Heartbeat Africa is a publication for you, our partner in ministry. We pray that within these pages you’ll glimpse how wide and how long, how high and how deep is Christ’s passion for Africa. Thank you so much for your part in making Him known through the ministry of Africa Inland Mission.

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Online
WWW.AIMINT.ORG

THE SIMPLE LIFE BUT NOT THE EASY LIFE

For members of one of AIM’s newest outreach teams, living a simpler lifestyle means a lot of hard work – including a hike up “Internet Mountain” to send and receive emails, doing laundry by hand in a basin, and preparing each day’s meals completely from scratch. A simpler lifestyle is one of 12 core values held by AIM’s Training In Ministry Outreach (TIMO) program, through which this team serves. Owning minimal possessions frees team members from the bondage of material things, and a simpler lifestyle helps remove some of the barriers between the team and their host people group.

Learn more about this team and AIM’s team approach to ministry beginning on page 16.
three years ago I stood in a packed room in Tanzania in front of 100 lively boys. Not many years before many of them had lived on the streets of Mwanza, stomachs aching from hunger and minds numbed by sniffing glue. Now because of the prayer and gritty work of my Tanzanian host Micah, these boys radiated energy, joy, and promise.

It was Sunday morning. With my Bible open to Acts 1:8 I asked the boys what a missionary was. I told them missionaries are God’s “sent ones”. They are ordinary people who start right where they are talking about what Jesus has done in their lives. God empowers them with His Holy Spirit and they carry the special message of salvation to people who are different than they are.

Up to that point I just had my audience’s polite attention. Then I began to spotlight how God had used Africans in the past, and they beamed with pride. Africa was the place that had protected the baby Jesus (Matt. 2:13-21). It was an African who helped Jesus carry the cross to Golgotha. Africans were in Jerusalem the day the Church started. An African government official became the first missionary to his own continent even before the Gospel was taken to Europe (Acts 8:26-29). An African, I reminded the boys, was one of the leaders of the very first missionary-sending church. Finally, I explained that in the first centuries after the Book of Acts, it was North Africa that became the centre of Christianity.

Now many of the boys were eagerly leaning toward me. I told them that a little over 100 years ago, only one Christian in 10 was black or brown. Today, I said, around the world seven Christians in 10 are black or brown. Some of the largest churches in Europe and the U.K. are African-led. Africans, I explained, are changing the world.

“Men, just a few years ago all of you needed a missionary,” I said. “Today God is calling some of you to be missionaries. Maybe to other parts of Africa, maybe to the ends of the earth.” Moments later over half of those boys thrust their arms straight into the air to tell God they would follow Him wherever He led.

Today’s Africa is a different continent. The sub-Saharan Church is poised to break out of its homeland (and in important ways already has). One of AIM’s biggest jobs in the next decade will be to partner with it.

My hope is that some of these future missionaries hail from Mwanza!
After nearly two years in production, Africa Inland Mission’s On-field Media (OFM) teams feature length film, The Distant Boot, produced to help stir the heart of the African church toward greater involvement in missions, is now complete and recently debuted in Nairobi, Kenya. Its Nairobi debut coincided with a church-wide mission day, during which pastors and other ministry leaders received a DVD along with a Study Guide to take back to their congregations. An upcoming Swahili version, and then a French overdub, will extend the film’s reach throughout Africa. While the movie will show in local theaters in some places, the main distribution channel will be through packaged DVDs. “Eventually,” says OFM team leader Mike Delorezno, “we hope to get a movie into the hands of every church leader in Sub-Saharan Africa. And ultimately, we hope the story will be a catalyst for raising up a new wave of missionaries, and churches committed to sending them.”

“We hope the story will be a catalyst for raising up new wave of missionaries, and churches committed to sending them.”

Excerpt from an email from one of AIM’s Creative Access TIMO outreach team leaders, at the conclusion of the team’s two-year ministry assignment.

“Africa Bound!

