



# EDUCATING FOR PEACE

AUGUST 2009

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## SHALOM NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

**S**halom Educating for Peace is a non-governmental, non-profit organization working for building and sustaining positive peace through education.

The past few months have been exciting ones for Shalom. At the end of June we held our first conference on forgiveness and reconciliation in the Rwamagana district in Rwanda. Cori Wielenga, who was visiting from South Africa, was able to join the Shalom staff in Rwanda with presenting papers at this event.

In June we also held a ceremony for the staff of the Humura Psychiatric Day Care Centre for the completion of their training in nonviolent communication. The training of teachers at the Doctrina Vitae Secondary school also continues, with Cori having had an opportunity to train in nonviolent discipline during her visit.

We also held our annual board meeting at the end of June which gave us the opportunity to assess where we're at and where we will be going in the year ahead. Enjoy reading all about these things in this newsletter!



Pictured above are Penine Uwimbaba, Jean Prime Harerimana, Cori Wielenga and Jean de Dieu Basabose, who form the core team of Shalom.

Basabose founded Shalom in 2008. He has a Masters in Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies and has some five years experience in the field as a peacebuilder. Cori Wielenga helped establish the organization and is currently completing her PhD in Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies.

Penine has her Masters in Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies and is passionate about a peace brigade in Africa. Jean Prime Harerimana holds a degree in African Literature and History. He heads up our efforts in Burundi.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**We will take direct action against injustice without waiting for other agencies to act. We will not obey unjust laws or submit to unjust practices. We will do this peacefully, openly and cheerfully because our aim is to persuade. We adopt the means of nonviolence because our end is a community at peace with itself."**

*~Martin Luther King, Jr.*

## IN GRATITUDE

Our Rwamagana events would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship from various organizations and individuals. We would especially like to thank Graham Dyson and the Centre for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management in Norway and Geoff Haris in South Africa.

## WEBSITE

Shalom has a website at the following address: <http://www.shalomeducatingforpeace.org>. Please visit our website for more information about us and our projects. We are also in the process of opening an account with Givengain ([www.givengain.com](http://www.givengain.com)) where we will be able to receive donations through Visa and Mastercard payments.

## RWAMAGANA CONFERENCE

On the 26th of June, we ran our first seminar for a group of leaders from the Rwamagana district in Rwanda. These leaders formed the Reconciliation Forum of their region, an initiative of the government's National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC).

Some thirty-five leaders heard presentations by Shalom members on reconciliation, forgiveness, leadership that fosters peace and the role of storytelling in reconciliation. The presentations were well received and there was some intense discussion afterwards around the difficulty of

applying forgiveness and reconciliation in the Rwandan context,

Jean de Dieu Basabose stressed that merely living alongside one another did not mean reconciliation had taken place, which posed a challenge for many of the participants.

There was a strong desire for much such seminars and more opportunities to explore these concepts and dialogue around how to apply them. The Forum also asked Shalom for access to relevant resources.



Members of the Reconciliation Forum who were trained by Shalom

## PREST EVENT WITH THE INTUMWA CHOIR

On the 27th of June, we held a Peace and Reconciliation through Song and Theatre (PREST) event in the Rwamagana district. Some eight hundred people from the local community flocked to see the Intumwe Choir perform songs and theatre around reconciliation in Rwanda.

Jean de Dieu Basabose has been working with the choir for some months, training them in concepts of reconciliation and forgiveness. Based on what they learnt, they put together a powerful

repertoire that brought to life these concepts through music and drama.

In the evening over a thousand people gathered in a local church where we showed short, locally produced movie clips which brought up the topics of domestic violence and the difficulty for perpetrators leaving prison.

The Intumwe Choir would love the opportunity to take their song and theatre production on tour around the country. Their performance had a powerful impact in the Rwamagana area.



Hundreds flock to see the Intumwe Choir perform their reconciliation program in Rwamagana district.

## RADIO BROADCAST

Apart from the training that Basabose is doing at various schools and centres, he still continues to broadcast our weekly radio program. At the moment, we are tackling the topic of peaceful dialogue. We have had requests to start a similar radio program in Burundi and the DRC.

We would like to extend this radio program, where the topics are discussed in small groups in local communities throughout the country. Each group

would be run by a facilitator trained by Shalom. These groups would be encouraged to put the concepts into practice. At the end of the year groups would meet together to celebrate what they have achieved and learn from one another.

This would be an effective way of making use of radio, which is the most powerful form of communication in Rwanda with a very far reach.



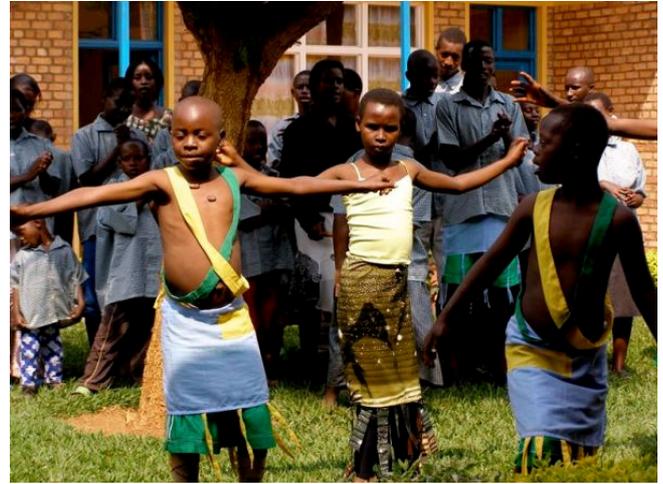
Members of the Intumwe Choir perform their production on reconciliation in Rwanda.

