SHALOM NEWS UPDATES

SHALOM Educating for Peace is a non-governmental, non-profit organization working for building and sustaining positive peace through education. Shalom pursues the following objectives: (i) educating for peace, (ii) researching for peace and (iii) cultivating the culture of non-violence.

Shalom is a relatively young organization and we have spent the past few months establishing ourselves in Rwanda and Burundi. Our primary activity has been developing proposals and networking for the purpose of raising interest and funds for our projects.

Basabose has continued to broadcast our weekly peace program on a community radio station in Rwanda where the message of nonviolent means to resolving conflict has reached a wide audience and solicited high levels of debate.

Together with an American volunteer we have been initiating a peace education project with self-help cooperatives in rural Rwanda to assist in nonviolent means of communication and resolving conflict. Thanks to Megan for her help!

Thank you to all of you who responded by email to our first newsletter, released in August. The requests for internships and partnerships, the sharing of resources and the general encouragement was phenomenal! Thanks also for contributions to this newsletter which will be included in our four-page edition early next year.

RESHALOM’S PROJECTS IN 2008/2009

YOUNG PEACEMAKERS PROJECT
This project seeks equip youth leaders in training youth in peace principles. Shalom has developed a training manual to assist these leaders in this task. The aim is to reach 250 youth leaders in 50 local churches through this training.

PEACE EDUCATION THROUGH RADIO
Currently members of Shalom speak on a weekly community radio program in Rwanda, called Umcyo, where peace principles are discussed and debated and people can call in with their questions and comments. A similar project is set to launch in Bujumbura, Burundi.
“Arriving in Rwanda you expect to see a country still torn apart by the war in 1994. At least, that’s what I expected to see. Instead on the clean streets of the capital, Kigali, I see a city that could be a nearly perfect fit to my home for the last four years—the Mississippi Delta. There’s definitely poverty and there’s definitely wealth, but this city is not at all what you expect when you de-board a plane in Rwanda.

The reconciliation process is in full swing here both through government and civil society action. Shalom is certainly providing a voice to this process here, as well.

It’s been an incredible experience so far, definitely one to repeat!”

Megan Colnar is from San Antonio, Texas. She recently graduated with a BA in International Relations and Latin American Studies. Additionally, she was the recipient of the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship for 2008-2009 to do a comparative study of global nonviolence and reconciliation movements in India, Rwanda, South Africa, Chile and Northern Ireland.

In July this year Basabose spent a few days in Bujumbura, assisting Harerimana in setting up Shalom in Burundi. During this time, they were able to meet with numerous potential partnering organizations to discuss the way forward for Shalom.

One such organization, Trauma Healing And Reconciliation Services (THARS), is partnering with Shalom to educate communities in peace through adult literacy. Another organization is considering financing our Young Peacemakers Project which trains Church youth leaders in conflict resolution in order that they in turn educate their youth groups. This project aims at reaching some 250 youth leaders, and through them, thousands of young people.

Shalom is also negotiating with a radio station in Burundi to start the same peace education program there as is running in Rwanda. Radio is a powerful medium of communication in the Great Lakes region and this is a relatively cost-effective means of reaching thousands of people with the message of nonviolence.

Lastly, Shalom is exploring the possibility of dialogue groups at university campuses which would encourage students from various ethnic groups to engage in deep listening exercises which would contribute towards healing and reconciliation.