

SOMA

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FEATURING

MURAKAZA NEZA: SWEAR IN AND PST

BY ELISABETH J. TURNER, EDUCATION 4

**HELPING IMPOVERISHED WOMEN IN
MUSHAKA: PHOTO ESSAY**

BY JOEY ANCHONDO, EDUCATION 4

VISTING KIGEME REFUGEE CAMP

BY MEGAN HAGGERTY FOSTER & CHRISTINE HOOYMAN, HEALTH 3

RIFE IN RWANDA? A CROSSWORD

BY MATTHEW BEAMER, EDUCATION 2 RPCV

Contributors

Alex Bok, a health 4 volunteer, is a drug cartel member that joined peace corps to hide from her friend-enemies. Her drug of choice was sugar. Before moving to Rwanda, she chose to sell snickers bars and 3 musketeers at lower than retail prices and had a large base operations making and distributing counterfeit chocolate in the South.

Arielle Mancuso, a health 2 volunteer, hails from the San Juan Islands. She is a graduate of McGill University in Montreal, Canada with an honors degree in International Development Studies and Biochemistry. For over two years, she lived in the small town of Kiramuruzi in the Eastern Province and worked for Plan International in Rwanda, managing and providing support to projects targeting children and youth. She enjoys sewing and also spent the last two years creating an igitege wardrobe by hand.

Christine Hooyman is a Health 3 volunteer, living in Nyamagabe district. Christine graduated from American University with a degree in Globalization and Justice and Advanced Leadership Studies. While she only has a handful of months left in Rwanda, she hopes to announce umuganda with a loudspeaker from the pickup truck throughout her sector before she leaves.

Elisabeth J Turner is an Ed 4 PCV, placed at E.S. Murunda in Rutsiro District. Hailing from California and New York, she studied education policy and peace education and enjoys discussing the development goals of Rwanda and systemic differences between it and America with her Rwandan friends. When she's not learning Rwandan church songs on the guitar, she can be found teaching herself how to cook or chasing the neighbor's chickens out of her house.

Ella Robinson is an education 3 PCV who has become an unintentional cat collector. She has now had 8 cats in-country (at different times); Binx, Emily Rose, Boo, Templeton, Toothless, Cat, Rags, and Rajah. She does not intend on having anymore, but that has not stopped her in the past. While keeping a wary eye on the animals she co-habitats with she enjoys playing guitar, dancing solo, and teaching kids in her neighborhood how to do the Cha-Cha-Slide. It is also very probable that she wants Cheetos in the exact moment that you are reading this.

Joey Anchondo is an education 4 volunteer serving the Rusizi District. A graduate of Seattle University's school of journalism, Joey has worked for several news outlets and his photography has appeared in over a dozen publications, news websites and galleries. He hopes that he has more opportunities to use his photography to promote the work of volunteers while serving in Rwanda. Before joining Peace Corps, he spent a year parasailing through the seventh circle of hell, and racing camels in Jupiter's Great Red Spot.

Matthew Beamer, an education 2 RPCV, hails from Casper, Wyoming, where he grew up with two younger brothers and a younger sister. After earning degrees in Math and French at Montana State University in Bozeman, MT and loafing for a year, he joined the Peace Corps, ready for anything.

Megan Haggerty Foster is a health 3 PCV from Oregon. Her site is Kitabi in Nyamagabe district, right outside of the rain forest. She likes macaroni and cheese filled packages, taking an excessive number of pictures, and wandering.

Miranda Hyslop-Garza is a part time pirate who raids the seas and if inclined the Oceans. She is a health 4 volunteer who likes french fries and beer. She is from the mid west which is why a career in piracy is an amazing accomplishment. She is an inspiration to all women that want to achieve individualism.

Nick McClure of education 3, hails from Arizona, a place where there are infinitely fewer baboons than his site near Nyungwe Forest. Despite the monkeys, he loves living in Nyamagabe District where he teaches adult students at a conservation college.

Sara Gaul is an Education 3 volunteer living in Gatore Sector, Kirehe District. Gatore is known for bananas and mud. And there sure is a lot of both, especially in the rainy season. We have coined my site as banana-land. I wrote a story for SOMA about how much I love bananas, and since then have eaten way too many bananas that my stomach, I think, has started rejecting them. So I've really calmed down quite a bit in my banana-eating. Originally, I'm from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and attended Duquesne University for journalism.

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Murakaza Neza: Education 4 Pre-Service Training

By Elisabeth J. Turner



The sun was shining as 34 Peace Corps Trainees drove through the hills of Rwanda from Kigali to our new home in Kamonyi District. We landed in-country less than two days before – jet-lagged and dizzy with excitement, nerves and utterly overwhelmed.

As we bumped along the red dirt roads, past the tree said to mark the very center of Rwanda, huge raindrops started to fall. It was pouring when the cars finally stopped outside the tall, green hedges surrounding the Peace Corps training Hub. Scrambling for our rain coats and carrying overweight luggage, we ran for cover, trying not to fall in the slippery mud.

We dropped our bags and walked to the back of the training house. We passed through a door to the outside where we stood under a beige tarp, the rain beating a deafening sound above us. Chairs and colorfully-dressed, smiling Rwandans crammed the small space.

We squeezed into thirty chairs and chatted nervously as the Rwandans greeted and smiled from across the room. They seemed just as nervously excited as us.

A petite woman with short, curly hair finally calmed the energetic crowd, her soft voice barely audible over the heavy rain; though it mattered little as our Kinyarwanda language skills only encompassed greetings, and that was used up in the first five seconds.

Soon, she switched to speak English and made introductions of the various Peace Corps training staff, explained the different villages where we

would live, and, then, she introduced us to our host families - the people we would live with for the next three months.

A Rwandan name was called, they stood, grinning, waiting to hear their new trainee's name. The two met in the center of the crowded tent and the family enveloped the nervous trainee in a three-cheek kiss and huge hug as the rest of the crowd cheered and laughed.

The rain was forgotten as the greetings continued; overwhelmed by the joy of the crowd as each trainee was welcomed into his or her new Rwandan family. After all of the families received their new son or daughter, the seats were rearranged and Fantas were brought to celebrate.

The language barrier prevented long talks with the family, and soon both Rwandans and Americans, returned to their own language and friends. Every trainee anticipated the big move into

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their family's house with a mix of amusement and courage.

And so it began – our new life in Rwanda. We were terrified, excited and felt like we could conquer the world. Then, we were taken to our houses, in the pouring rain with a family who spoke little to no English who we only just met, and our courage waned just a bit.

For the next three months, 34 trainees were on a cross-culture roller coaster ride. Sometimes thrilled with new accomplishments and sometimes depressed with thoughts of home;

we gained squatting muscles and ate new, occasionally gross, foods; we conquered bucket baths and learned to wash clothes by hand.

As our language skills grew, we went from fearing an evening with our host families to looking forward to simple kitchen conversation or a random dance party as we discovered a mutual love for Michael Jackson. We endured long days of training and sleepless nights on thin mattresses and squeaky beds. There was illness and injury – bug bites and diarrhea.

We taught children to fist bump and went from being called 'umuzungu' to being called by our names from every yard as we walked through town. We ate brochettes, potatoes and our weight's worth in peanuts. We navigated the chaos of the weekly markets and became less terrified of the local transportation. We hiked to the rocky hills, got lost in the beauty of the morning fog, became drenched in sudden downpours and sweated in the midday sun. We played cards so many times that we learned our competition too well.



