

peacenotes

Kampala Gathering Ripples Into Hope for Kenya Forum



Nirina Kiplagat at the Kampala Gathering

For the Kenyan participants in Kampala II, the January Gathering was bittersweet. Rich conversations about hope, lament, and community coincided with ongoing post-election violence. Some expected at the gathering from Kenya could not attend due to security risks. Yet God showed hope amid these circumstances. **Emily Chengo** of ALARM Kenya reflected, "As a Kenyan team we bonded quickly and...that momentum has not been lost. We came back [from Kampala] and held our first meeting less than three days after arrival." The Kenyan participants initiated the *Hope for Kenya Forum*, an initiative allowing church leadership in Kenya to confront the core issues that sparked such violence, lament the atrocities, ready themselves to contribute to healing, and act as catalysts for positive change.

The goal of the forum is four-fold, as described by **Dr Celestin Musekura** of ALARM: 1) to create a safe space to allow church leadership to confront issues facing the church and nation as a whole, 2) to create space allowing the top Kenya church leaders to be vulnerable before God and before each other through the theological journey of lamentation, 3) to mobilize the church as a vessel in the healing and reconciliation process, and 4) to engage the church in the reconstruction and reform process.

In February 2008, the Hope for Kenya Forum brought together 75 church leaders for a two-day gathering. Church leaders lamented the violence and committed

themselves to preaching peace and healing amid the deep rifts that had emerged over the preceding months. Leaders called on the Forum to deepen this message at the grassroots level through local gatherings with clergy and church leaders across Kenya.

Nirina Kiplagat of the Nairobi Peace Initiative says, "Regional debriefing sessions provide an opportunity to deepen theology of lamentation and experience God's forgiveness and healing at a personal and congregational level." Prayer pilgrimages by church leadership to areas most affected by the violence are also planned to deepen the journey.

Local gatherings have followed in Mombassa, Kisumu, Kericho, and Kakamega, with further grassroots gatherings planned in Eldoret and Nikuru. Here the Forum distributes content through a new curriculum for pastors to enhance their capabilities in reconciliation and peacebuilding. In these gatherings many confessed that cries for vengeance in the name of justice were louder than messages of hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation; others confessed to speaking on behalf of their tribe at the expense of the gospel. One participant reflected, "Before I came I had nothing to help many of my pastors in the Rift Valley who have lost families and whose congregations have been involved in the violence. Now I am going back to them with biblical lessons and good teaching on healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. I am grateful to the Forum for helping the church at such a time when the church is confused with politics and tribalism."

The gathering in Kampala was crucial to this process. As chair of the Forum Chengo reflects, "I am amazed at what the Lord is doing and it all was sparked at the Kampala II gathering." **Chris Rice** of the Center for Reconciliation shared similar sentiments: "What I see in this is streams of our journeys weaving together and carrying forcefully outward in public ways that are bearing fresh seeds of hope on the ground. This shows the promise of the work we have committed ourselves to, our part in a 'quiet revolution' over the long haul." Though the violence in Kenya loomed large in the background of Kampala II, the gathering also provided the opportunity to imagine possibilities for the church to speak hope amid violence.



Prayers offered for Rwanda at Kampala Gathering in January

Inside this edition...

Kampala Gathering Ripples into Hope for Kenya Forum

U.S. Leaders in Reconciliation Gather at Duke Divinity School

News Briefs

John Kiess Follows the Journey of Kampala II

Onesephore Manirakiza Facilitates Reconciliation in Burundi

Burundi Update

Your Story Here...?



Please send us news and notes from your corner of the Great Lakes Region. We want to keep each other informed to pray for one another. Please send us photos in digital format (preferably high resolution JPEG), and stories (350 words or less).

news briefs

Learn About the Holy Trinity Peace Village!

Bishop Paride Taban, participant in Kampala II, has produced a remarkable and joyful website about his Peace Village in Kuron, Sudan:

www.kuronvillage.net.



