

AIM forAfrica: Rwanda

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The UF Center for the Arts in Healthcare's AIM for Africa initiatives create cultural bridges between the arts and healthcare in the U.S. and African nations. In May and June of 2010, a team of 19 CAHRE faculty and students, along with several health and arts professionals from Florida and beyond traveled to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue work begun in 2009. CAHRE is a part of a consortium of NGO's working together in Rwanda to improve quality of life in genocide survivor villages. The consortium includes the Rwanda Red Cross, the Barefoot Artists, Engineers without Borders, Jefferson Health, and the Rwandan Village Concept Project.

The primary goals of the 2011 initiative were: 1) to provide relevant education to healthcare professionals and lay healthcare providers in the Rugegero Survivor Village and surrounding region; 2) to use theatre and the visual arts to enhance health literacy and community engagement in the Rugegero region; 3) to use the arts to enhance familiarity with and utilization of health services in the Rugegero region; 4) to use the arts as a needs assessment tool to explore relevant social issues; and 5) to create sustainable economic opportunities for individuals and communities through vocational arts training.

The CAHRE team, under the leadership of Jill Sonke and Cindy Nelly, continued work in the Rugegero genocide survivor village and two

regional health clinics, expanded work into a small village adjacent to Rugegero that is home to a community of 91 people of Twa decent, created a bicycle taxi co-op project with an emphasis on health education in the town of Gisenyi, presented regional Home-Based Life Saving Skills training programs, and conducted needs assessments in the Twa village and in Goma, DRC. CAHRE nurses conducted health assessments, trainings, and provided healthcare to address immediate needs, while artists installed health education murals at local clinics, presented health education theatre performances in area schools, and provided vocational arts training in local co-ops, villages, and clinics. The health and health education projects focused primarily on nutrition, hygiene, HIV prevention, family planning, and malaria prevention.

Upon return to Florida, team members created Rwanda Sustainable Families, an economic assistance program, to aid villagers

in the Rubavu district in starting small businesses and put their children through school. Thus far, 15 families have been part of the program, starting businesses selling vegetables and goats. Additionally, members of the CAHRE team are creating a public art exhibit including photography, handicrafts, and artwork created by the children of the Rugegero and Twa village expressing their views on peace and unity. The exhibit will be presented in the fall of 2010.

The AIM for Africa Rwanda & DRC project will continue through 2011 as CAHRE hosts the East-Central Africa Arts & Health Forum in Kigali, undertakes extended residencies in Rugegero and the Twa village as well as in the DRC, and launches a longitudinal study assessing the impact of its programs on healthcare utilization in the Rugegero region. For more information, see www.arts.ufl.edu/CAHRE/aimrwanda.asp



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