Three months later, we again found ourselves underneath the same tarp where we first met our host families.

The sun was shining brightly, peanuts were roasting on the training Hub's stove and trainees were scattered around - some finishing their final language test and some eating goat brochettes at the local bar. Many were dressed in new, handmade Rwandan dresses, all made of brightly colored igitenge.

In the afternoon, host family members trickled underneath the tarp, this time to be

greeted warmly by their trainees. When the seats were mostly full, Alphonsine took her place in the center, her curls a halo around her head, her soft voice carried well thanks to the absence of rain.

Now, we understood more than only the first five seconds of her introduction. Now, the excitement in the air wasn't competing with fear, instead it was competing with a presence of sadness.

In three months, we had successfully lived in a Rwandan village, we built bonds with the people sitting under the tarp and we had created a home. But, on this day, we were going to say goodbye.

Six trainees gave speeches - two in each of the three national languages – Kinyarwanda, French and English. Each speech shared a mix of gratitude, memories and motivation. It was a bittersweet time, but we anticipated what good things and new adventures would come in the future.

A few days later, we took the oath and became Peace Corps Volunteers without fear or anxiety about what might lie ahead. We knew there would be challenges, but we also had confidence we did not have before Kamonyi. Our host families taught us and prepared us for our lives ahead, similar to how our actual families prepared us before we ever left The States on a plane to Africa.

Now, as we shared Fantas to the sound of a soft, afternoon rain, we said goodbye to our host families. And this time, we hugged them not as strangers, but as sons and daughters, ready to begin our lives in Rwanda.

The Great Rwanda Biscuit Challenge of 2012

By Matthew Beamer, Ed 2 RPCV

There we were, face-to-face with a pile of thirty-five different *ijana* biscuits. They represented all that Rwanda has to offer in the way of cheap snacks for bus riders and babies, and Mackenzie and I were determined to find out which one is the best, kill us though it may. This was the Great Rwandan Biscuit Challenge of 2012.

Lined up, freed from the confines of the various Ziploc and paper bags we had used to imprison them after their collection from all corners of the country, they appeared an imposing force. We had on our stretchy pants, were seated comfortably on a foam mattress, and had milk at the ready to wash down the biscuits. Both of us had had experience with biscuits, choosing them as the go-to food when feeling ill or slightly peckish, but neither of us was prepared for the battle that lay ahead.

We began the challenge, which involved tasting two kinds of biscuits and choosing one among them to continue in an NCAA-tournament fashion. We flew through the first rounds, devouring biscuits with gusto and laughing as we decided the fate of the biscuits we tried, advancing some to the next round and a chance at fame and fortune and delegating others to biscuit ignominy.



There are several biscuits that were so utterly terrible that they deserve special mention for the injuries they inflicted on our taste buds. They tasted, as Kenzie so elegantly put it, “like they had been squeezed in the sweaty palm of a child” before being packaged and sold as something that was supposedly delicious.

These offenders, which should almost certainly never be purchased except as a gift for the most dastardly of enemies were Azam Bikuti na Chai and TB’s Chai Biscuits.

Luckily the milk, and biscuits like the graham cracker-esque Amulya Milk Glucose and Nutter Butter-like Milk:

Power Plus Energy Bites, cushioned such harsh blows and we battled on. After the second round of tastings, some 56 biscuits in, we were starting to feel the effects of the fight. Our stomachs began to cramp, a

“Trading blow for blow, we slogged our way through more biscuits, eliminating the losers of each round until we had our Final Four...”

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soporific stupor began to overtake us, and we questioned whether or not we could continue. We were discovering that while one or two packets of biscuits is a very reasonable thing to eat, the otherwise so elegantly-designed human body was not meant to consume 35 packets of them. But, continue we must, and continue we did, forging on and continuing the challenge.

Trading blow for blow, we slogged our way through more biscuits, eliminating the losers of each round until we had our Final Four: Vitamilk, Nice, Amulya Rich Milk, and Cremica Glucose. This is where the real challenge began. These four biscuits represented the best that Rwanda has to offer and we had

to choose one among them to be crowned champion. Our bodies had suffered many blows, absorbing each successive biscuit with more and more difficulty until we were like saturated sponges trying to absorb more water. And yet, we had to have more; we had to find the winner.

**“ This is where
the real challenge
began.”**

In the first semifinal, Vitamilk edged out the ever-popular (and rightly so) Nice Biscuits. In the other semifinal, Cremica Glucose was chosen over Amulya Rich Milk for their

texture and overall flavor.

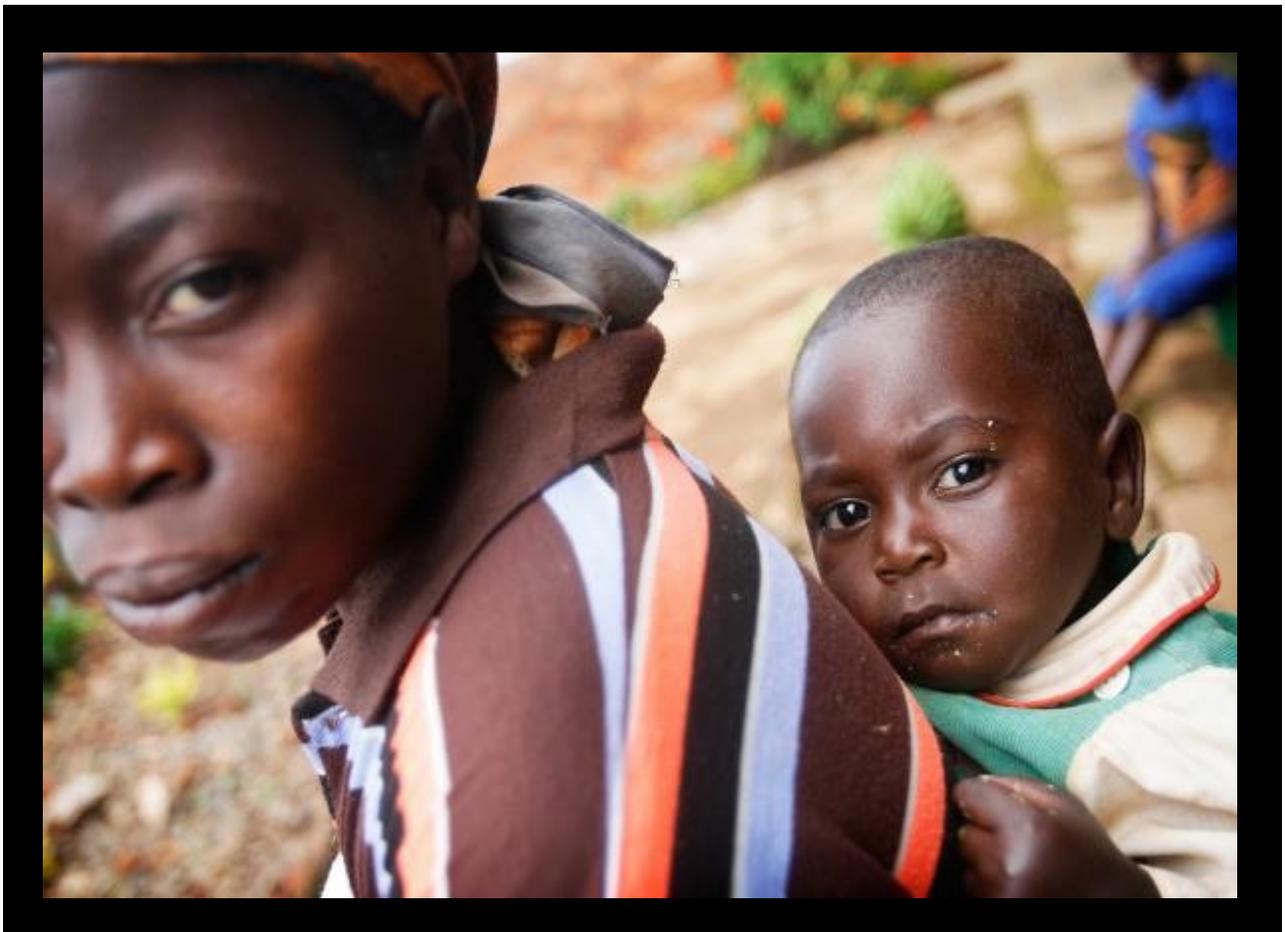
In the end, we emerged victorious, having found the best *ijana* biscuits in Rwanda: Vitamilk, which are crunchy, reasonably thick, and tinged with a hint of vanilla that made the biscuits melt in our mouths. We slumped down onto the flimsy mattress, sweating sugar and holding our aching stomachs. We may have won the battle, but we would pay dearly for the victory.