## HUMURA CENTRE FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Over the past few months Basabose has been training staff at the Humura Day Care Centre in nonviolent communication. At the end of June we presented them with certificates at a ceremony which was even attended by Miss Kigali and reported on in Rwanda's English newspaper, *The New Times*.

Humura is one of the most well-equipped day centres providing for the needs of mentally and physically handicapped children. During the celebration their children sang and danced for us and the staff put on a play depicting what they had learnt from the course.

Being handicapped holds a very strong stigma in much of rural Rwanda and the staff expressed how helpful it was to be taught the principles of nonviolent communication, both in terms of their work with the children as well as with one another and parents they have to interact with. They have asked that Shalom run a similar training at satellite centres they have elsewhere in the country.



Children at the Humura Psychiatric Day Care Centre perform Rwandan dance and song.

## DOCTRINA VITAE SECONDARY SCHOOL

During Cori's visit to Rwanda she had the opportunity to train the teachers at Doctrina Vitae Secondary school. This school is keen to adopt peaceful means of operating as well as educating their learners in peace. During this session, Cori covered the topic of nonviolent discipline and how this might be applied in the Rwandan context. The challenge is large classes and teachers report the recent upsurge of urban influences in the way of cigarettes, drugs and alcohol.

Regardless of these challenges, these teachers are committed to the way of peace and benefit from Basabose's regular training sessions on such topics as nonviolent communication, conflict resolution and reconciliation. The need to run such training in other schools in Rwanda is great and we long for the resources to have a wider reach.



Shalom staff, Basabose and Penine, work to prepare the materials for the training.

## FUTURE VISION: WE NEED YOU!

During our annual board meeting it became clear that there is a great deal of need for Shalom's intervention in a variety of contexts. Training school teachers, hospital staff and community leaders in nonviolent communication seems an immediate urgent need. Through sports, theatre and song large numbers of people in local communities can be reached. Through the use of media such as radio and film, we can facilitate dialogue amongst Rwandans across the country.

We would like to see the Intumwe Choir tour Rwanda, and maybe even Burundi and the whole of East Africa with their message of reconciliation. Further, we have a dream to see a Peace Academy be established in Rwanda, where we can train and equip people in peace and reconciliation.

These are our dreams. We need your help to make them happen!



Staff from Humura and Shalom, together with Miss Kigali and a representative from NURC during the ceremony.

## FORGIVENESS IN RWANDA

Forgiveness is a difficult concept to apply in any context, but all the more so in a country which has seen such extreme violence as is the case in Rwanda. During the sessions with the leaders of the Rwamagana district it was clear that forgiveness was something that would cost a lot on the part of the person doing the forgiving.

It is particularly difficult to forgive when it seems that the one you need to forgive is not remorseful for what they have done. And yet we believe that forgiveness needs to take place whether someone has said sorry or not. This is partly because we forgive to relieve our own pain. We forgive in order to be able to move on in our own healing process. And it is partly because the one needing to ask for forgiveness has a long and difficult process to walk themselves.

They need to come to terms with what they have done. They need to take responsibility for their actions. They need to make sense of how it is they came to lose their humanity and act in such a violent way. And they need to forgive themselves.

Forgiveness is a journey. It demands a lot of courage but gives in return many rich rewards.

## WHY FORGIVE?

"Wherever people are willing to face the past honestly, old wounds can be healed and amazing things happen," writes Johann Arnold in his book *Why Forgive?* In this book he draws together the stories of a wide diversity of people who have suffered pain and trauma beyond description. But each of these people has had the courage to forgive.

The foreword of the book is written by Jean-Paul Samputu, a world-renowned Rwandan musician who has turned his own suffering into a story of healing and reconciliation. Having survived the genocide in 1994, the magnitude of death and pain led him to become bitter, angry and revengeful. Through an encounter in Uganda he experienced a religious conversion and decided to use his talents for reconciliation. One of his first steps was to forgive the person who had killed his parents. He writes that today he is able to share a meal with this man and his family.

Arnold describes whole villages in Rwanda who have chosen the way of forgiveness over revenge. He quotes Margaret Mead saying, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world."



Children at the Humura Day Care Centre sing and dance during the ceremony celebrating training in nonviolent communication. Although handicapped children in rural communities may be marginalised and neglected, these children receive love, care and the hope for a better life. Bringing peace into our communities means looking after the marginalized and neglected, reconciling all people from all walks of life to form rich and diverse communities together.



### SUPPORT SHALOM

There are many ways you can assist Shalom to bring the message of peace to Rwanda and Burundi.

Bring your skills and expertise to Rwanda.

Assist us through regular or once-off financial donations.

We are in need of a lap-top and other office equipment.

Connect us with organizations who can partner with us on our projects.

### SHALOM'S BANKING DETAILS

Account name: Shalom Educating for Peace

Account number: 12049-01-97

Bank: Ecobank, Rwanda

Swift code: ECOCRWRW