

# Step Up! American Association for Rwandan Women

January 2012

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## Message from the President

In the words of the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka in May 1994, "Rwanda was clinically dead as a nation." However, this pessimistic diagnosis had a positive outcome. Despite its apparent clinical death, there was a possibility of cardiopulmonary resuscitation to revive Rwanda even in the absence of vital signs. I am proud to say that thanks to your support, Step Up has been a part of this revival since starting its work in Rwanda in 2006. Thanks to your humanitarian commitment, Rwanda's pulse beats stronger than before its predicted clinical death. I thank you and wish you a happy new year. May you be blessed abundantly in 2012 for all that you do.



President. Bea Gallimore (in blue) with Abasa members

## Training in Rwanda July 2011

Step Up was able to recruit eight trainers including psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and a gender violence advocate to provide 2-week workshops in psychosocial trauma counseling in Rwanda. The eight trainers were divided into two teams that provided training in the capital city of Kigali hosted by the Kigali Health Institute (KHI) and at the National University of Rwanda (NUR) in the southern city of Butare. At the end of the first week, the two teams

swapped locations. This allowed Step Up to do two weeks of simultaneous training in Kigali and Butare.

The total number of trainees was 105 with 70 in Butare, and 35 in Kigali. This is the highest number of trainees that Step Up has ever had in Rwanda. The attendance in Butare was due mainly to the number of students in the Department of Clinical Psychology at the NUR who took the training for academic credit.



Board Member, Deb Doxsee, with trainees at KHI

The 2011 training took into account the evaluation and recommendations of the 2009 trainees who requested training on how to counsel victims of gender based violence (GBV) and substance abusers in the post-genocide society. The GBV law that passed in 2008 is very comprehensive and takes into consideration rape, domestic violence, polygamy, adultery, marital rape and sexual harassment all of which are crimes in Rwanda. This law has allowed women to stand up for their rights and to seek justice and counseling.

Consequently, the 2011 trainees were given basic training on counseling survivors of traumatic experiences associated with the genocide as well as techniques in counseling the victims of gender-based violence. The additional training included techniques for

community intervention treatment, establishing advocacy programs and shelters for GBV survivors, sexual health issues faced by victims of GBV, counseling victims of alcohol and drug abuse, and crisis intervention for GBV.



Board member, Cheryl Shigaki, with students

Thanks to your generosity, Step Up was able to pay \$6,000 towards the plane tickets for 6 of the trainers. Our goal next year is to provide full transportation support (\$2,500) for each volunteer trainer. To meet this goal we urge you to provide monetary assistance and also to donate frequent flyer miles that you have accumulated on Delta and United Airlines.

#### Assistance to Abasa

Our deep appreciation and thanks to all donors who continue to support the widows of the Abasa organization. Thanks to you, we continue our financial assistance to the women of Abasa. In 2010, the women decided to use the money from the honeybee project as a fund to establish other income-generating project. So far, 24 women are participating in spin-off income-producing projects. They sell clothing, vegetables, beans, sorghum, and cassava flour in the local market. Some of the women bought goats that they are raising for milk and meat.

The women have made a profit and repaid the money they used to start their project from the “Honey Money” fund. Step Up has decided to switch completely from providing direct financial support to enabling the women to start their own income-generating projects with micro-finance loans. In 2011, Step Up loaned a total of \$2500 to 25 Abasa women who were interested in starting a small trade in the market. Each one received \$100 for her project. They are expected to repay monthly into the Step Up account in Rwanda. We are confident that this assistance approach will be a success because the women have proven it with the money from the honey project. This change in our financial assistance to the Abasa women is in accordance with the goal of Rwanda Vision 2020, the national policy of moving progressively from reliance on humanitarian assistance associated with the 1994 genocide into domestic

economic activity for sustainable development. Step Up is trying to work within these policy guidelines.



#### 2012 Step Up! Fundraiser

Step Up will hold its biennial fundraising event on April 28, 2012. The theme of the Fundraiser is “The House of Hope”. The fundraiser will consist of a dinner banquet, a silent auction, and the sale of Rwanda souvenirs and crafts. Canadian Senator Roméo Dallaire will be the keynote speaker. Dallaire is the retired general who was the head of the United Nations peacekeeping mission during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. He stayed behind with a handful of soldiers until the UN Secretary General’s order to pull out. General Dallaire will speak about his battle with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) caused by his military experiences in Rwanda and which are recounted in his autobiography, *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

We chose the fundraiser theme, “The House of Hope” because proceeds will go to building and maintaining a counseling center in Butare. The purpose of the center is to assist women survivors of rape and other gender-based violence. The city of Butare has already donated land for the center. Building the center has been a major goal for Step Up since its founding in 2004. The center will be called *Nsanga*, which means “come to me” and it will be a place for hope and healing.

Please plan to join us on April 28 to support this good cause. The fundraiser will be held at the Hampton Inn and Suites near the University of Missouri campus. Contact Step Up for more information and assistance with hotel reservations.

#### Step Up Collaboration With Colleges and Universities

The Step Up student chapter at Marquette University remains engaged with the work of the parent organization. The president of Step Up will make a presentation during the genocide commemoration ceremonies at Marquette scheduled for April 12-14.

Step Up works closely with several academic departments at the University of Missouri to educate the campus community about the history of the genocide in



Rwanda. In January 2011, a group of University of Missouri students established Step Up Mizzou, an MU chapter of Step Up for continued engagement with genocide survivors and other African refugees in the Columbia community via service-learning projects.

Step Up will recognize the contributions of the student organization with a service award to be given at the 2012 fundraiser banquet. Other Step Up volunteers will also receive awards.

### Membership and Donations

If you are interested in sustaining the ongoing Step Up projects in Rwanda, consider joining Step Up or making a tax-deductible donation. Membership information is available below or on our website. If you are already a member of Step Up, we appreciate your support and encourage you to renew your membership for 2011.



Step Up! Board Members (left to right) Deb Doxsee, Cheryl Shigaki and Hudson Giles relaxing after a day of hard work

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### Membership Levels

\$500 - Platinum Level  
\$300 - Gold Level  
\$200 - Silver Level  
\$100 - Bronze Level  
\$60 - Basic Membership  
\$25 - Student Membership

**Donation Amount \$** \_\_\_\_\_