**SOY MILK COOPERATIVE:
HELPING IMPOVERISHED WOMEN IN MUSHAKA**

Photo Essay

By Joey Anchondo ED 4

In the sectors of Nzahaha and Rwimbogo in southwest Rwanda, a group of women have begun a soy milk cooperative to help generate income. The program was initiated by Peace Corps volunteer Claire Brosnihan in cooperation with the health center in Mushaka, the town where she works. The cooperative comprises ten women, most of whom are subsistence farmers, and they all have severely malnourished children. The soy milk that the cooperative produces provides a cheaper alternative to cow's milk for the community and will generate income for the cooperative's members. Additionally, the cooperative gives the women a chance to learn basic business skills.



"The cooperative is important because we are helping the community and we are helping ourselves also," says Uwamariya Chantal, a mother of four from the sector of Nzahaha. She is pictured with her two and a half year old son, Emmanuel.

Right: Kamugwera Berthe, left, pounds boiled soy beans with a mortar and pestle as part of the first step in producing soy milk. Two of Berthe's three children are in the "red zone" of malnourishment.

Below: Julliette, left, pounds boiled soy beans with a mortar and pestle as part of the first step in producing soy milk. Julliette is a subsistence farmer of beans and cassava, and a mother of 8. She hopes that the income from the soy milk will help pay for her children's secondary school fees. She has hopes for her eldest daughter to become a nurse.





Above: Kamugwera Berthe, pounds boiled soy beans with a mortar and pestle as part of the first step in producing soy milk.

Below: Three year old Nigena Wazieri watches as his mother, Mukamerego Drephine pounds boiled soy beans.





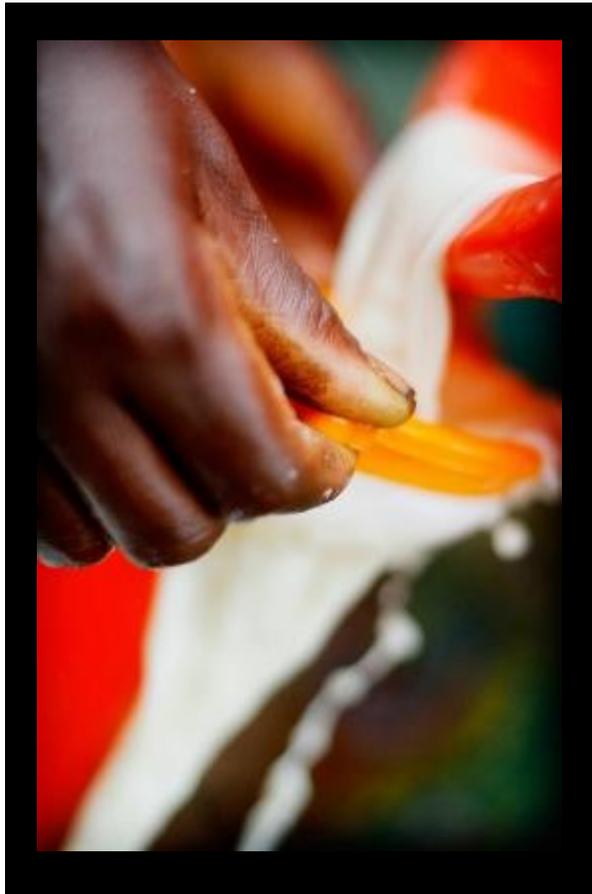
**Above: Soy milk is strained from the pounded beans through a rice sack.
Below: A woman mixes the soy milk after straining it through a rice sack.**



Right: Kamugwera Berthe tends to the fire that boils the soy milk it is sold.



Left: The milk is poured through a strainer to remove any last bits of soy bean.



Below: Kamugwera Berthe stands in the kitchen of the health center in Mushaka, where the soy milk is boiled before being sold. Two of Berthe's three children are in the "red zone" of malnourishment.



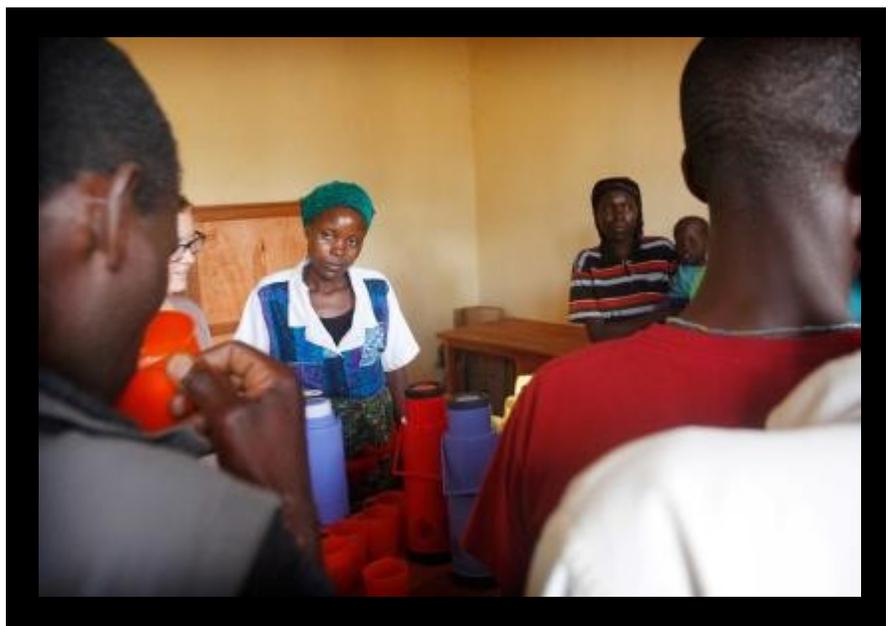


Above: Uwumukiza Juliette tends to the fire that boils the soy milk. Juliette is a subsistence farmer of beans and cassava, and a mother of 8. She hopes that the income from the soy milk will help pay for her children's secondary school fees. She has hopes for her eldest daughter to become a nurse.



Above: Nyangiri-mana Jeanette, left, talks with health volunteer Claire Brosnihan as they prepare the soy milk for sale.

Right: Uwumukiza Juliette serves mugs of fresh, hot soy milk to customers near the market in Gishoma.