Repurposed Royal Navy Ship to be Used for Medical Care among Island Communities of Lake Victoria

The challenge is huge: Sail a 150 ton former Royal Navy Tender ship christened, “Jubilee Hope” from Gibraltar, where it is currently being refitted for medical work, along the western coast of Africa, around South Africa’s Cape of Good Hope, then up the east coast to Mombasa, Kenya. Once there, partially disassemble it for the 500 mile journey inland to Lake Victoria, where the ship will be reassembled, launched, and put to use as a medical vessel, impacting up to 100,000 lives per year. “The ship will be equipped with dental and minor surgical theaters, a pharmacy and a laboratory,” says AIM missionary Dale Hamilton, who, with his wife Christine, has worked in the islands for 26 years, and will oversee operations and logistics for the ship. This initiative, headed by the Scottish charity, Vine Trust, is being conducted in partnership with the Africa Inland Church, Tanzania.

E-quipping Leaders

Serving through Internet-based Theological Education

As the crow flies, it’s about 8500 miles from Montana to Kenya. But distance hasn’t kept AIM missionary Ken Hall, who previously served in Kenya, and is now based in Montana working as part of AIM’s U.S. African Ministry team, from his passion of equipping African leaders for ministry. Working through iTee-Kenya, an internet-based Theological Education by Extension program, Ken works with students each week by posting reading materials, providing guidance, and participating in online discussions. “The biggest drawback of online learning is the lack of face-to-face contact with the teacher and other students,” says Ken. “[I found my] students tended to adjust to that around the half-way mark in their first online course.” Despite this factor, Ken sees a lot of potential for online distance learning. “As long as students have computer and internet access and the zeal to study, they can learn and grow pretty much as in a face-to-face class.” In fact, he finds students tend to produce higher quality work when submitting online. “When they post their responses to discussion questions, they know the whole class will be reading their work and they don’t want to be embarrassed by poor quality work.” Another benefit says Ken, is that students can work on their own daily schedule and don’t have to have exact time slots to be in class. “This gives them more flexibility with respect to their jobs, ministries and family life.”

To learn more about iTee Kenya, visit www.itee-ke.org

Read more about TIMO beginning on page 16.

“I can say without reservation (and with the agreement of the whole team) that we are changed people. We will never be the same. We have a greater understanding of God’s calling in our lives to work for the kingdom wherever we are... God has used this experience to prepare all of us. We are richly blessed!”

Excerpt from an email from one of AIM’s Creative Access TIMO outreach team leaders, at the conclusion of the team’s two-year ministry assignment.
We all experience different types of trauma during our lives: the death of a loved one, an accident, a divorce, severe illness, and others. But, what happens to a person when multiple traumatic experiences confront him at one time? Violent confrontations leading to physical injury, loved ones being killed or abducted, homes looted then burned to the ground, and the year’s crops stolen out of the field. How does one recover from such life-changing events?

After living and ministering in the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)-affected area in Central African Republic (CAR) for four years, my move to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and beginning ministry in that country’s LRA-affected area have given me a new understanding of the effect trauma has on people’s lives. In Congo, people tell of more horrific scenarios as the result of LRA attacks. People tied to the bush while these attacks take place tell of returning to the scene to find only the remains of the houses and charred bodies. Churches, Bible school buildings, and schools have been destroyed by the rebels. The local military often forbid people, for their own protection, to plant gardens further than a few miles from the town centers. This means that locals have to plant in soil that is already overused and unproductive, diminishing crop yields— their main source of income. Although actual LRA attacks now seem to have lessened and more LRA members are surrendering, the traumatic scars of their activity throughout northeastern DRC and southeastern CAR remain.

How is Africa Inland Mission responding to these hurting people? Under the initiative of AIM missionary Steve Wolcott, a series of workshops for churches throughout the LRA-affected areas of CAR and DRC were held in March 2010. These workshops continue to be held using material produced by the American Bible Society’s Trauma Healing Institute. Church and community members are introduced to the importance of confronting trauma from a biblical perspective through one-to-three day workshops. Groups of thirty to thirty-five church leaders are then trained to use the material in five-day equipping workshops. During these workshops, sessions are held where participants plan what they will do with the information they are learning. Follow-up on their activities is then done by those organizing the workshops. This includes holding another workshop six months later for those who prove that they are faithfully using their training to help others.

