



September 3, 2022

Burundi Trip Report

“Whatever you did to the least of these brothers of mine you did to me.” Matthew 25:40

Distilling down the impressions and events of 10 days in Burundi is a huge and difficult task but this verse became the theme of our stay.

“The least of these”

The school’s focus is to teach sewing skills to vulnerable people, such as widows, orphans, people without jobs, children abandoned by parents, daughters who were not fortunate enough to continue their studies.

One of the days at the sewing school we were able to speak with the currently enrolled students. As I (Leslie) spoke to them I realized that they struggle to understand that God cares for them and that they are very important in God’s eyes. They are constantly getting the message that they are worthless. The city turns on the water in their area for short periods of time (often at 2 AM). Jobs are very difficult to obtain if you don’t have the right family connection. Paying for a doctor’s visit is unaffordable. Several said that they sometimes eat only once a day. So we see that what we are doing—giving them a skill and the hopeful message of God’s love—is a way to communicate to them that they are God’s creation and of great worth and value. We do what we do because we want to show them that God sees and cares for them

Necessity

When asked why they were attending the sewing school here is what some said:

- I have no family members to help me; this is my last hope to be able to make a living.
- I have a degree in economics and have been looking for work for 7 years. With this skill I hope to be able to help provide for my family.
- I am struggling to feed my children. With the skills I learn here I hope to do that better.

Impact

On our first Sunday we attended the church of Pastor Boniface who is the visionary behind this work. Several women who had graduated from the school had heard that we were going to be present and came to meet us and to express their thanks for what we were doing and how it has changed their lives. One of the women said, “What you are doing for the Burundian people is so important and it is a gift that keeps on giving.

Modesty

The sewing school is in one of the poorest sections of town. The room we occupy is lit by light from the open doors. Our students learn on treadle sewing machines. This is such a small work! It is far from glamorous! *And yet*, God seems to be using it to improve lives and minister to the needy. Despite its extreme modesty, we feel that there is significant impact in the lives of those who participate.

All of the above concerns the sewing school. We have more information on the different activities of the trip on our Facebook page, [Sowing Hope in Burundi](#). ***Turn this over to find out about our new farming project.***

Online giving is possible at [Sowing-Hope.org](https://www.Sowing-Hope.org)

Farming Project

The idea of a farming project came to us via Pastor Boniface 2020 from a group of women who don't feel apt to train in the sewing school. We wanted to visit with the women and perhaps see the land before we went ahead with the project. Then the pandemic hit! So after waiting almost two years we finally got a chance to meet them. Twice.

This group of about 24 women introduced themselves to us. This is what we found out:

- One woman was a widow with 5 children.
- Another had 13 children.
- Some are illiterate.

We came to the first meeting with a number of concerns.

We said: We don't want to finance a project if you as participants don't have some financial buy in.

They said: We will contribute! (and they decided on an amount that each would pay)

We said: This is very hard work. You will have to walk significant distances to get to the field and then the work is hard.

They said: We Burundian women are strong! We will do it.

We said: You will work for 3 months only to receive the equivalent of one month's salary. Is it worth it?

They said: YES! (Emphatically!)

So after our two lengthy conversations with them we decided to go ahead with leaving \$1,500 to start the project. This should be a one-time investment and they should be able to sustain the project after the first harvest. That is,

- if weather cooperates,
- if the soil is fertile enough,
- if they get a good yield,
- if the market holds on the sale of the rice.

This is a fairly small investment of \$1,500 which, with their contributions should allow the women to get started in farming in a way that will augment the family income.

The women have broken into two groups, each with it's one hectare piece of land. In case you're interested a hectare is about 2 ½ acres or 2 ½ football fields. One group has found a plot and the other is still looking as I write.

- Please pray for the success of this project.
- Please pray that the second group will find a plot of land near where they live.
- Please pray for the different variables (in the bullet point above) which will impact this project.
- Please pray for unity and a collaborative spirit among the women.

We are so thankful to God for making it possible for us to travel to Burundi and for the many gifts that made it possible for us to make progress in both the sewing school and the farming project.