Above: Health volunteer Claire Brosnihan, left, greets a woman at the market in Gishoma as the soy milk cooperative opens for its first day of business.

Below: Women from the soy milk cooperative in Mushaka sit in their shop as their first customer sips his hot cup of soy milk



Visiting Kigeme Refugee Camp

By Megan Haggerty Foster & Christine Hooyman, Health 3

The Kigeme Refugee camp started with a handful of white plastic houses built on top of a hillside along the main road in Nyamagabe district. We were driving past it for months, craning our necks in the *twegerane*, like everyone on board, watching the camp literally grow from week to week. What started out as projections of around 7,000 people, quickly rose to numbers upwards of 14,000 living in and around 4,000 houses on two hillsides, sandwiching the main road. The citizens of the camp are from the DRC, Rwandans mostly that had been displaced in the 1994 genocide or before, and mostly women and children.

The presence of the refugee camp in many aspects of our lives, including constant discussions between community members, co-workers, and ourselves, the constancy of UN supply trucks and other aid organization vehicles along the road, and the overwhelming visibility of the camp, really encouraged us to pursue visiting it. "I had wanted to learn more about the camp since it was first erected. I had mixed feelings about going, but many of my co-workers had already visited or were going to visit. I don't think there's anything inherently wrong in being curious - I guess it's more important how we respond to that

curiosity," says Christine.

The process to visit started with discussions with the mayor and chief of police for the district, and with the director of the camp itself. These led to communicating with and receiving permission from the Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs. On the day of the visit, we briefly met with the camp director, who coordinated a very busy guide to arrive and take us on a tour, up one hill and around and up the other, giving us a cursory example of what life is like in the Kigeme Refugee Camp.

The influx of 14,000 people has substantially and visibly



changed the community of Kigeme, discernable if one were just to see it from the road. However some of the less visible changes we learned about from our guide or other community members. Vendors in the area have raised the prices of everything - some items even by as much as 400-500%. It's forcing the residents to travel to other communities to purchase basic market items. The market itself has changed from a barely recognizable clearing along the road to established wooden structures and boutiques, open every day of the week. It's a shocking transformation. Although the camp has boosted the local economy in some ways, previously existing residents complain of the financial burdens that the camp places on them as individuals, and on their families. This includes several of our co-workers in Nyamagabe district health centers.

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The hospital and health center in Kigeme have agreed to take on patients from the refugee camp, but sometimes it has been at the cost of successful patient service. Wait times in both locations have increased substantially, and although there is a seemingly well-organized system for intake of refugees at both the locations, there is concern over lack of staffing and availability. As the majority of the refugee population are women and children, kids are running around everywhere, posing a logistical nightmare - figuring out what to do with so many children who no longer have a school to attend.

The camp is located back-to-back with a school, however the school is already filled with local children. We asked if the children at the camp were attending school and were told that they were taught on Saturdays only. There were talks of educating them during the other children's school breaks and other options were being posed and discussed by community leaders. Although it seems now, almost a year after the camp was established, the refugee camp children have been incorporated into the normal school schedule. However, the school continues to face similar problems to the health center.

This was the first visit for both of us to a refugee camp, although Christine has visited emergency aid camps before. Neither of us knew what to expect, yet we were surprised at how organized the camp appeared. It was calm and quiet and structured. Of course there was the traditional excitement of children seeing foreigners in their village, but not dissimilar to our experiences visiting any random village in Rwanda. The informal economy

that was thriving inside the camp - barber shops, small boutiques and tailors interspersed throughout the houses, was really interesting. "I think it really speaks to the resilience of individuals and the ability to make something from nothing. Perhaps I'm making an assumption, but I expect many of the camp residents had mainly immobile resources left behind in DRC. To see individuals rebound so quickly - and creatively - was something that I wished I had more time to explore and ask questions about," recalls Christine.

"I think it really speaks to the resilience of individuals and the ability to make something from nothing."

We walked through rows and rows of the white plastic houses, or sometimes actual tents for those whose houses hadn't been built yet. These houses were some of the first things we noticed in the camp. Seeing the size of each individual house really gave perspective to the total area of the camp and the density of the population within it. The size and structure of these buildings raised a lot of questions for us about the quality of life in the camp, which will probably only be answered with time.

"I envisioned the houses in the rain, water and mud running down the hillsides, families of around five living in a maybe 8 ft. by 10 ft house, using communal kitchens, communal bathrooms, and communal showers. I thought about attempting to understand what that could possibly be like, yet understanding that I really can't possibly begin to reach comprehension. The people looked happy however, as if they had found ways to exist outwardly seamless in this environment," says Megan. "This is not the first time that a refugee camp has been located in Kigeme, and therefore, I assume they've had some experience working out the challenges."



The centralized bathrooms, showers, hand washing stations and water filling points are used for the entire camp, and there is a camp health post to address minor health issues. Once a month there is food distribution at a central point along the road. We were told by our guide that these distributions include staples like rice, potatoes, flour, sugar, salt, oil and beans. Often times many of these things are later sold on the side of the road to passing cars so that the families can purchase things like fresh vegetables. The reach of these distributed goods has been interesting to watch. We have heard that USAID mosquito nets and blankets from the camp have made it all the way down to Burundi to be sold in the markets there, and we regularly see USAID oil cans and other materials back in our own villages.

The local football field has been used for much of the material distribution, organizational and supervisory meetings for the camp, and also as a parking lot for many of the aid vehicles and trucks bringing materials. Each time we pass by, there seems to be something else happening on the field, including recently, the distribution of firewood. The volunteer who led our tour was clearly busy, but was very willing to answer our questions. We wanted to keep the questions pretty basic, as we tried to balance our curiosity with our hesitancy to not seem too intrusive. At the end of the day, our visit lasted only a handful of hours and therefore it was very surface level.

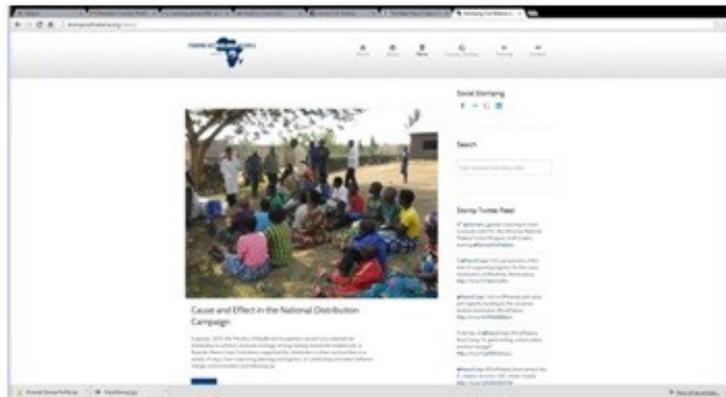
“I'd like to maybe go back again - maybe on a food distribution day and learn more

about that process. Ultimately, I'm glad I went because the presence of the camp is certainly impacting my community,” says Christine. We are really thankful to have had the opportunity to learn more about the camp, and see what some of the successes and challenges for the camp and its population are. Nobody knows how long the refugees will need to stay in the camp, or if they will return to their lives in the DRC. Overall we were impressed with the camp, the organizational structure, and the people within the camp. Although the visit was on a superficial level, it helped put into perspective the conversations happening in our more immediate communities.