The book used during these workshops, Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help, contains such lessons as: If God Loves Us, Why Do We Suffer?, How Can the Wounds of Our Hearts Be Healed?, What Happens When Someone Is Grieving?, How Can We Forgive Others?, and Taking Your Pain to the Cross. Written by four field-experienced missionaries (two of them experts in the mental health field), the book relates extremely well to African audiences, but is also being used in over forty countries and 155 languages around the world. The stories used to introduce each lesson and the illustrations are culturally-appropriate to Africans. All lessons are interactive with a strong emphasis placed on small group discussions and sharing. During the teaching times, facilitators pepper the participants with questions to ensure that concepts are being understood. The entire lesson format has also been developed in a story-based form for oral learners which we are now using with the church in Central African Republic.

Following-up on the use of this material in that country is especially pertinent as it has experienced yet another rebellion that started in December 2012 led by the Seleka forces. A coup d’etat took place in March 2013 with a new government taking over the country. But, the rioting, looting, and killing of innocent civilians continues; especially in the capital of the country, Bangui. Most of the AIM sister churches in CAR are located over 1,000kms from the capital, but at least four times to date, groups of rouge Seleka forces have tried to move into that area to gain what they can as chaos continues to reign throughout the country. Tensions are still high as people do not know what to expect from the new government. Plans are in place for AIM and the Bible Society of CAR to hold a follow-up workshop in CAR in March 2014 if the security situation allows.
ow did you get your British passport?” I asked my new Somali friend sitting next to me on a flight bound for London. He had just told me the hassle he had with the Kenyan immigration authorities who questioned if his identity matched the picture in his passport. “For the right price I can get you whatever passport you want.” He replied with a mischievous grin. Our conversation throughout the remainder of the flight took many turns regarding the Word of God, the person of Jesus – whom he knew as Isa al-Masih (Jesus the Messiah in Arabic), faith and his dreams and ambitions for his family. At the heart of this man was a desire to create a future for his family. He had even set up a local foundation to bring education to his clan back in his impoverished village in war-torn Somalia.

This is just one illustration of why millions of Africans are hitching a ride on the diaspora road to find a new life and hope in the West. Today there are over 5 million African migrants living in Europe and over 4 million living in North America. Africans are among the fastest-growing groups of immigrants to the USA, increasing by 100% since the beginning of the 21st Century. And the majority of these are coming from non-Christian backgrounds.
Whether they are economic migrants, international students, undocumented immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers, one fact remains the same – They are the new neighbors our churches are called to love.

Though AIM has had a long history of ministry to diaspora Africans, these growing trends and a new perspective on mission in the 21st century is causing us to increase our efforts. First and foremost is our desire to come alongside the church in North America and Europe to equip them for effective outreach. Currently AIM has workers who have "moved in" to African immigrant neighborhoods in several cities in Canada, Europe and the USA. All of these workers partner with local churches to extend the Gospel reach to these communities in practical ways that demonstrate Christ's love. Whether through home work clubs, moms and toddler groups, ESL classes, or at-risk youth mentoring, these workers want their African friends to know and experience life with Jesus.

Being able to speak their language and having lived in their countries of birth, many of these AIM workers are a crucial bridge between the local church and these new neighbors – a much-needed bridge because the gap is wide!

E. Stanley Jones wrote Christ of the Indian Road to share his experience of how Christ was being naturalized on the Indian road. In his book he describes that sharing Jesus with Indians caused him to rediscover the person of Christ and to let go of the burden of tradition and history he was trying to convey in his failed efforts. In a similar way, Vincent Donovan rediscovered Christianity by communicating the Gospel through the means and traditions of the Maasai and appreciating their "communal faith." These are just two treasures from the riches of lessons learned in contextualizing the Gospel in a foreign soil among a foreign people. The messenger being transformed and renewed by the recipients of the message.

We can testify to this in our own experience. My family served for many years in Kenya doing outreach and starting fellowships among the South Asian minority communities. We saw first-hand the beauty of a new culture or community embracing the Gospel – it’s like a brand new flavor being introduced to the ice cream family – it looks, smells, and tastes unique, but it is still ice cream. This phenomena is easier when we are guests and outside of our culture – to survive, to be effective, we must learn to adapt and only then can we communicate.

