

Teach these Truths

2009 EASTER OFFERING · RWANDA · AFRICA

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Take a look at the country

The country of Rwanda in east-central Africa is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland and is the most densely populated country in Africa. Rwanda is a poor country with about 90% of its population engaged in agriculture (mostly on a subsistence basis). Food production in the country often does not keep up with population growth.

Rwanda received its independence from Belgium in 1962. Three years earlier the majority ethnic group, the Hutus, overthrew the ruling Tutsi king. Over the next several years, thousands of Tutsis were killed and about 150,000 were driven into exile in neighboring countries.

The next generation of Tutsis formed a rebel group called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and began a civil war in 1990. In 1994 the Tutsi rebels defeated the Hutu regime and ended the tragic genocide of roughly 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus. Approximately 2 million Hutu refugees (many fearing Tutsi retribution) fled to neighboring countries. Since then, most refugees have returned to Rwanda, but several thousand remained in the neighboring

Democratic Republic of the Congo and formed an extremist insurgency bent on retaking Rwanda.

Despite the challenges of ethnic reconciliation, Rwanda is changing quickly as it moves from being a traditional subsistence farming country to a modern society. Rwanda has adopted a powerful vision called Vision 2020. They are taking steps to become the Singapore of Africa—an economic, transportation, and technological hub of East Africa.

The government is courageous and very forward looking, but implementing these modern plans is a great challenge in a culture steeped in tradition and with a predominantly poor population.

Recent changes include: All schools must switch from the French language to English within one year, and all teachers must have a college education (most elementary teachers needed only a secondary education focused on teaching).

The capital city, Kigali, has also accepted and begun implementing a 50-year city growth plan. In the city of Kigali, all houses built after July 2008 without city approval must be torn down.

The stress from these changes is felt throughout the population. Many teachers have lost jobs, and others are scrambling to learn English. Many people have had their houses torn down in the last months. There is a sense of hopelessness and panic among the poor.

This is a unique time in which the church needs to step in to empower the poor to rise to the occasion and challenge the state to pursue Vision 2020 with justice.

Take a look at Friends in Rwanda

Evangelical Friends Mission began working in Rwanda in 1986 with a team of Friends missionaries who had previously served in neighboring Burundi.

Friends missionaries in Rwanda today are stimulating the national church leaders in fresh initiatives of evangelism, cell groups, and church multiplication. National leaders are transitioning to self support for their ministries, a major step forward. Friends in Rwanda seek not only to win new people to Christ and plant churches, but to be a force toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.

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Take a look at leadership training

Leadership development is an important part of the work Evangelical Friends Mission is doing in Rwanda. A regional Bible school trains church leaders in sessions held four times a year for two weeks at a time. What they learn in their classes, students put into practice as they serve in their home community between the school sessions.

Through scholarships we also support additional study for gifted leaders. Presently two leaders are studying in Uganda with one of those almost ready to return to Rwanda to serve as the church's assistant superintendent.

Take a look at D4D

About a year and a half ago, Friends missionary Debby Thomas, along with three Rwandan pastors, attended a conference in Uganda to learn about Discipling for Development (D4D).

Discipling for Development has been developed by Mission: Moving Mountains—a ministry of The Navigators. This community-development and discipleship program involves:

1. Personal spiritual transformation as a prerequisite for community transformation.
2. An incarnational identity with the community and demonstration of the good news.
3. Transformation of communities coming from the power, truth, and love of the gospel.
4. Development that integrates all of life and community.

5. Empowerment of the community to become all that God intends.

6. Replication as a unified community ministers to other communities.

Debby had been very active in creative Christian-development initiatives and D4D provides a model for these ongoing efforts in addressing both the spiritual and physical needs of the poor in Rwanda.

Thirty Christian volunteers have been trained and are now working in four communities. They will work in each community for about three years as transformation takes place from within the community. The first four communities are the pilot projects, and Debby Thomas anticipates that work will begin in more communities even before these communities reach the point of being ready to replicate their process in new communities.

One of the four pilot communities is Kirambo in southwestern Rwanda. In the early months of their development, a group of 16 women started a group savings program after returning from a D4D training session. Each member of the savings groups contributes \$1 every week and a different member receives this money to invest in some way that will improve that person's life. It gives them enough buying power to start something they could not start alone. The group has doubled and now includes several men.

One of these men is Emmanuel. He is a young man who was born to a very poor family. Recently married, he and his wife were living in a rented single room with so many holes that snakes frequently came in and people would just reach in and steal his things. He had no

land and he believed raising any kind of animal was outside his grasp. He felt he would always be poor. But he was one of the eight people from Kirambo who went to a D4D training meeting and was challenged with the simple principle of "Use the little you have in your hand." He and his wife planted the tiny area outside their rented room using some of the techniques he had learned. As part of the savings group they invested \$5 to purchase 2 rabbits and 3 guinea pigs. He made \$14 from selling the first litters. With this and the small profits from his crop, he was able to rent a larger plot of land. With successive harvests and cycles of the savings group, they were able to supply their family with vegetables, rent a nicer home, and purchase a plot of land.

His dream for 2009 is to build his own home on his land. He has started tithing and is thinking about how to make his church, his community, and his country a better place. "I can be a light to others and in my home I can have both physical and spiritual food that I can give to visitors," says Emmanuel.

This last February Emmanuel was chosen by the Kirambo church to lead a new church plant. This new church has been a cell group for a while, and are now meeting on Sundays. Emmanuel will be able to share both spiritual and physical teaching that will make a difference in the lives of this group of believers.

Put faces on the Discipling for Development ministry in Rwanda by viewing the D4D PowerPoint at www.barclaypress.com/infodesk.php/Christian-Education-resources.