Reflections on a year of Stomp in Rwanda

By Arielle Mancuso, Health 2

Stomping Out Malaria in Africa has made great progress during the past year to fight malaria in Peace Corps Volunteer's communities, but the achievement in Rwanda is exceptional. Last year, only three Peace Corps Volunteers completed two projects affecting 90 people in 21 communities. So far this year, 13 volunteers have completed 14 projects affecting 10,804 people in 44 communities- and the year is not even close to the end! That is a growth rate of 433% in participating volunteers; 700% in projects; 12,000% in people reached and 210% in communities affected. Overall, I think that we can accurately say that the malaria program in Peace Corps Rwanda is growing.



The program is also becoming more robust. The diversity of activities that Peace Corps Volunteers are involved in is expanding. Last year, the portfolio of malaria activities at Peace Corps Rwanda included trainings only. Although trainings are an efficient way to deliver messages that promote preventive measures and appropriate treatment for

malaria, there are many other important activities that volunteers can become involved in. In January 2013, the Ministry of Health and its partners carried out a national net distribution to achieve universal coverage of long-lasting insecticide treated nets in Rwanda. Eight Peace Corps Volunteers participated in the national net distribution in

their communities and directly distributed 3,800 nets.

In addition, volunteers supported the distribution in a variety of ways, from improving

planning and logistics, to conducting innovative behavior change communication and following up with the development of community-level initiatives to foster a culture of malaria prevention. The stories of five volunteers were featured on the Stomping Out Malaria in Africa's website as their "Weekly Awesome", putting Rwanda on the Stomp Out Malaria in Africa map, and many more activities are planned for the future. I had the opportunity to see most of you at the Regional Meetings in February. I spoke about practical ways volunteers can become involved in malaria activities, including serving as Regional Malaria Volunteers and participating in the surveillance of long-lasting insecticide treated nets in Rwandan communities. We have announced the results of the election and your new Regional Malaria Volunteers should be



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reaching out to you soon. This network of Regional Malaria Volunteers is an efficient method for us to provide you with local technical support as you implement community-level malaria projects at your site.

Equipped with technical knowledge and resources, they will serve as liaisons between centrally-located Malaria Volunteers and volunteers in the field in order to increase access to the support you need to design and carry out malaria projects that produce a meaningful impact in your communities.

We still have more work to do. During the Regional Meetings, 31 volunteers signed up to participate in the Net Use and Maintenance Survey. This survey is an opportunity for Peace Corps and Stomp Rwanda to establish itself on the national radar. Our approach to development is unique and, as a result, often misunderstood by partners working centrally. We fill a niche that is different than “donor” or “technical advisor.” Rather, we are “community whisperers,” because we know what is going on in the community, what makes a community click, and most importantly, what doesn’t. Very few people at the central level share this perspective, and I can’t express how many times this knowledge has given me an advantage, despite my technical inaptitude in the face of global experts. Partners at the central level are also beginning to recognize the advantages of tapping into the wealth of community knowledge Peace Corps Volunteers possess. No other partner is better placed to



provide this much needed information. The Net Use and Maintenance Survey is an opportunity to leverage our advantage and contribute in a significant way to national level processes. As soon as we receive our stamp of approval, we will be conducting the survey in 29 communities. We have also provided technical support to enthusiastic volunteers who went above and beyond to plan their own malaria activities in their communities. Some volunteers are planning to do a series of workshops for Community Health Workers and Health Center staff on malaria prevention and community mobilization. Others are incorporating malaria into youth development camps and establishing malaria clubs at their schools. Others are designing community-level educational outreach activities. Still others are working to establish strategic partnerships to procure insecticide-treated nets to bring to their schools. Their work is admirable, as they are the trailblazers for malaria work in Rwanda. The first steps are always the most difficult, but also a learning experience for the program as we strive for continuous improvement of malaria projects that are context appropriate and of high quality.

Our Program Director claims that Stomping Out Malaria in Rwanda is “the new Peace

Corps.” For many reasons, I agree. This is one of the few times that the work of Peace Corps Volunteers is being outwardly recognized as making a significant contribution to a global priority issue. Since 1997, the elimination of malaria from endemic countries around the world and eventual global eradication has been on the international agenda. Progress has been made, but achievements are fragile, requiring sustained commitment and interventions that offer more value for money. You may not be aware, but Peace Corps Volunteers played a significant role in the elimination of the guinea worm from many countries where volunteers serve, contributing to nearly successful global eradication (transmission occurred in only four countries in 2011, as opposed to 20 in 1990). We can do it again, but this time with a focus on malaria.

Peace Corps is responding to a changing environment in the context of the global financial crisis. On some level, you’ve all experienced this with the introduction of new project frameworks, the Volunteer Reporting Tool, and Focus In/Train Up training packages. As Congress moves in a direction of demanding performance for funding, Peace Corps must work to improve the quality of its training and reporting. Now, Peace Corps Volunteers must have the technical capacity to carry out their work and report on the impact that their projects have had. Although any period of transition can be frustrating, we are benefiting from the opportunity for more and better professional development.



Stomping Out Malaria in Africa is one of few programs that invests in its volunteers and provides them with intense technical training. Before beginning our service as Rwanda’s Malaria Volunteers, Virginia and I attended a two-week “boot camp” training in Senegal. We gained a thorough knowledge of malaria, enabling us to perform the duties of our job. One of our tasks was to disseminate malaria information to volunteers serving in Rwanda. In the duties of our job. One of our tasks was to disseminate malaria information to volunteers serving in Rwanda. In order to accomplish this, we have provided all volunteers with a basic understanding of malaria at Peace Corps official trainings and will be conducting an intensive training for Regional Malaria Volunteers soon so they may provide continued learning to volunteers in the field. The Health Program Manager, Emmanuel Rugira, and Beth Braaksma, Health Group 4, recently returned from Boot Camp VI and we will be meeting with them to debrief on ways to improve and involve them in the program.

As we near the end of our service, we are preparing to pass the reins to a new Malaria Volunteer. As with many of life’s changes, the feeling is bittersweet. I was told at the boot camp training in Senegal that I had a difficult task ahead of me getting the program in Rwanda off the ground. In order to be successful, I would have to “be malaria.” You bore with me through the year as I’ve sent countless emails and presented, always on the same topic, at your trainings. We laughed when I dressed up as Arielle the Anopheles mosquito for Halloween. Together, we’ve built the foundation of a malaria program in Rwanda; a program that I hope continues to grow in my absence. That depends on you. In addition to the volunteer who steps up as Rwanda’s new Malaria Volunteer, you each have a role to play in the continued effort and future of the program.

Hanukkah in Rwanda

By Nick McClure, ED 3

Last year, I wasn't very good about celebrating the Jewish holidays. Matzoh is hard to get here, and, having a seder alone doesn't sound like much fun anyway, so there goes Passover. Realistically, I'm not going to build a sukkah in my backyard, so Sukkot is out too. Compared to the other Jewish holidays, Hanukkah is relatively easy to celebrate in Rwanda. All you really need are candles, which can be found at nearly every shop in the country. Of course, I didn't bring a menorah with me, but melting candles onto a strip of cardboard works just as well, right?