But when we are communicating Christ to foreigners at home we invite people into our Christian culture. I will never forget an experience I had one year while on home-assignment in California. I was on my way to our church’s evening service when I noticed a Pakistani couple hitch hiking. I couldn’t pass this opportunity up, so I pulled over and offered them a ride. I took a chance and asked if they wanted to join me for the service. To my surprise they agreed. I was shocked when we entered the service – it was patriotic Sunday – America the Beautiful and flag waving Boy Scouts. The service helped compound their presupposition that Christianity and American culture were one and the same thing. I don’t think they got the message that Jesus was for Muslims. I never heard from the couple again. I don’t believe anyone from the church followed up on them either.

Most of our approaches to sharing the good news with our foreign-born neighbors are by inviting them into our Christian culture through the activities I mentioned earlier. All commendable efforts meeting felt needs. Yet, when our “guests” want to take the relationship further and follow Jesus they have to sacrifice quite a bit to be “one of us.”

The stakes are high for the thousands of Africans making the journey to Europe and North America each year, especially those who are undocumented – risking people smugglers, deserts, sea crossings and the possibility of being sent home, all for the dream of a better life. Many lose their lives in the process, all too poignant as we read the local headlines of more than 100 African migrants who drowned making passage to Lampedusa, Italy, on Oct 3. 
AIM believes the best way to see the Diaspora reached is by coming alongside the local church in the neighborhoods and cities where African immigrants are finding their new life.

Having migrated, many continue to make sacrifices by sending much of their income home to family they have left behind. Although Africans represent one of the highest employment percentages among migrants in the USA, because of discrimination, many are forced to take unskilled jobs despite English proficiency and education.15 Billions of dollars each year are sent back to Africa, and in some cases makes up a sizeable chunk of the home country’s GDP.16

This challenges us to look at our African immigrant neighbors in a new light, with a new appreciation and a willingness to make a greater investment in bringing Christ to them.

One of my friends who I describe as my “adopted younger brother” is an asylum seeker. We first met during an outreach day in a local park. Mohammadi had spent a new appreciation and a willingness to efficiency and education.

That didn’t deter him and after a year he hit the diaspora road again, but this time landing in Italy, and leaving a young wife and child behind at the camp. Through frequent phone calls I have journeyed emotionally with Mohammadi each step of the way, continually trying to connect him with Christians in the cities he finds himself in. I don’t support his decision to leave and the means in which he makes passage, but none-the-less he is my brother and Christ calls me to love and serve him. Mohammadi has taught me so much!

AIM’s mandate is to see Christ-centered churches among all African peoples, which includes African immigrants in Europe, North America and beyond. We especially desire to see those who are a part of unreached people groups embrace the good news of Jesus and form new communities of faith in their heart language and culture.17

Those coming from these groups need a safe community in which to be themselves. They need the wonder of the gospel to be translated in living color as grace is being extended. And they need to be set to mission as they in-turn share the good news with their spouses, children, fathers, brothers, sisters and extended family back home.

AIM believes the best way to see this realized is by coming alongside the local church in the neighborhoods and cities where African immigrants are finding their new life. We want to train and mobilize everyday Christians to “move in” and live as missional communities dying to their culture and embracing their new neighbor’s culture. Rather than inviting going to them, and being Jesus on the diaspora road.

Many African migrants are vibrant Christians and have established some of the largest churches in cities across the world. AIM wants to partner with these African believers and churches in reaching unreached Africans. We also desire to connect these churches to other local churches to build fellowship and partnership for city-wide outreach.

IF YOU would like to know more about extending the love of Christ to the African immigrants in your city please contact AIM. We would love to come alongside you, equip you and explore the possibilities for partnership. Write me at John.Becker@aimint.net

DEFINITIONS

Diaspora Africans
- Refugees
- Asylum Seekers
- Economic Migrants
- Students/professionals
- Undocumented immigrants and trafficked

Diaspora: People groups who are displaced and scattered away from their original ethnic homelands.

Refugee: Individuals granted complementary forms of protection; or, those enjoying “temporary protection.” The refugee population includes people in a refugee-like situation.

Protracted Refugees: When 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more in a given asylum country.

Asylum Seekers: Individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined.

Economic Migrants: someone who has emigrated from one region to another region for the purposes of seeking employment or improved financial position.

