

FPT - Friends Peace Teams



Advance Report - 2007

Friends Peace Teams opened an office in St. Louis (in the Friends Meetinghouse) in the spring of 2006. FPT administrative staff works out of that office, although David Zarembka, the coordinator of African Great Lakes Initiative, is in the process of moving to Africa. We have an active Board of Directors and Advisory Council, but welcome more participation by representatives of Yearly Meetings and other groups.

In April 2006, the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) began a one-year project supported by the United States Institute of Peace, the Philadelphia YM Bequest Fund, and the Shoemaker Fund to train 48 Healing Companions in Rwanda and Burundi. Two cycles of training have been completed with eight Healing Companions from twelve communities trained to conduct our Healing and Rebuilding Our Community (HROC) workshops. A Manual for the HROC workshops has been completed in English (to be translated into Kirundi/Kinyarwanda) and a second Manual on Training of the Healing Companions is in draft stage. The AGLI publication, "After the Guns Have Stopped: Searching for Reconciliation in Burundi" by Theoneste Bizimana and Anna Sandidge has been circulated to much positive acclaim.

In Rwanda, a project supported by the Drane Family Fund to conduct twenty Alternatives to Violence (AVP) workshops in the Nymata community, hard hit by the genocide, was completed and a report by Laura Shipler Chico, "I am My Neighbor's Mirror: A Community Rebuilding After Genocide" has been published. A pilot AVP program with four Basic and two Advanced workshops with half Congolese participants from North Kivu and half Rwandan participants from Gisenyi was also completed. The three-day workshops formed significant bonds between people who had formerly considered themselves to be enemies.

In Kenya the AVP training is rapidly expanding with numerous workshops conducted over the last year in Mombasa, Nairobi, and western Kenya. In 2006, eight newly certified AVP facilitators in Western Kenya made a commitment to apprentice with an AVP team of experienced Kenyan facilitators, to conduct a three-day basic level workshop in each of ten separate locations in Lugari Province, one each month. This is an all-volunteer effort. Significantly, these workshops are all self-financed, without reliance on outside funding. The new AVP Lubao Peace Centre (western Kenya), constructed by AGLI workcamps, is nearing completion and has been put into use. An AVP coordinator has been hired full-time to keep up with the growing demand for AVP in

Kenya.

Again with the help of an AGLI workcamp, construction has been completed on a building in Kamenge, Bujumbura, Burundi for the HIV-positive Kamenge Clinic, organized by the Friends Women's Association. The Clinic moved into the new building (the largest building in that region of the city) in April of this year.

In Bududa, Uganda, the Children of Hope program sponsored 200 orphans and AGLI workcampers finished the Hope Technical School which opened in July of 2007 with fifty-one students.

Adrien Niyongabo (HROC-Burundi) did a speaking tour in England and Elie Nahimana (General Secretary of Burundi Yearly Meeting) and David Bucura (former AVP coordinator and General Secretary of Rwanda Yearly Meeting) spoke in the United States. In August, 2006, thirteen AVP facilitators from the Great Lakes region of Africa and 4 AVP facilitators from the US, who have gone to Africa to do AVP with AGLI, attended the International AVP Gathering in Johannesburg, South Africa.

In Colombia we sent a two-person team to work with the previously trained facilitators of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). Along with the Colombian Facilitators, we offered three Second Level/Advanced workshops and three Training for Facilitator workshops, training a new group of over 20 apprentice facilitators. The Colombian facilitators are now fully qualified to operate an AVP program without the help of foreigners, but they welcome visitors. They have now become a formally recognized AVP program, and have conducted six other workshops this year. We strengthened the connections between the AVP group and Justapaz, the Mennonite sponsored Center for Justice Peace and Nonviolent Action, with a group of Conscientious Objectors and with the Andean Service Committee.

In May of this year we approved the addition of a new FPT program, the Indonesia Initiative, which will sponsor AVP training, and community development and pre-school education initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Heacock

Interchange - Spring 2007

Friends Peace Teams' African Great Lakes Initiative

"Friends Peace Teams is a Spirit-led organization working around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacemaking, healing and reconciliation. FPT's programs build on extensive Quaker experience combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution. We invite participation by all who share our commitment to this work".

Mission Statement, Friends Peace Teams

Since April of 2005, I have been engaged in an Embraced Ministry, with support and oversight provided by Baltimore Yearly Meeting together with my home meeting, Richmond Friends. The primary focus of my ministry has been with the work of Friends Peace Teams and its African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI), as a member of a peace team conducting alternatives to violence training in Kenya. I have become a strong advocate for AGLI's extensive peacemaking efforts in central and east Africa.

