



Meet Bisesero

BCC have been supporting Bisesero since January 2008

How many people altogether: Unknown (Large number)

How many community groups within Bisesero? Five, including a youth group.

Youth group: Approx 30

What have we helped with so far: Cows, goats, potatoes, fertiliser, renting a field, housing, repairing housing, bees

Story of Bisesero: Bisesero is an area in the west of Rwanda, near Kibuye, on the shores of Lake Kivu. It was the only place in Rwanda where any concerted resistance to the genocide took place. The men defended themselves and their women and children with stones and sticks against the repeated onslaughts of the interahamwe and the Rwandan army with their guns, machetes and grenades. Because the women and children were gathered together for protection they were easy prey for the reinforced militias with the army. After 11 weeks of massacre, on the 27 June 1994, French soldiers arrived and encouraged the survivors to come out of hiding, which they did, but then soldiers quickly left and abandoned the people to their killers. Estimates vary of between 30,000 and 50,000 being killed on the hills of Bisesero, but what is clear is that only around 1,000 survived. These tended to be the strongest and fittest so now, 20+ years on, Bisesero is dominated by an ageing male population.

Needs:

- To have refrigerated storage for crops.
- To have somewhere to store the seeds.
- To have training for the young people's pig project.

Dreams:

- The young people want people to come and see their pig project and say, 'Look how well they did. We want to do it to that standard.' This stems from the houses that were built to such a high standard that others want to build houses to that standard now.
- To have our young people come and play football with them.

Local Executive: He suggested the young people start a hair salon as the nearest salon is in Mubuga.

Message for BCC:

We are so connected. The photos you took of us working together, make sure you show people so that they know we are connected. You are our brothers and sisters. Come and stay in our houses!

They like us as they don't trust denominations (due to the genocide) and we have no denomination. Please come back and teach us as we are non-denominational too. We like that when you come, you come with the word of God.

They were discouraged by the churches. We learnt how to connect with God, not necessarily with the church. They were betrayed by the church. Pastors taught a genocide version of the Bible and the local pastor of the church they attended said from the pulpit after it had started, 'I'm glad there are no more Tutsi in my church!' After the genocide, the church was empty. There was no pastor. No-one called us to come back to church, but we went and worshipped with no pastor, but then fear came back. People didn't want to be in church. We didn't trust them.

One young man (Vice President of one of the community groups) called Antwan would like to go to Bible College. He has been challenged to go and take with him one young man and one young woman who are hungry spiritually and come back and help feed their community spiritually. When asked how we could help them spiritually, the youth leader, Emmanuel asked, 'Can we start a new church?'

We can now see why God has partnered us with Bisesero. We couldn't see the reasons back in 2008, but as a church we merely responded to God's prompting to support and encourage a group of people. Although there's so much more to be done, it's humbling to see what has already happened; to see a people who were traumatised with hope for the future and a desire to not just be self-sufficient, but to do things to such a high standard that others will want to come and see how it is done. Praise the Lord! Imana Ishimwe!