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A five hour bus trip south from Tanzania’s coastal metropolis of Dar Es Salaam, and another hour inland via motorcycle taxi over winding sandy paths, is a village nestled within hills of palm and baobab trees. This is the home of one of AIM’s newest TIMO teams. They live among a people and in a place we cannot name – a fact which, in a way, underscores the isolation of their location. Team leaders Colin and Rebecca lead a group of eight young men and women here. And although Training In Ministry Outreach (TIMO) as a program can be found in almost every niche of Africa – from glistening cities to rural enclaves – this team happens to be in one of the most remote settings.

The team member homes, mud structures with cement floors, are spread throughout the community, usually a fifteen minute walk from each other, and...
THE TEAM invites us to pray for

20 PEOPLE

who would regularly read the Bible with them in their homes.

“Right now,” write Team leaders Colin and Becca, “the most receptive people are kids in our neighborhood who come to ask for the Scripture in some form almost every day.”

TREES OF LIFE: Massive Baobab trees dot the landscape in the region where the team serves. Known as a source of food, water, and even shelter, the trees are called by some the Tree of Life. Some species live up to a thousand years and can grow to 40 feet in diameter.

often up a hill. There are a lot of hills here, and TIMO members do a lot of walking. The team is barely six months in to their three year commitment. And this first year is primarily focused on learning the language – a Bantu variety with the added complexity of being tonal in nature – and building relationships with neighbors and others amid their daily routine. The first year is also a lot about just surviving. Not all the hills here are sand and rock.

Living among a community like this one requires more than just language skills, it calls for an entirely new way of doing things. Even washing clothes or cooking a meal are monumental tasks for a Westerner plucked out of their familiar world and dropped into rural Tanzania – with scant supplies, no electricity, and no running water or transportation. For some of the team, it can make them feel like children again: Confused, awkward, dependent. It's incredibly humbling, and this can actually help open doors for creating new interpersonal connections, but it can also open up a host of opportunities for discouragement. Add to that the family of rats that moved into the kitchen cupboard and the bats that have taken up residence in the shower, and frustration can easily follow.

The beauty of TIMO is that it allows a new cross-
The beauty of TIMO is that it allows a new cross-cultural worker to dive into this strange and difficult life with a group of sojourners at their side. To cultural worker to dive into this strange and difficult life with a group of sojourners at their side. TIMO brings together teams like these to go out among unreached peoples to both learn and do ministry. And in the process, it provides a structure of edifying, caring community to increase the likelihood of success. Teammates are not only roommates. They are a family in place of those that are far away. They are a church where there is none. They are a community of people who understand one another—where they have come from, and why they are here.

Colin and Rebecca's team have had their uphill battles. From a family that had to leave early, to serious illness, to spiritual discouragements. But they carry on. Through hot days of labored progress, and sleepless nights of second thoughts, to days of sweet fellowship together as a team, and those precious, rare moments when it all makes sense. Like when the little girl next door leaps into the arms of her favorite new neighbor at the end of a long day. Or when the girl's mom gains the courage to visit their home and takes an interest in the Children's picture Bible they keep. Or when Colin and Rebecca begin to see the young team making friends in the community and headway with the language, and in this, catch a glimpse of ministry that will far outlast them.

This is why we do team. As AIM works among some of the hardest to reach peoples and places, we start and finish better when we do it together. And in the middle, where the triumphs and trials of ministry in Africa play out, where the hills are sometimes steep and the paths winding, we share the burden every bit as much as we share the vision.
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When the Tree Is Small, You Can Make It Straight

A Rwandan Youth Camp Ministry Works to Build a Trusting Generation

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nepredictable, reserved, hostile – these are the words a Rwandan used to describe her people to me. Considering Rwanda’s damaged history, these characteristics, though undesirable, come as no surprise. The genocide of the Tutsi people and the resulting war in 1994 left nearly one million people dead, 100,000 children orphaned, and countless families separated. Nearly twenty years have passed, but that horror and pain is still very much alive in people’s hearts and memories.

Rwanda, like other African countries, is considered “a young nation,” because so many of its citizens are children. Researchers have discovered that most people who come to Christ do so when they are between the ages of four and fourteen, concluding that this is an age group that is the most receptive to the gospel. In Rwanda, there are six million people between the ages of 5 and 25, making this young generation a huge mission field.