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) was founded in 1993 and is governed by a board and advisory council that includes representatives from 16 Yearly Meetings around the US. The African Great Lakes Initiative, a major program of Friends Peace began in 1998, when David Zarembka, (now Coordinator of AGLI) as the former BYM representative to FPT, proposed a delegation to the Great Lakes region of Africa, to see how Quakers were affected by the crises in the countries of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Kenya, and to look at possible ways FPT might partner with them in promoting peacemaking and healing.

Today, AGLI is supporting and promoting peace activities at the grassroots level in Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Congo. In partnership with yearly meetings and other Friends' peacemaking organizations in the region, AGLI works together with native peoples in local communities to develop and deliver workshops and training, organize workcamps, and assist with developing other projects, all of which promote deeper understanding and community between Friends in Africa and those in the United States.

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) – originally founded in this country by Quakers in the 1970s, in their work with prison populations – has been implemented in each of these African countries under AGLI, and the program is rapidly expanding. One example of the success of AGLI's collaborative model is in Western Kenya, where eight new AVP facilitators, who our team certified in October of 2005, made a commitment to apprentice with an AVP team of experienced Kenyan facilitators, to conduct a three-day basic level workshop in each of ten separate locations. This is an allvolunteer effort. Significantly, these workshops are all self-financed, without reliance on outside funding. This is no small feat, in a country where the average income is a dollar a day. In Kenya, workshop participants have included community leaders, police, paralegals, prison officials, teachers, youth, and Friends church members.

I made my second trip to Kenya in September of 2006, working with teams of Kenyan facilitators to conduct a series of advanced training workshops in Nairobi and Western Kenya. I am expecting to return again this September to support expansion into new, regions of the country. However in Western Kenya at least, the program is operating largely on its own. AGLI and our Kenyan partner, Friends for Peace and Community Development, have recently supported the hiring of an AVP coordinator, Getry Agizah, who will also oversee the new AVP-Labao Peace Center, which is nearing completion through the efforts of AGLI workcamps held each summer. Plans are also underway for AVP training in the drought stricken northwest, which has seen a dramatic increase in violence among nomadic tribes.

AGLI continues to advance and support AVP workshops in Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, where the program has had a considerably longer history of success. In Rwanda alone, as of this date, over 1000 local court judges have been trained in AVP, as part of a system that has been set up by the government to provide hearings for alleged perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide, most of whom have remained in jail without trial for twelve or more years. These hearings are patterned after a traditional form of arbitration known as "Gacaca", a process designed to seek the truth and foster reconciliation through dramatically reduced, restorative penalties for people, in return for confessing the details of their crimes.

The AVP training is having a profound impact on these Gacaca judges, other Rwandans, and their communities. In the words of one AVP-Rwanda facilitator, Kalisa Eddy, "In other workshops, people go as they came. But in AVP, they see things more deeply. AVP is more open. [A person can] reveal what he did, even things he won't

say in church. [AVP has] elements of openness and love, building a sense of family. [It is] more than theory. It is the model [of] bringing everyone in. Everyone is included, participating. When you include everyone, you get love, telling the truth." (*Peace Cannot Stay in Small Places*, Laura Shipler Chico and Uwimana Marie Paule, AGLI/Friends Peace House publication, 2005.)

AGLI also supports programs in trauma healing and reconciliation in Burundi and Rwanda. Through interviews with Burundian participants we have learned how the Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC) program (sponsored by Burundi Yearly Meeting, in partnership with AGLI) has literally changed the lives of family and community members. Their amazing personal stories can be found in the recent AGLI publication, *After the Guns have Stopped: Searching for Reconciliation in Burundi*, by Theoneste Bisimana and Anna Sandidge. One HROC participant, Dennis Mpawenayo, states "I wish to have HROC teachings in all the villages and countryside. There are some who still have the spirit of revenge because they don't know the causes of their anger and hate. HROC can help them see their hidden self. If these teachings reach others I think it will help bring reconciliation and peace." Each three-day workshop is designed to bring together ten Hutu and ten Tutsi participants, usually for the first time in years.

Through the support of a substantial grant from the US Institute of Peace, AGLI has been able to expand the HROC program in Burundi and Rwanda. An HROC training manual has now been completed. With our partners, Burundi Yearly Meeting and Friends Peace House in Rwanda, we have implemented an advanced training course to more effectively prepare community facilitators, and have also developed a training program for "Healing Companions", former HROC participants who offer trauma healing support in communities in Burundi and Rwanda. And planning is now in the works to take HROC into other regions in need of healing from war.