Bishop Taban and local villager carry sorghum

Josephine Munyeli's Peer Training

In February, **Josephine Munyeli** of World Vision Rwanda conducted a peer counselors training in schools affected by a recent earthquake. Participants shared that when they heard the earthquake they thought it was a bomb, immediately igniting traumatic memories from the genocide. One student named Claire shared, "I fell down and my best friend Rose came to help me. Suddenly I told her, 'do not touch me. You are the ones who are killing us.' Rose said, 'No, this is me, Rose, do not be afraid.' I replied, 'You are not Rose because she and my mother have just been killed by Interahamwe.'" It showed that genocidal scenes endure in the students' memories and trust remains low. Josephine asked we continue to pray for the Rwandan healing process. Also pray for Rwanda as many of the FDLR militias are returning from Congo—a prayer item from Kampala II.

Lam Cosmas Deepens work in Community Leadership

While **Lam Cosmas**, participant in both gatherings, continues to work with the Justice and Peace Council of Gulu, he has begun a community based organization in the village of Atiak, Uganda called *Change Foundation*, which will develop and promote catalytic leaders for reconciliation and development in northern Uganda.

Imagined in Africa, Hatched in America

U.S. Leaders in Reconciliation Gather at Duke

Surrounded by African church leaders engaged in reconciliation at the first Great Lakes Initiative gathering in Kampala, Uganda, **Chris Rice** and **Emmanuel Katongole** wondered if the Center for Reconciliation could facilitate such a fruitful intersection with church leaders in America. Amid the mango trees they saw how rare an opportunity it was to bring together leaders involved in the work of reconciliation from different regions, countries, and denominations in the Great Lakes region of Africa. This space of encounter was not only lacking in Africa, it was lacking in the American church as well.



Elders bless participants at the May US Leaders Gathering

Nearly two years after this idea came about, over seventy American church leaders engaged in God's mission of reconciliation gathered at Duke Divinity School under the auspices of the Center for Reconciliation from May 12-14. Leaders young and old came from all parts of the country and all denominational backgrounds to learn from one another, worship together, rest, and create new friendships. "We've read each other's articles and books, but never met one another," reflected one participant. Conversations involved the continuing divides within American society and the American church, including political, racial, and class divides.

Seasoned elders shared stories from the civil rights movement and discussed what that moment in American history can teach practitioners in reconciliation today; intellectuals shared their observations on political and social trends within the American church; contemplatives discussed the role of prayer in social action. One particular gift of the gathering was an unplanned but deeply provocative conversation about immigration in

America, how this presents a new frontier in peace and reconciliation for American churches.

Africa was not only present in dreaming this gathering, but in its conversation as well. American leaders heard from two participants in the Great Lakes Initiative, Anglican Archbishop of Sudan **Daniel Deng Bul** (Kampala I participant) and **Angelina Atyam** (Kampala II participant). Archbishop Deng told stories from the long civil war in Sudan that has ruptured his country, challenging participants to be mindful of American influence abroad in their peace advocacy. Angelina Atyam spoke about her daughter's abduction by the LRA, her organizing of local parents into the Concerned Parents Association, and her incredible spirit of forgiveness.

Following the Journey of Kampala II

John Kiess Continues the Conversation

In researching his PhD dissertation, CFR Student Associate **John Kiess** traveled throughout the Great Lakes Region following Kampala II, meeting with a variety of catalytic leaders associated with the Center for Reconciliation's Great Lakes Initiative. He met with Anglican **Bishop Macleod Ochola** in Northern Uganda, Anglican **Bishop Pie Ntukamazina** in Burundi, and heard **Josephine Munyeli's** stories about hiding neighbors in her house during the genocide in Rwanda. Below are excerpts from his travelogue in Eastern Congo:



John Kiess at Kampala II Gathering.

"I'm surviving a mild case of malaria and a few earthquake aftershocks, but all is well. I've been travelling in Bukavu with my friend **Pastor Manasse Mbusa** and the national leadership team of the Baptist Church in Congo (BCA). Crowds of hundreds have been singing and dancing their arrival everywhere they've gone. The arrival of church leadership is like the president coming to town; there's no American analogy. The government is completely absent from the region and so the church has been the most important agent for change. They run most of the schools, health clinics, rehabilitation centers, and job training centers. It's inspiring

work, especially considering that all of this is done on so few resources....

"I'm staying at a local rehabilitation center for child soldiers and street children in Goma, and have had some unforgettable conversations with the kids at night. They've shared heartbreaking stories, many involving multiples escapes from rebel groups and long, desperate journeys for survival. There's a remarkable man running the place who once lived on the streets himself. I also visited a rehabilitation center in Bukavu which gives kids trade skills in carpentry, mechanics, textiles, and others. Many signs of hope here....