It was into this difficult and young environment that AIM missionaries Gilles and Myriam Bonvallat moved nine years ago. As they settled into their new home, they quickly realized that, though Rwandan children and youth make up more than half the population of the country, there were very few ministries dedicated to teaching and mentoring them. For some reason, children had become one of the most neglected people groups in the country.

While growing up in Switzerland, Gilles and Myriam experienced pivotal faith moments whenever they attended church youth camps, and they began to wonder if camps like the ones they remembered would be effective in their new country. As they prayed and sought guidance, God confirmed that, in order for them to reach the young people of Rwanda, they indeed needed to develop a youth camp ministry – something that had never been attempted in Rwanda before.

The Birth of a Ministry

To many Africans, the word “camp” does not elicit feelings of excitement; the only camps they know are either army or refugee. Therefore, a church youth camp with a dorm lifestyle, communal meals, and group activities is a foreign concept. But as Rwandans learn more about them, youth camps are becoming ministries they are embracing. “Camp is a tool,” Myriam explained to me. “It is a platform that provides an environment for people to be away from their daily life challenges and to spend a lot of time before God and to experience new things that really impact and hopefully influence their life for eternity.”

The vision for these camps comes from Ezekiel 11:19 which says, “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” Through 3-D Christian Camps, Gilles and Myriam hope young people will experience transformed hearts, establish personal relationships with Jesus, and become models for the rest of the nation on how to live in unity with one another.

The Forma’ Camp

Once church leaders supported the Bonvallat’s vision, Gilles and Myriam’s next task was to train would-be counselors and launch their 3-D Christian Camps, he generously donated an old vocational school on Mount Bihembe, an hour east of Kigali, to be converted into the camp’s kitchen, dining hall, classroom, and dormitories.

“All camps are tools,” Myriam said. “One camp might reach the heart of one person, another camp might help someone to experience God in a different way.”

While growing up in Switzerland, Gilles and Myriam experienced pivotal faith moments whenever they attended church youth camps, and they began to wonder if camps like the ones they remembered would be effective in their new country.
The Wake of Genocide

NOT SURPRISINGLY, TRUSTING ANOTHER PERSON IS ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS FOR A RWANDAN TO DO, ESPECIALLY IF THAT PERSON IS FROM A DIFFERENT TRIBE.

staff members. Most Rwandans have no idea how to build a camp, what activities to plan, or how to develop the special relationships between counselors and children that make camp life so uniquely special. “We decided that the best way to show them what a camp is like was to do one with them,” Gilles said, “to have them be part of a camp as a camper.” That was the inspiration for creating Forma’Camp, a training (or formation) camp for counselors, and the camp that I had come to visit.

The main goal of the camp is that each Forma-Camper will develop into leaders and counselors of future camps. “We want to hear their testimonies and learn about their experiences in children’s ministry,” Jessica, one of the camp’s Servant Team members and a fellow AIM missionary, explained. “We want them to be passionate about teaching children and passionate for God’s kingdom. We want them to be committed to use what they learn here. We make it clear that this knowledge is to be shared.”

Chosen campers are asked to pay a small fee to help offset some of the camp expenses. “They don’t pay much,” Myriam insisted, “but we want to make sure they take the camp seriously.” Even though the cost of the camp is much more than what the campers pay, the sharing of the expenses helps everyone take ownership of what’s happening. And it is one of the initial ways that the Bonvallats teach these young adults about successful community living.

Splitting the expense of the camp is not the only shared component. “Camps are a very holistic time for everyone,” Gilles said, “and everyone is doing a little bit of everything. We’re not just playing or teaching. We take part in all the activities of the camp to make it run, which means you do the dishes, you clean the toilets, you clean your rooms, you help each other by serving. It’s all part of the life in the camp.” These lessons on servant-leadership teach the campers how to work together in their small-group teams. They encourage campers to communicate effectively and to practice trusting each other. One young woman, Claire, who learned a valuable lesson about trust during July’s Forma’Camp told me, “It’s important to learn trust, because we live in a world where we are not alone. There are people all around us... If you want to live peacefully with them, you have to trust them.” Her new friend, Capitoline, added, “Learning trust is very important, because when we live in society, we need each other. We need to be complete. I can do something, and you can do other things. I need what you can do, and what you need, I can do.”

Not surprisingly, trusting another person is one of the hardest things for a Rwandan to do, especially if that person is from a different tribe.

