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Visiting the 'COWS FOR PEACE PROJECT'

By Alinda Drog

"The camp I attended in Rwanda proved to be an exhilarating time where themes such as: 'God of Peace lead us into life, justice, unity and reconciliation' were spoken about. There was also the opportunity to visit the beneficiaries of the 'Cows for Peace' project of CARSA. Vera Buunk (a participant in the camp) and I were picked up early by Christophe. After some shopping to buy food for on the road, we stopped to pick up Samson (a employee of CARSA and Austin (an American intern), to visit some of the 'victim-perpetrator couples', who received a cow, so that we could ask them about the genocide and the impact of the project in their lives.

During the journey Christophe explained how they their way of working is.

After following a reconciliation workshop, people can become part of a 'cell group'. At present there are 12 cell groups of which 2 consist of women. Among these groups 53 cows have been distributed last year. Twenty of these cows now have calves.

Except for women

who are survivors, there are also wives of perpetrators in the groups. These are a separate target group because the deeds of their husbands also had repercussions for themselves.

Each group has 16 to 29 members and these groups meet regularly to help each other in the reconciliation process. All of the participants live in the Kamonyi district around the village of Ruyumba.

At the start of the day it was difficult to ask about the genocide and especially what the perpetrator had done to the the victim. Later it became easier and people were willing to talk about this.

But most of the conversations were about the result of having the cow and life at present.

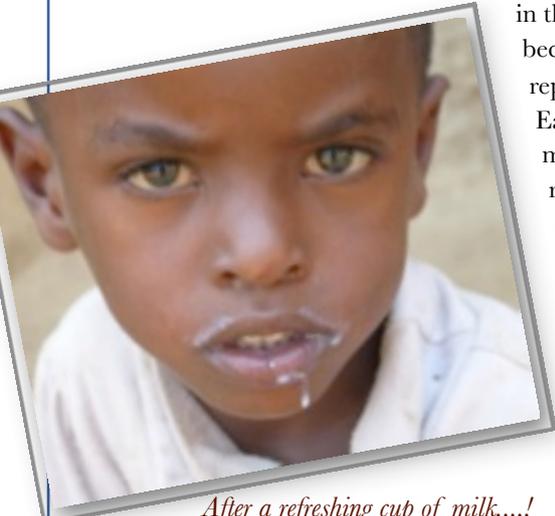
Meeting

We had a wonderful time to meet Christophe Mbonyingabo and to hear more about his work in November, Marlien de Jong and Alinda Drog told us of their experiences in Rwanda and Berend Jan about the plans for the farm.



Alinda Drog

"Amazing to see the victims truly forgive their offenders. Not only on the surface, but deeply. This would not be possible without God's help. The perpetrators explained that they did ask forgiveness in the community court, but through CARSA they came on speaking terms and it became possible to really forgive.



After a refreshing cup of milk....!

CHILDREN ARE DRINKING MILK DAILY

No hunger in Aloys en Celestin's families....

Most children who live in the country suffer severe malnourishment. This malnourishment has such bad consequences that the children will not be able to follow education.

Aloys has 3 children (Harriette, Fabrice en Delphine) and his wife is expecting a fourth. Celestin has 2 children (Patrick en Celestin). They are the couple (victim/perpetrator) which received a cow together. (Children in picture on the right).

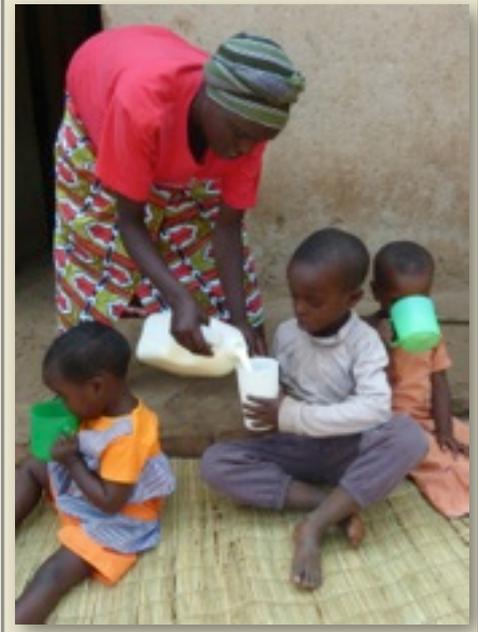
Better relationships between victims and offenders

Aloys and Celestin live 600 metres apart. I didn't dare ask what Celestin had done, but he spent 12,5 years in jail. Part of the time he was doing community work. He built roads and houses. He has been home now for 5 years.

The cow they have is called 'Indanga Mirwa' and has a calf now. She got her name only after she bore the calf, this is their tradition. Aloys has a stable where the cow can live, but mostly it wanders around freely.

Looking after the cow together results the development of trust in the relationship between Aloys and Celestin. They meet each other regularly and share the milk with both families.

"I am able to look Aloys in the eyes again now", I am not proud of what I did to him, says Celestin, "We can be real neighbours again."



We watched the children of Aloys and Celestin drink from the tasty fresh milk .



'Cows for Peace Farm' Wilde Ganzen will multiply your money!

Since we got to know Christophe and the team of CARSA we had the desire to do something to make their organisation financially sustainable.

The people of CARSA have given up their professional career to bring peace and reconciliation to their country, as well as helping them practically to get out of poverty; in order to do this, they live from gifts given by individuals.

Slowly the idea to set up a farm started to grow, which would bring income for them, and jobs and training to the local people. We pitched the project to the Wilde Ganzen and they have approved our plans. This means that they will contribute about one third of the funds. Moreover we found a Dutch farmer Berend Jan Stoel, who involved and who will help the local people find the best way to this into being. He has experience with development work and farming, and knows what the preconditions are, to make this project a success from different standpoints.

~~~~ News ~~~~ 'hot of the press' ~~~~ we managed to purchase a piece of land for the farm! ~~~~

CARSA had found a piece of land and they now managed to agree on a price with the owner. The land is in the catchment area where they are working in Mugina. This will allow them to work amidst the target group and help stimulate the economic growth of this poor area in the long run. Here they will endeavour to set up a model farm where people can learn about keeping chicken, dairy farming and growing fruits & vegetables.

For this Farm we need quite a bit of money and we would like you to help us. We have been able to put a downpayment of €10,000.- on this land of 8 hectare. In January we need another €4,000.- for the second payment. Would you be able to contribute to this, sponsoring part of this land? A hundred square metres of land will cost us € 27,50. One hectare will cost € 2,750.-.

Let us know what you can do to help. We would love to hear from you.

For each euro that you give, Wilde Ganzen will give 55 cents!



'Indanga Mirwa' and her calf