I've told some members of my community that I'm Jewish. Most people simply understand that to mean I am a different type of Christian, like a Seventh-day Adventist, or even a Muslim. A few have a clearer understanding of what Judaism is and so I tried to explain the story of Hanukkah to those



villagers. And for readers who are not quite sure, Hanukkah is a commemoration of rededicating the Temple in Israel around 200 B.C., after a war between the Israelites and the Syrians/Greeks. The Syrians were trying to prevent Jews from practicing their religion. After the Maccabees (Jewish rebels) drove the Syrians from Jerusalem, they wanted to purify and rededicate the Temple, which Syrians had temporarily used to pray to Zeus or some such god by the Hellenized Syrians. But, after arriving at the temple, the Maccabees discovered a problem – there was only enough oil for the lamp used in the temple every night to stay lit for one night. It would take eight days to produce more oil. By a miracle, the small vial of oil burned for eight nights. So now, we light candles for the eight nights of Hanukkah, or the “festival of lights.”

All the Rwandans who heard this story said it was very good, and a good reason for a holiday — to celebrate our history. Before, I had not thought of Hanukkah as a celebration of Jewish history. Actually, a fair number of Jewish holidays celebrate events from our history and particularly hardships we have overcome through the years. In holidays of many other religions, you don't notice necessarily find a celebration of history or triumphs. After some reflection, I think this is probably one of the major reasons I continue to identify myself as a Jew, although I am not particularly religious. I never really consciously realized it before, but I value the connection Judaism gives me to my heritage, to the past and to the bigger picture.

Debating PCV Alcohol Consumption By The Peer Support Network (PSN)

Throughout our service, drinking has been brought up so many times by so many people. So this is a debate about drinking. The purpose of this debate is not to try to convince you to drink or to stop drinking. It is our hope that this will start a dialogue about the reasons why you choose to drink or not. Most Peace Corps countries have a problem with volunteers drinking excessively and are trying to find ways to circumvent this behavior. We hope that after reading this debate, you will pay more attention to the reason why you are choosing to drink or not to.

Don't drink. It's easy.

Why not, you ask? Glad you inquired. Here are some perks of "saying no" to the tempting delights of Primus, Mutzig, Waragi, and, the most potent of all, our beloved local banana beer.

Money!! You save so much money by not drinking. Say you average 15 beers a month at an average of 800 RWF/bottle. When you add the hotel room that you need for a night or two, we'll average it at 16,000 Rwf a month, a THREE days salary for us. Think of all the other awesome things you could buy with that saved money: 4 Meze Fresh burritos, 53 liters of milk, 33 holographic Obama belts, 320 avocados, 40 goat brochettes, etc. If you were pulling a \$30,000/year job in the States, you would be spending an average of \$82 per day. Spending a THREE day salary on alcohol would put you out \$246 per month. Dang, with that money saved, you could financially provide for 6 children through Compassion International or get a fancy new hair cut in New York.

We know the idea of sitting down with English-speaking, cultural-sharing peers and relaxing with a few beers is a favorite pastime and habit of many here. Habits are hard to break. Who doesn't enjoy throwing a few too many back and getting their silly on with the handy excuse of "I was drunk" conveniently resting in their pocket. With Jamie Foxx's wise words dancing in our heads, we look forward to these crazy nights guilt-free: nights where we can just let go and be ourselves. Because honestly, being in an environment where we are constantly looked at,

weighed, judged, and usually found wanting, our baseline stress levels tend to be a bit higher than average. We need the autonomy to decide: "Tonight, I'm throwing it all to the wind!"

One of the best kept secrets though: You don't need alcohol to act drunk! That's right. Everyone has been lying to you all these years. Our inner uninhibited selves are there all the time, waiting to spring out at our most meager command. Have the urge to make out with someone willy-nilly, don't let the absence of alcohol stop you! Want to finally be rude to that PCV who was driving you crazy, why let soberness get in your way? Drunkenness is a state of mind. If a woman can trick her body into thinking it's pregnant by sheer mind power (which legitimately happens), then I think it's safe to assume we can trick ourselves into thinking we're drunk. Why is this a plus? Because you can turn it off at the drop of a hat, almost like a friend-with-benefits deal. You get the good time, but you can put your sober-headed hat back on right away in case a security incident happens or you realize the "attractive" girl you picked up is really just a prostitute. Win-win all around.

Fact: It's harder to steal from a sober person. Guard well your spiffy electronics and hard-earned money! No matter where you find yourself in the world, there will always be people on the prowl seeking to take advantage of the unsuspecting or vulnerable. Why make it easier for them? Make them work for their goods like you do!

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In spite of all our advancements in medical technology, regrettably, we still have no cure for the common cold or the even commoner hangover. Is a night of revelry and fun truly worth a morning of pain and... (wait, scratch that [I'm thinking most of you would answer "yes" anyway]). Let me rephrase, hangovers suck. They make you wake up late. They make you wake up miserable. They make you miss site installation. Basically, they make everything worse. So avoid them. In spite of all our advancements in medical technology, regrettably, we still have no cure for the common cold or the even commoner hangover. Is a night of revelry and fun truly worth a morning of pain and... (wait, scratch that [I'm thinking most of you would answer "yes" anyway]). Let me rephrase, hangovers suck. They make you wake up late. They make you wake up miserable. They make you miss site installation. Basically, they make everything worse. So avoid them.

Drinking is not bad: Why?

American Culture. It's part of American culture to meet up with friends for a drink. It is typical to go out for drinks after work or to catch up with friends. A lot of our social interactions revolved around casual drinking in the United States. Being in Rwanda our social lives have been drastically altered. Therefore it is normal and common for us to feel inclined to grab a drink, especially when we are surrounded by other Americans. It's one of the few things we can do here that is similar to something we'd do back in the states. One of our goals as a Peace Corps Volunteer is to share our culture with host country nationals. Going to the bar, having a beer with our meal is part of our culture. Also, having the female volunteers going out and drinking in a bar with other Americans shows Rwandans that women should be treated equal. It is all about Gender Equality.

Comfort to do something we are used to. Going out after work to grab a drink is a way for us to de-stress in America. In Rwanda it provides a comfort of doing something familiar when we are surrounded by something we are not familiar with. It is a normal outlet for us especially after being in the village for weeks at a time where we cannot truly be ourselves. There's nothing wrong with this. When we go out, we are usually with other like-minded people and during this time we can talk about the difficult times and get

the support we need while relaxing with a drink of our choice.

To Add Variety. When we go out and meet up with other volunteers, we do not want to drink tea. We drink enough tea and Fanta in the village. We want something new. In the States we have a huge selection of beverages to choose from, so in Rwanda when we are able to have choices other than Fanta or tea, we are going to choose that. Our choice in alcohol to drink at these gatherings might just mean we want a variation from what we've been

Not drinking can also earn us the gold medal of compliments here: "You are serious." In a culture where true respect and true love is hard earned for foreigners, choosing to abstain from alcohol sets you apart and makes Rwandans take you seriously (well, maybe less seriously if you're a guy, but hey, just tell them you're protestant and all is forgiven). We have chosen to spend two years in a culture that judges us by our actions and by the cleanliness of the shoes we wear and by the reputations of company we keep. We chose to live in this culture and learn from this culture and share with this culture. And ladies, you aren't going to get no respect from the older mamas and papas if they know you get drunk and party. That's just the way it is. And guys, when village women see you have the habit of drinking and partying, you are doing nothing to fight the culture that it's okay for women and girls to work all day while boys and men get to drink and play.

drinking the past few months alone at site. We need a little variety for our sanity. Nothing wrong with that.