Falling backward, arms crossed, from two stacked tables into the arms of new found friends is a lot to ask of anyone, but for Rwandan youth who have grown up in a culture of distrust, it’s huge – and how campers spend their last days at camp. “Before I came here,” said one camper after the plunge, “I couldn’t trust any person that came across my path. Here at the camp, [though], we came close to each other and built these kinds of relationships that are so mutual. You see yourself as a brother and sister to anyone.”

The Wake of Genocide

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We are dealing with a country where many people were hurt, and they were hurt by people they thought they could trust. Now, you see many problems that we have in the community as a result of that. For young people, it’s essential that they learn how to trust others. How to create a community with somebody from a different background, see how they are the same, and see that they are made in the same image of God. Without trust, everything else will fall apart. There won’t be any unity in our country or in our church.

“For Rwanda’s young adults, who were small children when they saw their country devastated by war and genocide, teaching trust is incredibly important. It is the first step in the process towards national and cultural reconciliation.”

**THE TRUST FALL**

It’s very difficult for people who struggle with trusting their own families and neighbors, fellow human beings whom they can see and touch, to take the steps toward trusting in God, whom they cannot see. To address this issue, Gilles, Myriam, and the whole Servant Team attempt something radical—experiential teaching—to give campers the opportunity to trust people in small ways (and perhaps for the first time) in the hopes that these Rwandans will open themselves up to trusting people in bigger ways. But most importantly, the Bonvallat’s hope the campers will see the necessity to place full trust in God.

Throughout the ten days of Forma’camp, the counselors-in-training are thrust into challenging situations that encourage teamwork and communication. Victor, this Forma’camp’s Rwandan Director, chooses games and creates ropes-course activities that are unfamiliar to everyone, so that all campers are on the same page. They all need to help each other in order to understand and succeed.

All of these sometimes-silly games and activities build up to the climax of the camp experience: The Trust Fall. For several days, the campers prepare for that pivotal moment. They learn how to spot each other, they practice releasing control of their bodies, and slowly, they gain confidence in their teammates. “This is the final testimony that ‘I trust you,’” Myriam explained. “‘I have experienced enough unity in this group that I can let myself fall into your arms and know that you won’t let me go onto the ground.’”

Arriving at this testimony is no simple task. Victor and his assistant stack two tables on top of each other, and after giving one more pep-talk to each member in the group—which includes the words of Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” — Victor helps each person climb to the top of the tower. From there, an unnerving five feet from the ground, the camper breathes deeply and crosses his arms in front of his chest, waiting for the call from his friends below that they are ready to catch him. A moment of tense silence. And he falls backwards, right into the unseen arms awaiting him.

I watch this scene over and over again. One camper after the next. And each time, the screams of laughter and delight grow louder, and it is impossible to not be infected by their intense joy. Claire, shortly after falling into the arms of her new friends, told me, “Before I came here, I couldn’t trust any person that came across my path. Here at the camp, [though], we came close to each other and built up these kinds of relationships that are so mutual. You see yourself as a brother and sister to anyone. I love the people here even more than my own family.”

**THE PATH FOR A NEW GENERATION**

Many of the Forma’camp attendees, after such a dramatic display of genuine trust, gained a renewed vigor in his or her passion for teaching children. They realized that the path towards national reconciliation begins with them and that they are responsible for passing that knowledge down to the youngest generation. One counselor-to-be, Frank, said, “Young people [like me] are an emotive force; they can change things and make things happen… If we are well guided as youth, we can achieve something amazing in our lives. I want to be the change that I want to see.”

No Rwandan wants to relive the horrors of nineteen years ago, and the best way to start the journey towards a united nation is to plant the seeds of trust into the newest generation. “[Children] have not experienced quite as much pain as their parents have,” Manasseh said, “so it’s easier to help them learn this trust at an early age.”

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Rwanda’s children will be the leaders of tomorrow and the ones who can truly change the nation.

**THE PROMISING FUTURE OF THE CAMPS**

When the Bonvallats first came to Africa, they were inspired by Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” The Forma’camp environment fits that model perfectly, teaching new counselors how to models Christ to the younger generation.

