

## **Notes from Andy's 1<sup>st</sup> journey concerning the Twa and a partner organization, Harvest for Christ:**

Onesphore has also organized a large outreach to the Twa. The Twa, as we have mentioned before, are a pigmy tribe that are indigenous to Burundi. However, they only represent a very small percentage of the total population of Burundi and have lived for many generations now as a significantly disenfranchised people. The government has given Harvest for Christ a large piece of land in the Moravia area. There they have been helping the Twa to build new „mud brick“ houses. They broke ground recently for a primary school and a housing facility for the teachers of the school. They will also build a secondary school and clinic in the near future, and if God supplies also a Bible School to train young leaders for the future of the Twa and all of Burundi. I went to this area last weekend with a group from South Carolina and we worked on three houses, carrying trees for roofing material and digging trenches for the foundations of these homes. It is hard for us as Americans to understand the poverty of these people. We are helping them to move into houses made with mud bricks! The one I dug trenches for was maybe 25 ft. x 15 ft. When the father thanked us at the end of the day, you would have thought we had just helped build his family a mansion. For them it was. They had been living in a grass hut no bigger than a minivan. I cannot even write this story without crying.

If you consider that Burundi is one of the ten poorest countries in the world and that the Twa have been significantly neglected by the Burundian government, the world and even the Church, it will begin to put into perspective the poverty and deprivation these people live in. I consider it an honor to touch the lives of such a people for the Glory of His Name. He WILL have a people out of every TRIBE, tongue and nation. Rev 5:9

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On Monday July 20, Chris and I made a trip with Onesphore to the city of Ngozi and to a small community called Busiga. In 2008 during the summer evangelism outreach, Harvest for Christ saw many people come to Jesus in Busiga and the result was that a small church was planted. During this past year the church grew from around 15 to 100. One of the converts was an elderly man named Mark. His story is unique because he is over 60 and a member of the Twa (the pygmies of Burundi). Mark then promptly led his entire family to Jesus and they began to attend the church. This is in itself an amazing thing considering how the Twa do not generally, 'mix' well with other Burundians. The long unfortunate history of the Twa has made them very distrustful of anyone and this only enhances their marginalized condition. Mark is absolutely one of the most bubbly and joyful men you will ever see. I have some great photos of him that I hope to share with you later from our website. The church in Busiga is still growing and among them is a growing number of the Twa.

Mark invited us to come to his village and to his home. His "village" is scattered all over the steep hillsides of several rolling hills. You cannot image what I saw. 83 families with lots of needs. My heart just wept. Mark's house almost defies description. If I tell you it was made of sticks, leaves, grass and some mud you may not be surprised. But what is staggering is that his house was smaller than the size of a six passenger minivan and he, his wife and four grown children live there and sleep there. The "bed" his wife

and he sleep in was made of bamboo like sticks. It was off the floor about two feet in one corner and the children all sleep on the ground beneath them. And there was still room for the small spot where they cooked their rice and potatoes campfire style. I took pictures but no amount of photos or film can begin to describe the destitute conditions the Twa live in. My heart and my eyes wept.

Stephen Kuert, the missionary who assisted us last year in our outreach to Burundi told me recently about a friend of his who worked in Burundi for some years with an agency that assisted the nation with agricultural developments. This man's research of the Twa and other disenfranchised peoples led him to believe that the Twa may in fact be the most marginalized and deeply disenfranchised people in the whole earth. I have seen poverty and some marginalized people in other parts of the world, but I can tell you I have not seen anything like the Twa. And it is more than their poverty. As pygmies, they have been viewed as the outcasts of the Burundian society for generations. Many Christians here in Burundi want to help them, but societal as well as financial conditions make it difficult for this to work well.

As many of you know already, Amy and I have been praying for the Twa even before I came to Burundi last year. Having read and done a small amount of research about the Twa we had asked the Lord to please give us an opportunity to reach them for Jesus and for the Glory of His Kingdom. A few weeks ago, you will recall that the Lord gave us another opportunity to meet some of the Twa in another outreach with Onesphore. We were with a team from Charleston SC and we were involved with helping the Twa to build mud brick houses. This outreach was in the area of Murahmvia.

I believe that God is leading us to develop an outreach project in this Busiga area and while we pray that it will reach many Burundians, we pray that it will especially impact the lives of the Twa of this area. In the next weeks/months we will communicate with you more on this project and how we can each help to reach the Twa with the Love of Jesus.