100 three day workshops bringing together the survivors and perpetrators of the genocide. Through this program many people have been healed from their pain and have taken another step towards reconciliation. As a result of past formations, around 6 groups have taken the initiative to establish their own peace groups that continue to meet the needs of their communities.” HROC-Rwanda Strategic Plan.

From Masisi, North Kivu, Congo: On August 10, Zawadi Nikuze (Goma, North Kivu), Levy Munyamana (Masisi, North Kivu), Theoneste Bizimana (Rwanda), David Zarembka (AGLI coordinator, Kenya), and Gladys Kamonya (Kenya, Dave's wife) traveled to Masisi, North Kivu into the area controlled by the rebel warlord, Laurent Nkunda. Nkunda is under indictment with the International Criminal Court for war crimes. During the visit many heavily armed soldiers were guarding the road, there was no fighting. Since that time fighting has again erupted in Masisi and 350,000 people have been displaced including all those working on Quaker projects in the area.

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Rwanda:

Theoneste Bizimana, Josephine Mukangoga, Innocent Rwabuhiri, Solange Maniraguha

Uganda:

Hellen Kabuni, George Walumoli, Barbara Wybar

In July and August Patrick Mureithi of Springfield, MO journeyed to Rwanda and Burundi to shoot a documentary on the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities program. He is going to title it

“Icyizere: Hope.”

You can view an excellent five minute promotional video of the documentary at:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=4IUZSBGe2G4>

When “Icyizere: Hope” is completed, AGLI will be asking it supporters to show the documentary everywhere possible—meetings, churches, schools, universities, civil organizations, homes, and cable access television.

Thank you for your help.

Imperceptible Change of Hearts

By *Bethany Mahler*

How do people live together in the wake of violent conflict? That is the question I came to Rwanda to answer. As a graduate student in the field of Conflict Transformation, what has always struck me about the Rwandan genocide is the intimacy of it. Overnight, neighbors killed neighbors, teachers turned on students, priests betrayed their parishioners. “How could one human being do such a thing?” you wonder, and more importantly now, thirteen years after the genocide, “How can these same human beings live next door to one another?” As a survivor, how do you rebuild a relationship with the person who tried to destroy who you are? As a perpetrator, how can you live from one day to the next with the shame of what you did and the constant fear of revenge? For many Rwandans, it is not an issue of whether or not you will have to face your attacker or your victim; in the close communities that pervade the densely-populated country of Rwanda, running into the “Other” can happen daily.

When I arrived in Rwanda in the summer of 2006, I was amazed by the normalcy of it all; the bustle of the marketplace, the constant flow of people on the roads, the ubiquitous sound of drums and singing that paced my steps. People seemed comfortable, even happy. Perhaps it was because Rwandans are so good at keeping up appearances or perhaps because it was just easier for me to believe, but I clung to this image. It was not until I attended my first Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) workshop in September that I began to see the cracks in the walls. I met people at the workshop who hadn’t spoken to their next door neighbors in over a decade. There was one woman who was so traumatized that she rarely left her home; a released-prisoner who, until that day, had looked at all survivors as his enemy. I rapidly came to appreciate the immense distance that lies between peaceful coexistence and real reconciliation, between what I had seen on the surface and what lay just underneath. For many Rwandans, it is the difference between a life bound by compassion and humanity and a life overwhelmed by silence and fear.



The Trust Walk