July’s Forma’camp was the Bonvallats’ last as residents of Rwanda, and though they were exhausted and a bit sad to send the campers back home, they expressed gratitude that God let them start this camp ministry and that He inspired young Rwandans to get involved. “It’s all a process of passing on the baton,” Gilles told me, “and of being sure that you will have people behind you to continue what you started.”

There is a proverb in Kinyrwanda, the mother tongue of Rwandans, that says, “When the tree is small, you can make it straight.” So many children in Rwanda are eager to learn and are in desperate need of proper biblical teaching; they merely need guidance. The 3-D Christian Camps are just the beginning of Rwanda’s movement for children. As more young people discover glimpses of unity and place their trust in Jesus, they will grow into a strong generation, one flourishing with hope, and one with the potential to become a mighty force for the gospel.

**For more on 3D Christian Camps in Rwanda scan the QR code or visit http://vimeo.com/76208906 to view a video produced by AIM missionary Paul Stehlik.**
We DID it!

This past October, thanks to 12 team captains, 107 bike riders, and 584 generous donors across the country, a marginalized group of women will be able to recuperate from surgery in a bright and clean refuge.

The 2013 “Ride for Refuge” was a stunning achievement. Africa Inland Mission hosted 12 teams between Vancouver and Montreal. Our goal was to raise 2/3 of the $30,000 necessary to complete a gynaecological ward at Rwankole hospital in Bunia, DR Congo. The hospital hosts regular surgical campaigns to help women who suffer from vaginal fistula, a medical condition arising when the walls of the birth canal are damaged by prolonged labour or violent rape (women who experience this horror face enduring humiliation as urine or feces leaks uncontrollably from their bodies.)

Seven days before the event, AIM riders had accumulated $12,500 in cash and pledges. With two days to go, Ride Coordinator Julia Trotter sent hearty congratulations to team captains. “We did it!” she wrote, thrilled that the ambitious $20,000 goal had been achieved. In the final tally, AIM’s intrepid riders raised a whopping $30,059.59 - far more than Julia had initially thought possible.

Simply “unbelievable,” she wrote. “God really blessed our efforts.”

On behalf of Rwankole Hospital, AIM would like to thank everyone who donated time or money to the Ride. The gynaecological ward (pictured above) opened its doors just in time for Rwankole’s fall surgical campaign.

Why put your hard-earned money into a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP)?

The advantage is that once you have retired and need to withdraw from your investment, you will likely fall in a lower tax bracket.

When you make AIM the beneficiary of all or part of your RRSP, you do far more than secure tax benefits. You gain the satisfaction of knowing you’re helping change lives.

For more details on planning your RRSPs or other planned giving, please contact AIM toll free at 1-877-407-6077 or email us at donorrelations.can@aimint.net.
As the lessons were taught in a participatory fashion, stories of LRA-related traumatic experiences abound. Along with those, women told of husbands deserting them and children dying. Pastors shared how they felt abandoned and not supported by their own church people. One man shared through a drawing how he left his wife sick at the health clinic before making the long trip by bicycle to attend the workshop. One elderly woman shared that fourteen of her children and grandchildren had been abducted by the LRA. Laments were composed describing the pain, frustration, lack of hope, and yet the belief that God was still in control. As these devastating stories were shared through prayer, word, song, and art work, people began to experience God’s peace and comfort; healing for the wounds in their hearts.

To all who mourn in Israel, He will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyful blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for His own glory.

A small bunch of flowers was placed on the pile of ashes as a visible reminder that the sorrow and pain many had experienced for years had been left with Jesus and that he would use it for good. Spontaneous prayers of thankfulness were prayed and more songs were sung. Smiles began to appear on faces. Tears of joy streamed down as we were powerfully reminded that God does love us and that He is more than able to help us through difficult times.

Please pray as Africa Inland Mission Central Region continues to strategize concerning how best to facilitate more trauma healing workshops throughout the LRA and Seleka rebel-affected areas in Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo. The goal of these workshops is to train church leaders to deal with the pain in their own hearts due to the traumatic experiences they have lived through so that they can help the people in their congregations experience healing from their wounds of trauma as well.

1. The New Oxford American Dictionary
2. The Lord’s Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony.

For more information see:
LRA in CAR: history http://www.enoughproject.org/conflicts/la/congo-car-south-sudan
LRA recent activity http://www.lracrisistracker.com/
http://traumahaelinginstitute.org/