It is Fun. People say that drinking is fun. And we agree, drinking can be fun when paired up with fun people to drink with. Some people need a drink before going out and dancing. There isn't a problem with this. We only see each other every few weeks if not every couple of months so when we get together, why not splurge, have a few more beers, get a little tipsy... It's not going to happen

again for a long time, so why not? We are working/volunteering in a very stressful environment and sometimes for us to loosen up and let go of our troubles to have fun, we need a drink or two. At site, our actions are being closely monitored and watched, like we're animals in a zoo. Sometimes we need to let loose, and "dance like no one's watching" (for once!)...

We are Adults. Drinking becomes a problem when a person feels like they have no other option but to drink, out of boredom, loneliness, etc... It's not up to us to tell the person to stop drinking, or to lecture them about the facts (that they already know). We are adults and we should be able to make the choice of whether we would like to have a beer at lunch/dinner. We are adults and if we are able to function and get our job done, then who are you to tell us that we shouldn't drink at all. We are smart, we are educated about the dangers of binge drinking, and we know right from wrong. We are treated like children everywhere we go and to say that we cannot drink, to take away that right is going too far. There may be times when we drink over our limit but we have friends that will make sure we are taken care of. And sometimes, the only way for some people to learn a lesson is by learning it the hard way. Allow us to make the choice and learn from it. Honestly, after one bad hangover, I think many people will learn quickly their limits and refrain from drinking to excess

At the end of the day, there is not much else left for us to do in this country that is the same as what we would do in the States to deal with stress. As long as we know our limits and we are safe, we say go ahead and drink.

The First BE in the East

By Alex Bok & Miranda Hyslop-Garza, Health 4

The first Eastern region Boys Excelling (BE) camp took place in Rwamagana at G.S. Gatagara in November. The camp had over 60 boys participate, including several who were visually impaired.

The boys attended three classes a day for three days then could join in several activities planned for the afternoon. Each day a theme was presented in the classes – day one talked about leadership, day two was preventing HIV/AIDS and day three focused on gender issues. In classes, volunteer teachers tried their best to answer students' amusing questions. As the week progressed, students became more open to new ideas and information.



After classes finished, students took a short break then picked an afternoon activity to join. The most popular activities were learning to bake bread, playing Ultimate Frisbee and learning the high-octane moves of modern dance.

An afternoon cursed with rain meant outdoor activities were moved indoors, and volunteers proved their adeptness at flexibility and change. One rainy day activity was particularly interesting – playing Pictionary and charades with the students. Several volunteers and facilitators went to help, but only one camper showed up to the activity. Needless to say, the six volunteers and one Rwandan facilitator made this one camper feel incredibly uncomfortable and also that we were all here for him. Although student turn-out was low for this activity, the volunteers and facilitators had a good time – drawing large amounts of weapons to try to prompt the guessers to say “Arsenal soccer team.”

After afternoon activities, campers could choose to rest or participate in another activity. At our camp, most boys wanted to play sports and asked for any

type of ball – soccer balls, volley balls, beach balls, tennis balls, baseballs – if you had them they were gone.

At 7:00, dinner was on the table and the hungry eyes of 60 boys were felt. Guard your food. Although we wanted boys to meet as many different students as they could at dinner, trying to break up the bonds and friendships they had already made became a challenge. No matter what, best friends continued to sit by each other instead of moving to a new table – but it also might have had something to do with the presence of akabanga at that certain table.

After dinner, there was another round of organized activities for each hero group. The first night each hero group wrote and performed a song. The group of Martin Luther King Jr. won for best song. The second night the volunteers and facilitators turned Gatagara into a carnival. The boys participated in a tug-of-war, face painting, rice sack races and other carnival games. The last night, we held a bonfire. This event is highly anticipated at

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BE and GLOW camps. Our bonfire was a place where students, facilitators and volunteers felt free to share success stories and literally burn away any failures or obstacles preventing success. The best part, however, was sharing American culture in the form of a smore after sharing our stories.

On the last day, we held closing ceremonies. Each hero group filed in to the main hall one at a time, shouting their group's spirit song and carrying a poster the boys designed. Then, Christina Titus' group surprised her with a round of "Happy Birthday" and a cake baked during the afternoon activities. One student from each group made a short speech, either in English or Kinyarwanda, about BE Camp. Everyone prayed together, then lit a candle signifying the light ignited at BE Camp and to be passed on to others. To end the week, one of the visually-impaired boys sang "Silent Night" and played guitar.

GLOW Girls are Leaders for Life

By Ella Robinson, ED 3



How to write an article about GLOW. Mm...write about how inspiring the girls were? Nope, that's a given. Write about our statistics? Nope, people will fall asleep. Write about...the food? Getting closer.

When I was asked to write an article about the Nyamagabe GLOW camp, I had trouble figuring out where to start. I was overwhelmed with the pressure of it—oh my God, an article about GLOW? I was drugged up on Benadryl for most of our camp, how in the world can I write about something that's a blur to me? I thought about all the other people that are more qualified for this daunting job, and I thought about the likelihood that I will not successfully capture our camp in a

few lackluster paragraphs. And I thought about how each day was full of activities and classes and funny little moments that are impossible to recreate here. But...here's me giving it a shot anyway.

There are certain things that you can expect from a GLOW camp. You can expect shy girls to begin with—girls who speak softly and infrequently, who need a little extra nudge at the beginning of each game or class discussion. Girls who don't know you or each other, who all order orange Fanta and huddle close together in groups that all went to the same school. Eager, intelligent girls who are willing to learn but hesitant in such an unfamiliar setting.

Then, as the week goes on, you can expect to notice a slight shift in the demeanor of —each



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girl a little more outspoken, a little more sure of herself, a little stronger. For the Nyamagabe camp, this shift in demeanor was accelerated by the unique presence of our junior facilitators; girls who had gone through the camp last year who wanted to take a leadership role this year. For each team of campers we had one or two such girls, and to me it seemed as if this minor change in the structure made each new GLOW-er a little more comfortable right off the bat.

This difference was at the heart of our camp, along with not choosing to rotate between PCVs and their respective groups—we taught all the lessons to our individual teams, staying with the same group of girls for the whole week. At first I was a bit skeptical about the changes, but I suppose that's because the first camp I participated in was successful, and I was unsure about whether the alterations would produce the same results: but I was pleasantly surprised when they did.



The changes even seemed to make the girls progress faster, getting bolder quicker. They really got to know the PCV who was in charge of their group, as well as the junior facilitators. Having been through the camp so recently, the experienced girls were the perfect combination of peer and guide; teacher and friend.

It's hard for me to provide any wisdom about whether or not this method was 'better' than the first camp that I was a part of, but I can say with relative certainty that it was just as successful in creating a comfortable and safe environment for the campers.

In short, our camp fulfilled all of the usual expectations for GLOW. The hard-working members of our administration team survived, and the girls visibly became more confident and self-assured by the time we had to say goodbye. But I'll also add that our camp exceeded expectations (as I believe every camp does in its own way); not because of all the growing confidence or because of expectations met, but because of what set us apart. The Nyamagabe camp changed the structure of GLOW in a way that was beneficial to both the girls and the PCVs involved, and it made a difference.