In Uganda, AGLI partners with a Quaker peace project in the village of Bududa, a rural, poverty stricken community high in the mountains on the slopes of Mount Elgon. The organization, "Children of Hope", supports children orphaned due the AIDS pandemic, landslides, and political strife. Their sponsorship program assists families with school supplies and school uniforms, after-school programs, tutoring, and counseling. Children of Hope founded a vocational skills school that began operating last year, which targets children who are unable to attend secondary school. Summer workcamps organized by AGLI provided labor and materials for the school, located just outside the village, with workcampers from the US and Canada working together with Ugandans from the community.

All of our programs in the African Great Lakes region fall under the care of Quaker Yearly Meetings (both Friends United Meeting and the Evangelical Friends Church) and/or other Friends-affiliated organizations. One of my goals in traveling among monthly meetings and other Quaker functions within BYM, is to educate Friends about the Quaker presence in Africa, and to ask: "What can Friends in the West learn from this amazing level of witness and commitment, demonstrated by our African sisters and brothers, to the cause of peace and reconciliation,?" Many have heard me say that our own Meeting along with other Meetings within BYM, as members of Friends United Meeting, has expressed an intention to look for more common ground with our Quaker neighbors around the country and world. This discussion has led to the suggestion that we can search for individual or corporate ways to unite with FUM and Evangelical Friends' through our strong peace and justice witness, testimonies with which we are in unity.

From my final journal entry on the eve of my departure from Kenya last fall:

“Saturday Evening, 9/28/06, Nairobi

I have come to love Africa, it's wild beauty, its stark contrasts – in culture, tribal ethnicity, and religious beliefs, all imbedded in deep, rich traditions. Traditions that, at best, foster strong bonds of family, faith, community, and a wonderful generosity of spirit, while in the worst of times serve only to tear apart, shame, stigmatize, and polarize, leading to violence, suffering and pain. Yet these problems are not unique to Africa... only in their specificity. They represent the challenge to all humanity – to learn how to live in a non-violent world, with the final recognition that we are truly all one, connected by threads of indwelling Light, that of God in you and in me.”

Linda Heacock



Advance Report - 2005

This past year has been a very exciting one for Friends Peace Teams. It has been a time of expanding our peace team work and our capability to administer it. During the past 11 years FPT work has been accomplished mainly by volunteer effort. We have reached the point where we can enhance our effectiveness by revising our governance structure and establishing an office with paid staff. We are in the process of discerning what staffing model will best support our mission and facilitate growth faithful to the Spirit. Our budget is approximately \$250,000 per year and we will soon be launching a fundraising campaign to expand our programs.

FPT programs include trauma healing educational workshops for local communities in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. We have been conducting Alternatives to Violence workshops and training local facilitators, particularly in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya. This work is called our African Great Lakes Initiative Program (AGLI.) Healing and rebuilding communities is a focus of these programs where ethnic and religious conflict and results of the genocide have torn the communities apart. The effectiveness of these programs is measurable and they have been greatly appreciated. There is much more need than we can meet with our current organization.

Some preliminary work is planned for additional work in Latin America. FPT also serves Friends by assisting them with clearness and training for peace team work and helping peace team members and their Meetings during their term of service and upon return. Much information about this is available on the web site:

www.friendspeaceteams.org. The email address is fpt@quaker.org. We publish Peace Team News in hard-copy and by email. Please subscribe to this to find out more about peace team programs, results, and plans.

We have adopted a mission statement as follows: "Friends Peace Teams is a Spirit-led organization working around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. FPT's programs build on extensive Quaker experience combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution. We invite participation by all who share our commitment to this work."

In the last year we created a self-perpetuating Board of Directors that is responsible for Friends Peace Team work. Yearly Meetings are invited to participate in this peace work by naming a Yearly Meeting Representative to the FPT Advisory Council rather than the board. The representative will participate in an annual meeting along with those

from the Working Groups involved in the FPT programs in specific geographical regions of the world. This will allow meaningful and interactive participation by the Yearly Meeting representatives, yet avoid the current work overload.

For more information visit the web site or write to Friends Peace Teams, PO Box 141, Hyattsville, MD 20781, or call 877-814-6972. For the AGLI programs, call 314-645-0336.

J. E. McNeil, BYM Representative



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