

Africa 2023 Mid-Year Update

RWANDA, TANZANIA, KENYA AND GHANA

Message from Pastor John Rutsindintwarane

Pauline Usabyemeza, Speciose Dusengimana, and Ezra Nkubana were three of the first people I met when I first visited Mumeya, Rwanda. They led the organizing that brought a health clinic to their rural community near the border with Burundi. The clinic has grown into a 37-room medical center and paved the way for new businesses, road-building, new schools, and reforestation.



In May 2023, Pauline, Speciose, and Ezra accepted positions as community organizers. Their mission is to teach and coach grassroots leaders in dozens of other communities to build teams, listen to everyone's concerns, and work with government officials to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and families in Rwanda.

A bottom-up process of change that started in Mumeya is bringing hope across Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Ghana. I hope you're inspired and motivated by this mid-year update!

LONG-TERM IMPACT IN RWANDA



43
villages
organized



57,000
people served
annually by three
health clinics



\$1.44
million
in investment in
local communities



55,000
trees planted for
climate change
resilience



The power of grassroots organizing to SUSTAIN LONG-TERM CHANGE

Mrs. Uwimana Florida, a leader from the Rusumo Local Organizing Committee, explained,

“When I was learning community organizing, I did not know that learning to identify available resources to run our clinic could shape my personal development. It has been 7 years since we completed the Rusumo medical clinic. The community and the government have been working hand in hand to maintain the staff, medical supplies, and environmental protection. Such collaboration liberates our mindset and strengthens our individual and communal power. It shows the power of investing in long-term relationships at the grassroots and national levels.”



A new school in Nyarubuye

Local grassroots leaders in Nyarubuye celebrated the completion of a new school that will serve 75 students. The school is near the new health clinic that leaders also brought to their community and will be staffed by government-funded teachers. Students will be able to attend school near home and finish their primary education. In May 2023, Charlotte Muteteli gave the regional Mayor a tour of the new school and clinic and explained how these were just the first steps in a community-led process to transform Nyarubuye.



Making Rwanda resilient to climate change

Rwanda is extremely vulnerable to climate change. Extreme changes in rainfall result in floods that destroy homes and crops, while drought and drier dry seasons threaten the livelihoods of small farmers. To make their local communities more resilient to climate change, grassroots leaders are working together on a national campaign focused on mitigation and environmental care. As one part of this campaign, they have worked with local and regional officials to plant more than 55,000 trees and make other improvements that limit the damage from floods. Furthermore, communities are working to adopt roads in their neighborhood so as to sustain and protect what they already have as they patiently work hard for a better future.



Monthly meetings to build a shared vision for Rwanda

This year, grassroots leaders in Rwanda began meeting monthly to share their work and learn from each other. It is a commitment for people to gather from across the country. The meetings are motivating people to organize with more energy and discipline and help people come together from different regions and backgrounds to develop a shared vision for grassroots organizing in Rwanda and East Africa.



January 2024 Learning Trip to Rwanda

Faith in Action Rwanda will host a week-long international delegation January 22-26, 2024. The focus will be the Role of Grassroots Organizing in Overcoming Development Challenges in Africa. Participants will include leaders and clergy from Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, other African countries, Central America, and Haiti, along with donors, friends, and organizers from the U.S.



TANZANIA

With training and coaching from Pastor John Rutsindintwarane and Father Innocent Rugaragu, clergy and lay leaders from multiple faith traditions are building new organizations in the Kagera Region of Western Tanzania, near the border with Rwanda. Anglican Bishop Godfrey Mbelwa began the organizing process in Muleba, Tanzania. Now Muslim and other Christian clergy and lay people are participating. They have begun doing 1:1 listening in their communities, in a part of the country where the Central Government has not invested in education and health. With no regional college, young people must leave the region for higher education and, most of the time, never return to work in their communities, a phenomenon that continues to impoverish families and communities.

Clergy and grassroots leaders from Ngara, at the other end of the Kagera Region, have begun a similar process. Their communities have rich farmland but lack access to credit and markets and are now under pressure from a massive Nickel mining project. Through organizing, people are coming together to develop a shared vision and strategy to promote local agriculture, raise their incomes, and protect the fragile environment and water supply.





KENYA

We continue to work with Maasai communities in Kenya to provide training in community organizing and leadership development. With our support, the Maasai Empowerment and Transformation Organization (MENTOR) is working to ensure that Maasai leaders have a say over government decisions that affect their families and land. We are happy to coach and support Mr. Jackson Sokoine, MENTOR's director, as he grows as an organizer.



GHANA

The FAITH in Ghana Alliance formed two new regional multi-faith alliances in 2023, bringing their work to ten of the sixteen regions in the country. FAITH in Ghana is now supporting pilot local organizing efforts in 18 communities across Ghana. As of September 2023, these local community faith alliances had listened to more than 1,550 people about changes they want to see in their communities. With the Ghana economy in turmoil, and national elections scheduled for the end of 2024, grassroots organizing is helping develop a shared multi-faith agenda for decentralizing development and increasing investment in education, jobs, and health care.



To learn more and donate to support grassroots organizing in Rwanda and Africa, please visit www.faithinactioninternational.org