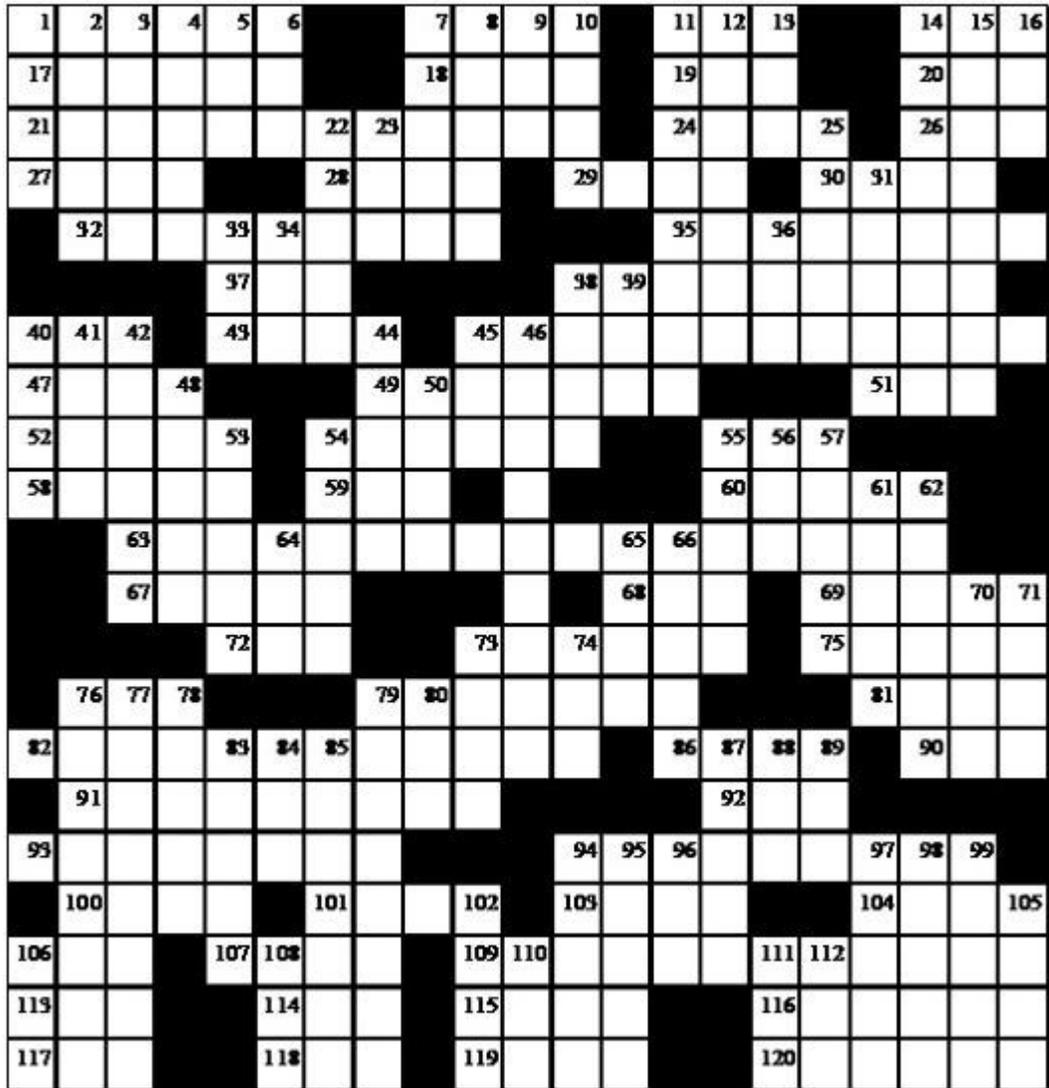


Rife in Rwanda?

By Matthew Beamer, ED 2 RPCV

Across

- 1. Equivalent of C flat
- 7. One resource for PCV grants
- 11. ____ a boy!
- 14. Body ink
- 17. Internet windows?
- 18. Peak in the Asgard range, Antarctica
- 19. A group with many arms
- 20. Medical gp.
- 21. Down-home eating utensils?
- 24. Horn sound
- 26. Drop the ball
- 27. Aim
- 28. Opera feature
- 29. Actor Mort
- 30. Rwandan assurance option
- 32. Dairy product that really sticks to your ribs?
- 35. City of gold?
- 37. Beach souvenir
- 38. Elope with an opera character
- 40. Pressure meas.
- 43. Celtic dialect
- 45. Training for frightening clothes makers?



- 47. Present opener?
- 49. Approaching
- 51. “____ Robinson”
- 52. Dog’s bane
- 54. Andean beasts
- 55. RR stop
- 58. Belgian beer found in Kigali
- 59. Part of ENT
- 60. Bert’s pal
- 63. A blasphemous answer to “Where are you going?” on Sunday?
- 67. Practice
- 68. Army officer, abbr.
- 69. Colon cleanse
- 72. Casper to Minneapolis dir.
- 73. Postage needs
- 74. In ____ (unsure)
- 76. ____ whiz!

- 79. Japanese restaurant comp?
- 81. *The Godfather* actor
- 82. The president of the U.S.?
- 86. Car blemish
- 90. Wind dir.
- 91. Police officer’s boundary?
- 92. Neither’s partner
- 93. Chez ____? (French girl’s name)
- 94. A famed London Premier League team?
- 100. Part of AMA, abbr.
- 101. National Artist syndicate in France
- 103. Prefix for wine lovers
- 104. La ____ tar pits
- 106. Ex-Ugandan leader Amin
- 107. “____ Off” (Prince single)

- 109. An appealing meal for grooming gorillas?
- 113. Author Anaïs
- 114. Replacement for Claudine?
- 115. Walk slowly
- 116. Venomous Asian snakes
- 117. Egg ____ (Christmas delight)
- 118. Showed the way
- 119. There are seven of them
- 120. Whore

Down

- 1. Alphabet sequence
- 2. Funny film, say
- 3. Jew : kosher :: Muslim : ____
- 4. Foot joint
- 5. British actor Stephen

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6. PCV group for emotional help
7. Student
8. _____ and dagger
9. Gp. active in Gaza
10. Gives a bad review
11. _____ house (in trouble with the wife)
12. Swiss painter Joséphine
13. _____ Paolo
14. Chic hotel near the Peace Corps office in Kigali
15. Where to find 76-Downs
16. Rocky peak
22. Sends to Hell
23. _____ Lanka
25. _____ commun: Rwandan lower secondary school
31. Germany's Philipp, for example
33. Sault _____ Marie
34. Laugh syllable
36. Members of the AMA
38. Nintendo game consoles
39. East end?
40. Survey
41. Hook accomplice
42. Irate
44. Chou _____
45. Highlander's cap
46. Symbol for a tribe worshipping vermin?
48. Isn't near
50. Make
53. Like Alfafa?
54. Sierra _____
55. Shuts an envelope
56. Give it a go
57. Los Angeles ballplayer
61. _____ column
62. Swellings caused by fluid
64. Two-player card game
65. Like Dr. Laurent or Elite
66. Ran easily
70. Many Kellogg grads
71. First-rate
73. Chair
74. Constellation to the south of Sagittarius
76. Rush Limbaugh genre, to a teenage girl?
77. Renting online?
78. Arabic airline, pluralized
79. Fostered
80. Slugger stat
83. An object, to Tweety?
84. Mercedes-Benz class
85. "_____ Girl" (*The Little Mermaid* song)
87. Big business in 2001?
88. Gaseous car accelerator
89. Number after due
94. _____ Puffs
95. Listens
96. Japanese mountain, Mt. _____
97. Pooh, for example
98. Easily broken
99. Poetic work composed of verses from other authors in a new form or order
102. European mountains
105. Aide
106. Bed and Breakfast
108. What many PCVs teach
110. Land in la mer
111. Meas. for carbonate hardness alkalinity
112. Support garment

Answers on page 31

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