



RWANDAN UPDATE

Tom MacGregor December 2007



Happy Christmas Friends,

Seasons greetings to one and all! I must admit for the first time ever Christmas has snuck up on me and I hardly even noticed. I guess the main reason for this is that you do not get the tell tail signs here that you get in the UK, for example the shops have not been playing Christmas carols since late September, there are not really any lights or decorations and the weather is still pleasantly warm. Do not get me wrong they do celebrate Christmas here but it is basically a family day where people go to Church and then have a party with a meal together, not turkey but if they can afford it, they will have some kind of meat usually Goat.



It has been another busy couple of months with both work and settling into my new home. After a few problems and the usual delays I have finally moved into a flat just on the edge of the town centre in Gitarama. I live above a Mobile Telephone Shop and Insurance Brokers (in the photo my flat is the one above the yellow sign). The location is so much better than I had ever dreamed of as it has running water, is near the shops and it is very secure. The building comes with a guards 24 hours a day paid for by the safety conscious Insurance Brokers. The flat was totally unfurnished and

so I am arranging for some of the small businesses that we work with to make the furniture. Due to the locations of these businesses this is proving to be a bit of a logistical nightmare and consequently I am without most of what I need but I hope to get a table and chairs sometime next week.

My work in cataloguing the small businesses that FH are working with continues and it has turned out to be a much bigger task than was ever imagined. Currently I have logged over 1,350 small businesses varying in size and enterprise from the individual hiring out wedding dresses to a cooperative of Bee Keepers with over 500 members. My conservative estimate is that the training and assistance that FH is currently providing through its small



enterprise scheme is having a positive impact on almost 10,000 people. Whilst the logging of the businesses continues I have also been writing a business plan in the hope of starting a small export and distribution business to assist with the sale of some of the products that are being made in the rural areas. It is still early days but we have already met with an entrepreneur from Canada who wishes to sell



some of our products and we are also hopeful in linking up with other FH workers around the World.



Believe it or not but last month I also had the opportunity to do some teaching. There is an English lady living in Gitarama who works with the VSO and one of the areas that she is assisting them in is improving the standard of teaching English in Schools. As anyone who has seen my writing or spelling will know I was some what nervous as I agreed to help her, particularly as she told me we would be training a class full of teachers. My fears were unfounded as she did all the hard work; I just had fun chatting and singing children's songs with the teachers in English. I did learn a lot and absolutely loved the experience so I signed up for another weekend.

Also last month saw the grand opening of the pig processing plant. A few years ago FH had a program of giving out piglets to struggling families in the South of Rwanda. The plan was that these people would raise the pigs and then breed and sell them. Off the back of this initiative it was discovered that there was a big demand for quality meat in the capital city, Kigali, however at the time there were no good facilities for slaughtering and transporting the animals and so the vision for RMS (Rwandan Meat Supplies) was born. It has been many years in the planning but now everything is finally in place which is good news for the local population but not for the pigs.



So as you can see although we have been really busy I am still loving every minute here in Rwanda. I praise God that I have been able to settle in so well, making new friends both with the locals and also with the other international staff that come from all over the World. Although I will never really be a native Rwandan I am already beginning to feel accepted and as my skills with the language improve so does the depth of my relationships. I am truly looking forward to my first Rwandan Christmas as a group of us are planning to go and stay by Lake Kivu in the West of the country. I have never been there but I have been told it is extremely beautiful and relaxing.

Prayer Requests

1. Prayer of thanks for how everything has gone over the last few months with a perfect flat, good friends and enjoyable work.
2. Please pray for the community leaders of the town of Gitarama as they try and finish all the local Genocide trails by the end of the year. The trials are held in the open air in the centre of town on two days a week and it is a time when people are reminded quite vividly of the past. It can put a strain on the community and understandably it affects the whole atmosphere of the town.
3. Please also pray for the on going work of FH here in Rwanda. FH, like all other charities continually must find a balance between what it wants to do and what it can afford to do. Please pray for the leaders will have wisdom in choosing the right programs for us to follow.

I thank you once again for your interest, support and prayers. It is all really appreciated. If you do want any more specific information please do not hesitate to contact me via my email which is tmacgregor@fhi.net or by regular mail sent to PO Box 911, Kigali, Rwanda. Also remember to visit my page at www.facebook.com if you would like to see more photographs.

Many thanks,
Tom