



## Rwanda Engagement Trip – October 2017.



**Tim went on the Rwanda engagement trip in October last year. You can read more about his experience below, but Tim is also offering his time to come talk at your branch meetings/events, so please get in touch if you have an event in mind. Tim lives in Lancashire and is willing to travel to a certain degree, keep this in mind when sending through requests but please do ask!**

**Tim Nuttall has been President of Rossendale (Lancashire) Branch since its 50th anniversary year in 2012, and a Speaking Out speaker since 2014.**

Back in August I received the email, sent to all UK volunteers, asking for expressions of interest in taking part in a visit to Rwanda to see the work of Save The Children Rwanda. I didn't think I stood much chance, but after sending in a written application, and having a couple of informal telephone interviews, I heard that I'd been chosen to take part along with four other volunteers.

Accompanied by Deborah Forster, Volunteering Recruitment Manager for Save the Children UK, we spent a week based in the Rwandan capital of Kigali, travelling out from there to see some of the field work included in the country's four strands of work in Education, Child Protection, Child Rights Governance, and Health & Nutrition. The fifth aspect of the work in Rwanda is Save the Children's involvement in the Mahama refugee camp, close to the Burundi border, where almost 50,000 Burundians who have fled unrest in their country over the past four years were living. The number now is likely to be over 60,000.

We were well looked after by local headquarters staff, including Country Director Phillippe Adapoe, and accompanied on five very full days of visits by the Head of Communications, Annett. Save the Children Rwanda employs 180 staff, mainly Rwandan nationals, with 100 based in Kigali, plus hundreds of volunteers across the country. Funding to run the country's operation comes from the Rwandan government and other national Save the Children organisations such as those in Denmark and the USA as well as Save the Children-UK and Save the Children International.

Save the Children have been working in Rwanda since being invited there by the Rwandan government in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide which killed 800,000 people in just 100 days and left the country with the highest proportion of orphans in the world. One of the first tasks was to set up a tracing system to put families back in touch with each other, something pioneered in Rwanda and used since in emergency situations around the world.

Our visits started with a primary school of 700 pupils about 40 miles from Kigali where we saw a programme run by Save the Children Rwanda to improve teaching standards in the country. The enthusiasm of the 18 teachers and all the children was obvious to see and definitely wasn't just put on for our benefit. We also visited a community reading club where two volunteers were teaching reading skills to 70 children whilst their parents made reading aids for them from recycled materials.

Later in the week we received a PowerPoint presentation on Child Rights Governance by the 13-year old and 10-year old president and vice president of a village children's group which uses play, music and dance to teach children how they should and should not be treated so that they know if they are being exploited in any way. In a country where 40% of the population is under 14 years of age it's vital for the children to know these things.

Our day at Mahama refugee camp showed all four aspects of Save the Children Rwanda's work in one place. The work there included teaching, the use of 'Child Friendly Spaces' to protect children and give them a purpose, and health and nutrition was represented by the newly built small hospital, the only one in the world run by Save the Children. One midwife deals with an average of five births a day amongst the refugees, but her dedication shone through when she spoke to us.

Before I went to Rwanda lots of people told me that I should be prepared for my heart strings to be tugged and for my emotions to be taxed. At the end of my week there, along with my five companions the overall feeling was simply one of overwhelming positivity at the work which Save the Children is doing there, the commitment of both staff and volunteers, and the way that Rwanda has survived and rebuilt since 1994.

My job now is to spread the word of this positive work by offering talks about Save the Children Rwanda. Equipped with the ubiquitous PowerPoint presentation, which can be tailored to the particular interests of each audience, I'm now ready take bookings to speak to groups of any kind within a reasonable travelling distance of Rossendale. If you are interested, then do please get in touch. It's an amazing story!