

Empower's 2008 trip to Uganda and Burundi a smashing success!

Carrie Miles, Linda Ikeda, and Betsy Anderson arrived in Uganda on May 16 and went to work immediately in Kampala and Kabale, a town near the border with Rwanda. Highlights of the trip for Linda and Betsy included working with widows, orphans and their caregivers, parents, teenagers, and street children. Linda and Betsy were also a great help to Carrie in conducting two seminars in Kabale, one for the regional leaders of the Mothers Union of the Church of Uganda (and some fathers as well) and the other for leaders from the Pentecostal churches.

Both seminars, as well as work done in Burundi in the third week of the trip, were huge steps forward for Empower. We now have dozens of leaders throughout Uganda and soon Burundi eager to teach and encourage the practice of biblical ideals of marriage and family. We have also created Empower International Uganda with Margaret Kiswiriri (who organized the Kabale seminar) as president and with five chapters in various parts of Uganda.



Mothers Union Leaders, Linda, and Guests

Participants were enthusiastic and had many ideas for how to use the material presented in the seminar. These ladies and gentlemen are true leaders and great teachers. We foresee that in a few years Empower will be an African-led enterprise, with us Americans acting mostly as consultants.



Seminar participants working in small groups in Burundi



Why empowerment is important

As Linda writes, " I will never get used to the low status of women in Africa. There is such a double standard for men and women. If a divorce occurs, the children, who are considered property, belong to the husband. Polygamy occurs among many men as does infidelity, and their wives are often infected with HIV from the husband's promiscuity. Domestic violence against women is rampant. This is just a part of the reason why Empower's teachings are so important. " In this context, the eagerness with which our partners are embracing the biblical teachings on unity and mutual self-sacrifice in marriage, and on the need to care for children, is truly inspiring.





Carrie, Linda and Betsy (back row) with widows and their children at All Saints Cathedral

Linda and Betsy left Uganda on May 28 after more intense sessions teaching parenting in Kampala. Their full trip report will be posted on www.EmpowerInternational.org.



Street children in Kabale with Linda's puppets



Carrie and Pastor Frank Tweheyo flew on to Burundi, where they were met by our dear friends, and now partners, of the Matana diocese of the Anglican Church of Burundi.

Frank, who oversees dozens of Protestant churches in Kabale, is Empower's Pan-Africa Program Coordinator.

At the invitation of the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Burundi, the Rt. Reverend Bernard Ntahoturi, Carrie and Frank worked with the Reverend Mr. Pontien Ribakare and the Reverend Mrs. Yvette Inamahoro to create a pilot program using Empower material in the diocese of Matana. The archbishop believes (and we agree) that healthy families are critically important to individuals, church, and society. He, Pontien, Yvette and others of the staff in Matana are amazing people, visionary and dedicated. If the pilot program succeeds as we hope, next year Carrie and Frank will help implement the program in the other dioceses throughout Burundi.

Carrie was delighted to be given a Burundian name: *Mahoro*, which means peace.



Seth, Frank, Archbishop, Carrie, Yvette, Pontien

Frank and Carrie had the privilege of spending 1 1/4 hours with the Honorable Mrs. Denise Nkurunziza, wife of the president of Burundi. Mrs. Nkurunziza accepted copies of Carrie's books, described her many programs to aid women, orphans, the poor and the elderly, then asked how Empower wanted to partner with her! We plan to pursue this unique opportunity in 2009.



Frank with the 1st Lady of Burundi



Peace translating for Carrie (now also named Peace) at Good Shepherd Church

The final highlight of the trip — and another exciting opportunity for Empower — occurred in Bujumbura, the capitol of Burundi. Carrie spoke two hundred members of the leadership team from the dynamic 6,000 member Church of the Shepherd. Pastors Esron and Imelda were excited by the teachings and have invited us back to conduct an in-depth training in 2009.

The new African version of the study guide was very well received. Focusing on biblical teachings on marriage and family, it brings out clearly the three-part biblical story of creation ideal (man and woman united and enjoying a “face-to-face” relationship in Genesis 1 and 2), humankind’s fall from that ideal (division between man, woman and God in Genesis 3), and our redemption from sin and restoration to God’s intent for us in creation (found in Jesus’ teachings in the Gospels and in the writings of Paul.) Participants especially enjoyed the teaching format, in which they worked through the studies in small groups (each on a different study), and then presented the material to each other.

Carrie learned a lot from participants’ discussions. Biblical passages that mean little to us Americans can have profound and very practical significance in Africa, where customary marriage and family practices are very different. For example, consider



the impact of statements in Genesis 1 that man and woman were given *together* dominion and ownership over the earth. In Africa, women are more likely considered to *be* property rather than allowed to own or inherit it. Genesis 2’s depiction of God creating woman as a “help suitable” or as a “strength equal” to the man contrasts sharply with attitudes that equate a man marrying with his “taking a servant.” Particularly touching are reactions to the observation that in Genesis 3 – a passage often referred to as “the Curse” -- the only things that are cursed by God are the serpent and the ground. Africans tend to believe that God cursed the people as well, a terrible prospect in a culture that is still wracked by witchcraft and modern-day curses. As one participant said, it is wonderful to know that “God isn’t trying to hurt us” but wants to welcome us back into a daily walk with him and with each other.

Empower works alongside existing ministries in developing countries to promote Biblical teachings on the equal worth and potential for unity among all human beings in Christ, most importantly within the family. We feel that this mission is best achieved through developing trainings, study guides, and films that empower our ministry partners to promote Biblical ideals themselves.



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2009

Our next trip is planned for June 2009. We have many, many invitations in Africa so are actively looking for others to join us. Please consider coming along in 2009! Carrie plans to conduct a training of trainers in the United States for next year's missionaries sometime later this year. The material is easy to teach, our colleagues are eager to learn, the need is enormous and the impact is life-changing – for you as well as for our audiences.

Membership in EIM is free and we encourage you to join. Empower is still a small organization. Currently our travel and programs in Africa are being funded solely by ourselves and by loyal and generous contributors. We also need to support our African partners in the work we have begun jointly. We therefore welcome any contribution you might make. Monthly contributions help enormously.



Checks may be made payable to Empower International Ministries and mailed to the return address above.

Empower International Ministries works with existing ministries in developing and/or historically non-Christian countries to promote biblical teachings on the equal worth and potential for unity among all human beings, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, social or family status. We seek to emulate the early Christian church in raising the respect and freedom accorded women; in freeing men from worldly norms of masculinity that lead to violence and despair; in encouraging equal-regard marriage, family happiness, and the godly care for children; and in promoting community values that eliminate sexual, ethnic and other social antagonisms.