



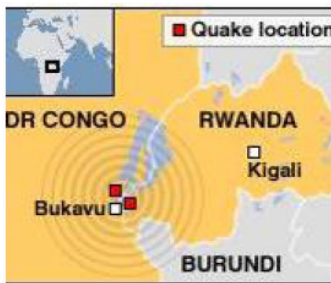
## RWANDAN UPDATE

Tom MacGregor March 2008



Dear Friends,

For the last month or so I have been trying to write this update but in all honesty I have been struggling to find the right words. It is not because nothing has happened, quite the contrary, it is because I have real difficulty switching between the many joys I have experienced and the heart break of the man made poverty and natural disasters. I will leave the arguments for why God allows such great blessings for some and such suffering for others to people more clever than me. All I will say is that here in Rwanda I have seen many wonderful examples of real happiness, love and compassion from people who have next to nothing. To them there seems to be a lot more to the meaning of life than their own personal comfort, I do not profess to have the absolute answer to this but I am sure that their faith in God is an important factor. Hopefully as I continue to search my understanding will deepen.



As I am sure you are aware in February we had a number of Earthquakes (I believe one was registered at 6.1). Here in Gitarama, although the whole house shook quite violently thankfully there was no real damage or injuries, in fact the first I knew about the severity of the event was when I received a call from a very nervous mother enquiring whether I was OK or not. Although my life and work has been largely unaffected I would ask that you spare a thought and prayer for my friends and work colleagues based in the south of Rwanda and also in Bukavu in DRC as they work with the local communities to try to put their lives back together.

My work continues with the Micro Enterprise Team which I am still thoroughly enjoying. At the moment the majority of my days are spent in the office as I try and complete a number of different proposals and business plans. Each one of these is aimed at securing funding and increasing the size of the markets available to the small businesses that we are working with. I do still get a few opportunities to visit the different groups which I must admit is my favorite part of the job, although I guess with my very basic language skills I am probably more useful to FH typing away on my computer in the office and leaving the field work and training to my very capable Rwandan colleagues.



Of course almost as important as starting new projects is to know when to end them. Not only is it imperative that we use our limited resources to support the most vulnerable groups but also it gives those we have already helped the opportunity of continuing the good work on their own. In Muhanga (the District where I live) FH had been operating a number of different child development programs for over five years and although it is always hard to let go it was felt the time was right. To acknowledge the successful completion of these projects we were invited to a big community celebration where I got to try my hand at traditional Rwandan dancing (it turns out I am truly rubbish at it).

I still love life in Gitarama and I have found a friendly local Presbyterian Church who have welcomed me in and really made me feel at home. There are about 250 people who attend the services including a few other expats. My language skills are not quite up to translating the whole of the service yet, but they always make sure there is someone nearby who can give me a hand with the tricky words (which in Rwandan is most of them). As well as settling in a Church I am also trying to get more involved in community activities and last month I had a brilliant opportunity as I joined the rest of the town's people as we cleaned up Gitarama in preparation for a visit by the Rwandan President. On the day he arrived there was a big ceremony held at the stadium and we were almost crushed as the crowds jostled to get in to see him. It was great to be a part of this and to see the people's genuine enthusiasm for a man who has done so much for this country.



My flat is slowly but surely becoming a proper home and in January I even found myself a housemate. Bruce is a retired teacher from the UK who is working with the Rwandan Government to help improve the standard of education within the Muhanga District and so he spends a lot of his time out on the road visiting the local schools. It is great to finally have some English company and conversation. Bruce is planning to stay in Rwanda for at least a year and so far he seems to love every moment out here. If you want to know more about him and his experiences he is writing a blog which you can read online at [www.bruceswanderings.blogspot.com](http://www.bruceswanderings.blogspot.com)

## Prayer Requests

1. Please pray for all those people who are still trying to rebuild their lives following the Earthquake. The rainy season has now started and there are some people who are without proper shelter.
2. In April will be the anniversary of the Genocide which is always a difficult time for the people of Rwanda as they remember family and friends who were brutally killed during this period. Please pray for this nation as it continues to work through the healing process and please also pray that I will remain sensitive to those around me so that I may be a help and not a hindrance to them.
3. I have now been here over six months and apparently this is when I should be really struggling with the stress of living in another culture. So far I have not felt anything like this and I strongly believe that this is down to your prayers. I would ask continue to pray for my physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing.

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](mailto:tmacgregor@fhi.net) or by regular mail to my new postal address **PO Box 146, Gitarama, Rwanda.**

Also remember to visit my page at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) if you would like to see more photographs.

Many thanks,

Tom