"In Bunia I stayed with **Katho Bungishabako**, a biblical theologian and director of Shalom University. He is busy building a very impressive institution, with the vision of making it the premier university in the east of the country. I spent one memorable day reading his doctoral dissertation on the book of Jeremiah and its relevance for the Congo. Looking at themes such as exile, oppression, hope for renewal, doing justice, relying on Yhwh, he situates Congo's story into the story of Israel, showing how the scriptural world and the world of Congo constitute the same reality. The biblical categories of displacement and return become key categories through which layers of Congo's brokenness are perceived and understood. It's a fascinating project from a man doing fascinating things in East Congo. In addition to running the university, he is also helping direct the rebuilding of his home village of Nyankunde, which was sacked by rebels in 2002. In word and deed, he is applying the social justice vision of the prophets to the Congo in powerful ways."

Peace in the Village Churches: Oneseophore in Burundi

The Christian calling to be ambassadors of reconciliation is sometimes hardest within a local church community. Kampala II participant **Oneseophore Manirakiza** found himself acting as such an ambassador to churches in the small village of Ijenda, Burundi. The three evangelical churches in the village had been in conflict for five years: from one church founded in 2000 a group broke away to form another church and then another group broke off from the second church. The leaders from the three churches would not even greet one another when they met in the street, even taking their conflict to the local tribunal.

Oneseophore was conducting a summer outreach program in the village and quickly identified the problem. "The work of God was paralyzed," he wrote. Reconciliation began by eating together, when he invited the pastors of the three churches to a restaurant to share food. Oneseophore told them his observation that God's work was hindered by this disunity and proposed a two day workshop with their

leadership. Oneseophore created the space necessary to walk the journey of reconciliation without simply passing over the hurt. Over those two days, Oneseophore wrote, "They had enough time to accuse each other, weep, and lament."



Oneseophore Manirakiza

When Oneseophore later visited them, he discovered the pastors had started to visit one another. They held another workshop and leaders of the churches asked forgiveness from one another in an emotional exchange. The second day the group asked not to meet at a "neutral" location, but rather at the site of the original church. Here they initiated a network for collaboration to heal the wounds of the past. Acting as an outside facilitator committed to peace through the Christian practices of eating together, speaking hurts, weeping, lamenting, and forgiving, Oneseophore found himself an ambassador of reconciliation.

Burundi Update

In April, **Bp Pie Ntukamazina** shared an inside look at recent violence in Burundi, as rebels used mortal shells in an attack upon the capital Bujumbura. The email list from the Kampala II Gathering shared over 20 messages of encouragement and prayer for Burundians, keeping alive a spirit of hope and perseverance. Below are selections of these emails:

"We are truly raising a lamentation to the Lord concerning this matter, according to Psalm 46. 'Nations are in an uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts...yet the Lord Almighty is with us.'" – from Kenya

"I would like to join my prayers and solidarity with all the people of Burundi and of good will, because this is our first duty and task as children of God in Christ Jesus. In my Catholic tradition, I would request as in Canaan, "let's listen to whatever He tells us". May all these prayer support groups and intentions accompany the people of Burundi." –from Uganda

"Thank you for calling the 'congregation' to pray with you and stand with you in this time of need as the wounds of struggle and killing are

reopened in your city and in your hearts. It is a privilege to be with you interceding before our one God together in prayer." –from the US



Bishop Pie of the Anglican Diocese of Bujumbura.

"We pray that the Burundians will see this violence as an opportunity to address possible issues that need attention. May the Lord help us all in the great Lake region to be sensitive to the hidden issues in all our conflicts." – from Uganda

I received many calls and emails from various people expressing their concern and assuring me of their prayers for Burundi. When I looked at all that I paused and exclaimed "Indeed, people care about Burundi." – from Burundi



peacenotes

Published by the Duke Center for Reconciliation

Phone: +1.919.660.3578
Email: reconciliation@div.duke.edu
Mailing Address:
 Duke University Divinity School
 Box 90967
 Durham, NC 27708 USA

Published by Duke Divinity School's Center for Reconciliation. ©2008
 Executive Editors: Fr. Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice.
 Editor: Ross Kane
 Design and Photos: Matthew Scott