

100 PROJECTS FOR PEACE PROPOSAL

Name: **Logan Gibson**
Institution: **Washington and Lee University**
Project Location: **Rwamagana, Rwanda**
Project Description: **Organize first library in Rwamagana**
Partnership: **The Rwanda School Project**
(www.rwandaschoolproject.org)

Summary of Proposal

My Projects for Peace proposal involves collaborating with the local NGO, Rwanda School Project, to set up a library for the school they are currently building in Rwamagana, Rwanda. Ultimately, the RSP hopes to make the library available several times a week as a reading room for the community at large—making it the second public library in all of Rwanda.

Background Information

The educational legacy in Rwanda prior to 1994 was marred with ethnic division. During the Colonial period, Hutus were barred from schooling and good jobs. When independence came in 1959, the tables were turned and Tutsis were repressed. Schools and exams became instruments of partition and inequality. The genocide in 1994 further devastated Rwanda's educational sector by destroying schools, killing many teachers or prompting them to flee the country, and orphaning hundreds of thousands of children.

The current government in Rwanda is the first to offer universal primary education, but only fifteen percent of Rwandan teenagers can afford to attend secondary school. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers in the country lack certification and the average class size is sixty-two students.¹ Many schools lack electricity for basic services such as lighting or computer technology, and most students do not have their own textbooks. There is only one public library in all of Rwanda. It is funded by the NGO American Friends of the Kigali Library and is not yet open. By developing a library at the Rwamagana school, I will help to facilitate social reconciliation in Rwanda through education and literary access for both ethnic groups.

What is the Rwanda School Project?

The RSP is an NGO founded in 2005 to provide secondary education in Rwanda. Using Expeditionary Learning (a program which evolved from Outward Bound) as its framework, the secondary school the RSP is building will focus on environmental sustainability, leadership skills, community service, and strong academic performance. The school itself will have solar power, water harvesting, bio-gas digesters, and demonstration gardens, making it a "living lab" for the 430 students who will be expected to demonstrate what they learn through community service projects each year. The library I will set up is central to the school's philosophy of personal empowerment through research and community service.

¹ World Bank Report 2004; Summary Education Profile: Rwanda. <http://devdata.worldbank.org/>

Timeline

March - June 2007

- Construction of library facility to commence (March)
- Draw up list of needed books from Expeditionary Learning curriculum (March)
- Write to American donors, publishers, and school districts for book donations (March)
- Collect books already pledged from individuals, schools, and churches; 100 boxes of books have already been donated (March-April)
- Purchase books with \$2000 of Projects for Peace grant funds (April)
- Ship books to Rwanda (April)
- Meet with local US librarians to learn more about Dewey Decimal System (April-May)
- Purchase categorizing software and laptop computer for library (June)

July-August 2007

- Commence the physical set-up of the library (July)
- Categorize, label, and organize the books (July-August)
- Teach class on Health and Malaria and assist primary students with publication of health text (July-August)
- Help with filming and production of documentary on the development and teachings of the RSP (July-August)
- Hire student assistant. Three-year stipend to be left for student asst. position.

Expected Outcomes

- Establishment and institutionalization of a library for a secondary school in Rwanda for all ethnic groups
- Use of library by the community as the 2nd public library in the country
- Documentary about the school to generate further funding and to educate the American public about the status of peace, democracy, and development in Rwanda
- Development of a service-learning relationship between the RSP and W&L students for lesson plans and grant writing for the school

Peace and Sustainability

Rwanda is a nation in recovery. In 1994, the international community stood by in silence as genocide erupted within the country—eclipsing the lives of about 800,000 people in less than 100 days. Twelve years after the genocide, resilient Rwandans are still piecing together their lives—Hutu living alongside Tutsi once again. The government-led reconciliation process is in full swing and the economy is in steady recovery. Yet, peace from the top-down is all too often ephemeral. A heartier, more substantial harmony must be cultivated at the grassroots level through education and community organization.

The connection between my work and the Rwanda School Project will ensure that the library I help to create will not only be sustainable, but will grow and develop for years to come. My hope is to cultivate peace in a small way by creating a safe and stimulating environment where both Hutu and Tutsi children can come together and use literary access as a healing resource.