

Finally, at home!!!

The year 2009 came to an end as we moved into our new Centre César, situated directly in the village of the widows. The move was made possible in large part due to the generosity of Marcelle Forestier, who has been a volunteer with Ubuntu for three years.



Marcelle, who lives in Toronto, came to spend three months with the widows back in 2007, and has returned four times since then. Seeing for herself the courage and resilience of these wounded women, the Centre César quickly became a passion for her. In 2008, she advanced funds for the purchase of the land required for our new centre, and later that same year advanced further funds to commence construction. When she returned in 2009 and discovered that not enough capital had been raised in order to complete the second stage of construction, once again, she lent a significant amount of money to the organization.

We negotiated a deal with the prison administration in Kimironko, and the prisoners became our construction workers. Emotionally, this was very difficult for the widows, however they came to accept this arrangement with the philosophy that: *"this arrangement was in line with the government's objective of national reconciliation, and because these same men destroyed their homes, it was fair that they build their community centre."*



Our lease finished on December 31st, so we had to move during this month. This proved to be quite difficult, and full of roadblocks. As well as torrential rains that put us behind by several days, there were also problems at the prison that deprived us of workers.

The mothers were implicated in the cleaning of the Centre, as well as the moving. Even though the construction is not quite complete, that the painting is not finished, and that we are still missing kitchen cabinets and furniture, we joyously transferred our activities.



All of the difficulties associated with this adventure resulted in widows that were more united, and also reinforced their sense of community. We often grow more by overcoming obstacles on a bumpy road, than by rolling on smooth pavement. Perhaps that is why there are so many bumps and potholes on the roads in Rwanda...

Having overcome these difficulties has given a fresh breath to the hopes of the widows, and to my determination to maintain our programs, and to continue to pursue the development of our centre. Needless to say, the widows consider Marcelle a true maman for them...

The year 2010 has started very well, the fundraising campaign that took place in Canada in November and December was successful enough to allow us to maintain our programs for the next six months. Our hearts are filled with appreciation for all of the donors who support us, and whose generosity allows us to develop our programs in order to support these courageous women.

Special mention to our sponsorship program, supporting 24 children in our daycare, 166 elementary school children, and 110 young people in high school. These children will be equipped with all necessary supplies for school. The mothers are so relieved without the burden of trying to find the money necessary to ensure their children receive an education. Education is without a doubt the best way to eliminate poverty. In Rwanda, as with other countries in the world, the children are the future.

It has taken us five years to get where we are, and we are home. The hope and determination that we live with will one day bring us to realize our goal of self sufficiency. Who knows, maybe in five more years?

Maman Nicole